NNCEA

PROGRAM EVALUATION

2025-2026



Nisichawayasi Nehetho
Culture and Education Authority Inc.

NISICHAWAYASIHK CREE NATION

OTETISKEWIN KISKINWAMAHTOWEKAMIK

NISICHAWAYASIHK NEYO OHTINWAK
TOGETHER WE LEARN
TOGETHER WE GROW
COLLEGIATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Special thanks to the community of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, including the NNCEA Board of Trustees, senior management, school leadership, staff, students, families, Elders, and community partners who contributed their time, insight, and perspectives throughout the evaluation process.

Their collective knowledge, experience, and ongoing commitment to education were essential in informing this evaluation, and we are sincerely grateful for their time, patience, and support.

We would also like to recognize Kali Spence-Sinclair for her contribution in designing the cover of this report, which meaningfully reflects the spirit and identity of the community.

Author of this report:

Kokopelli
Box 49
Tootinaowaziibeeng Treaty Reserve 292
Tootinaowaziibeeng, MB

Executive Summary

The Nisichawayasi Nîhitho Culture and Education Authority (NNCEA) commissioned this evaluation to assess the effectiveness, alignment, and cultural integrity of its education system and to identify actionable strategies to strengthen student outcomes, governance, and system-wide coordination.

The evaluation confirms that NNCEA has made considerable progress since the previous review (2017-18), particularly in strengthening cultural programming, stabilizing staffing, and improving administrative and financial capacity. Strong leadership from the Director of Education, supported by an engaged Board of Trustees, has improved alignment across several operational areas and positioned the organization for continued system development.

However, the evaluation also identifies a set of persistent structural and instructional challenges that continue to limit student success. The most significant system-level issue remains chronic absenteeism, which directly impacts student achievement, engagement, and graduation outcomes. In addition, variability in instructional practices, gaps in literacy and numeracy development, and inconsistent application of assessment and promotion practices continue to affect academic performance across grade levels.

At the system level, the evaluation found that while many NNCEA programs and initiatives are individually strong, they are not well integrated. This results in fragmentation across departments, inconsistent data tracking, and reduced capacity to monitor progress and outcomes in a coordinated manner. Interdepartmental collaboration remains largely informal and dependent on individual relationships, rather than supported by defined structures, protocols, and shared accountability.

To address these challenges, the report identifies priorities for system strengthening, supported by detailed recommendations across all program areas. These priorities focus on:

- Establishing a cohesive, system-wide instructional framework to standardize expectations for teaching, assessment, literacy, and numeracy development
- Implementing an education authority -aligned attendance strategy, including monitoring systems, intervention protocols, and community engagement approaches
- Strengthening student support services integration, including clearer coordination between administration, teachers, and support staff
- Enhancing data systems and reporting practices, including the use of PowerSchool and cohort-based tracking models
- Improving governance, policy alignment, and system accountability mechanisms
- Expanding program relevance and accessibility, particularly within the Mature Student and Post-Secondary programs

Central to advancing these priorities is the development and implementation of a comprehensive NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan, which will serve as the primary mechanism to align all programs, services, and operational functions under a unified vision, with clearly defined goals, measurable outcomes, and assigned responsibilities. This work should be complemented by a formalized Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NNCEA and Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) to strengthen interagency collaboration and shared accountability for student success.

Implementation of the recommendations should proceed as a phased, multi-year process, as outlined in the Practical Implementation Guide and the 3-Year Implementation Timeline, and indicated as follows:

- Year 1 (Foundation Building): Establish core systems, including strategic planning, attendance frameworks, instructional expectations, and data tracking structures

- Year 2 (System Alignment): Strengthen instructional practices, expand coordinated student supports, and improve interdepartmental integration

- Year 3 (Sustainability and Optimization): Consolidate gains, refine practices, and embed accountability and continuous improvement processes

Given the scope and complexity of this work, effective implementation will require clearly defined coordination, consistent monitoring, and structured reporting mechanisms across all NNCEA programs. Establishing a dedicated function to support implementation oversight will be key to ensuring that priorities remain on track, progress is measurable, and adjustments are made as needed.

The success of this implementation process will depend on strong interdepartmental coordination and a shared commitment across all NNCEA programs and schools. This requires clear roles and responsibilities, aligned planning processes, and active support and endorsement from NNCEA leadership to ensure system-wide cooperation, accountability, and sustained momentum.

Overall, this evaluation provides NNCEA with a clear and actionable roadmap to transition from a collection of strong individual initiatives to a fully integrated, coherent education system. With disciplined implementation, strengthened coordination, and sustained community engagement, NNCEA is well positioned to improve student outcomes, reinforce cultural and language priorities, and build a sustainable, high-performing education system for the future.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA:	Average Daily Attendance
AI:	Artificial Intelligence
ALC:	Adult Learning Centre
AO:	Attendance Officer
ATEC:	Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre Inc.
CFS:	Child and Family Services
CPR:	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
DEP:	Distance Education Program
EA:	Education Assistant
FNSO:	First Nation Safety Officers
HR:	Human Resources
HVAC:	Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
IEP:	Individual Education Plan
IPP:	Individual Program Plan
ISC:	Indigenous Services Canada (former INAC)
IT:	Information Technology
IXL:	I Excel, an online learning platform.
JUMP:	Junior Undiscovered Math Prodigies
LLI:	Levelled Literacy Intervention
MET:	Manitoba Education and Training
MKO:	Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP:	Mature Student Program
NCN:	Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation
NFMCCC:	Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative
NHA:	Nisichawayasihk Housing Authority
NHEA:	Nelson House Education Authority (now NNCEA)
NHTA:	Nelson House Teacher's Association
NNCEA:	Nisichawayasi Nîhitho Culture & Education Authority Inc.
NNOC:	Nisichawayasihk Neyo Ohtinwak Collegiate
OK:	Otayitiskiwin Kiskinwamahtowekamik Elementary School
PAL:	Possession and Acquisition Licence
PATH:	Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope
PAX:	Good Behaviour Game
PBIS:	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
PD:	Professional Development
PSC:	Post Secondary Counsellor
PTSD:	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAZ:	Comprehensive Leveled Reading Resources for Kids
RCMP:	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RFP	Request for Proposals
RTI:	Response to Intervention
SEL:	Social and Emotional Learning
SMART:	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound
UCN:	University College of the North
UFLI:	University of Florida Literacy Institute

1. Background

1.1. Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation

Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) is based in Nelson House, Manitoba, about 800 kilometres north of Winnipeg and 80 kilometres west of Thompson.

NCN has nearly 5,000 Citizens living in Nelson House, South Indian Lake, Leaf Rapids, Thompson, Brandon and Winnipeg. NCN's core reserve lands consist of 5,851.7 hectares as part of Indian Reserve 170, 170A, 170B and 170C.

As nomadic people, their ancestors developed a spiritual connection to and respect for the lands and waters, drawing on the life-giving bounty of fishing, hunting, trapping, and gathering fruits and medicinal plants from the forests.

Archaeological data collected by the Manitoba Museum show that the NCN people had a thriving lifestyle at least 10,000 years ago. They were fishers, hunters, and gatherers from that period, throughout the fur trade era following first contact with Europeans, right up until the twentieth century.

Many of these traditional lifestyles have been maintained to the present time. Since the first contact with Europeans, the NCN people have integrated the changing values and lifestyles of Western Civilization with their own.

NCN's indigenous education system existed before Europeans arrived and before the signing of the Treaties. With the Treaties (1908) came the Western education system. However, in 1981, local control of education was regained in Nelson House, and since then, NCN has continued working toward re-indigenizing the education system with their values and beliefs while still recognizing the Western knowledge systems.

Since 1981, NCN's educational system has continued to evolve, achieving many important milestones along the way. As part of this progress, a formal Education Authority was established and founded on the spirit, beliefs and basic principles of "Wahbung" and "Indian Control of Indian Education."

Initially known as the Nelson House Education Authority (NHEA), later renamed the Nisichawayasihk Education Authority (NEA), and, as of November 2016, officially operating as the Nisichawayasi Nîhitho Culture and Education Authority Inc. (NNCEA), the Authority continues to work toward "Transforming the Delivery of Education," one of the key goals identified in NCN's 2023–2028 Strategic Plan.

1.2. Evaluation Overview

With the objective of systematically evaluating the effectiveness, relevance, and cultural integrity of the current education system, and in support of strengthened local governance, improved student outcomes, and the alignment of programming with the values, priorities, and aspirations of NCN, the NNCEA has engaged an independent consulting firm, Kokopelli, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation during the 2025-26 school year.

A central aim of this evaluation is to obtain informed feedback from all stakeholder groups and to provide education leadership (Chief and Council, NNCEA, parents, caregivers, school staff, and the broader community) with evidence-based findings regarding the programs, practices, and activities that most contribute to student learning and success. The evaluation will further identify areas requiring enhancement, modification, expansion, or redesign.

The scope and areas of the evaluation were first outlined in the Request for Proposals (RFP) and subsequently confirmed through the approved service proposal and contractual agreement.

2. Methodology

To ensure full alignment with NNCEA's expectations, the evaluation team undertook a comprehensive review of the Terms of Reference outlined in the Request for Proposals (RFP).

The proposal submitted by the evaluation team was developed in direct response to the defined scope of work, objectives, expectations, and reporting requirements specified by NNCEA.

Following formal confirmation of the awarded contract, an initial scope-confirmation meeting was convened with the Director of Education. The purpose of this meeting was to validate the evaluation framework, confirm deliverables and timelines, clarify data access protocols, and establish collaborative mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and information sharing.

Subsequent to this meeting, the evaluation team finalized the evaluation design, including the development of stakeholder-specific survey instruments and a structured list of document requests. These instruments and document requirements were designed to ensure systematic data collection and to support the interview, site visit, and document review phases of the evaluation.

Furthermore, the evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive and reliable assessment of the education system. The following methods were used:

- Document and Records Review: Examination of institutional records, policy documents, enrolment data, and other administrative information available through the NNCEA.
- Desktop Research: Review of relevant literature, comparative frameworks, and contextual data related to Indigenous education systems and governance.
- Site Observations: Direct observation of school facilities, classrooms, learning environments, and general school operations.
- Interviews: Semi-structured and unstructured interviews conducted with NNCEA representatives, school administrators, teachers, and support staff.
- Surveys and Questionnaires: Distributed to parents and caregivers, teaching staff, students, NNCEA members, and school administrators to collect quantitative and perception-based data.
- Stakeholder Meetings: Group sessions held with students, staff, Elders, and other community stakeholders to gather collective perspectives.
- Extended On-Site Engagement: 26 cumulative evaluator days spent in schools and education offices to allow for observation, field verification, and relationship-building.

This multi-method approach enabled triangulation of findings, increasing the validity of the evaluation and ensuring that the final analysis reflects both statistical evidence and lived experience within the NCN education system.

3. NNCEA

3.1. Governance

The NNCEA is the governing body of the NCN school system. It was formally established in 1981 when NCN assumed full authority over its education system from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Since that time, the NNCEA has functioned as an independent, community controlled (local control) First Nation education authority.

The NNCEA is headquartered at the Alice Moore Education Centre and is responsible for the administration and oversight of the following programs and institutions:

- Otayitiskiwin Kiskinwamahtowekamik (O.K.) Elementary School
- Nisichawayasihk Neyo Ohtinwak Collegiate (NNOC)
- Mature Student Program
- Post-Secondary Program

The NNCEA's mission, expressed in Cree as "Mamawe Hopikihowasotan" ("Let's Raise Our Children Together"), reflects a collective responsibility for the well-being and success of children and youth. Its guiding values emphasize the creation of a vibrant, productive, and supportive learning environment for students, staff, and families. Central to this vision is the commitment to deliver an education that is deeply rooted in Nîhitho traditions, laws, culture, and worldviews, while simultaneously preparing learners to meet contemporary academic and vocational expectations.

In alignment with this mission, the NNCEA undertook an alternative planning process in December 2016 with the explicit purpose of *"acknowledging and using the sacredness of our language and culture in the education system."* This planning process resulted in the development of the PATH Plan (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope), a multi-year framework designed to increase and strengthen the presence of Nîhitho language and cultural content across the NNCEA school system.

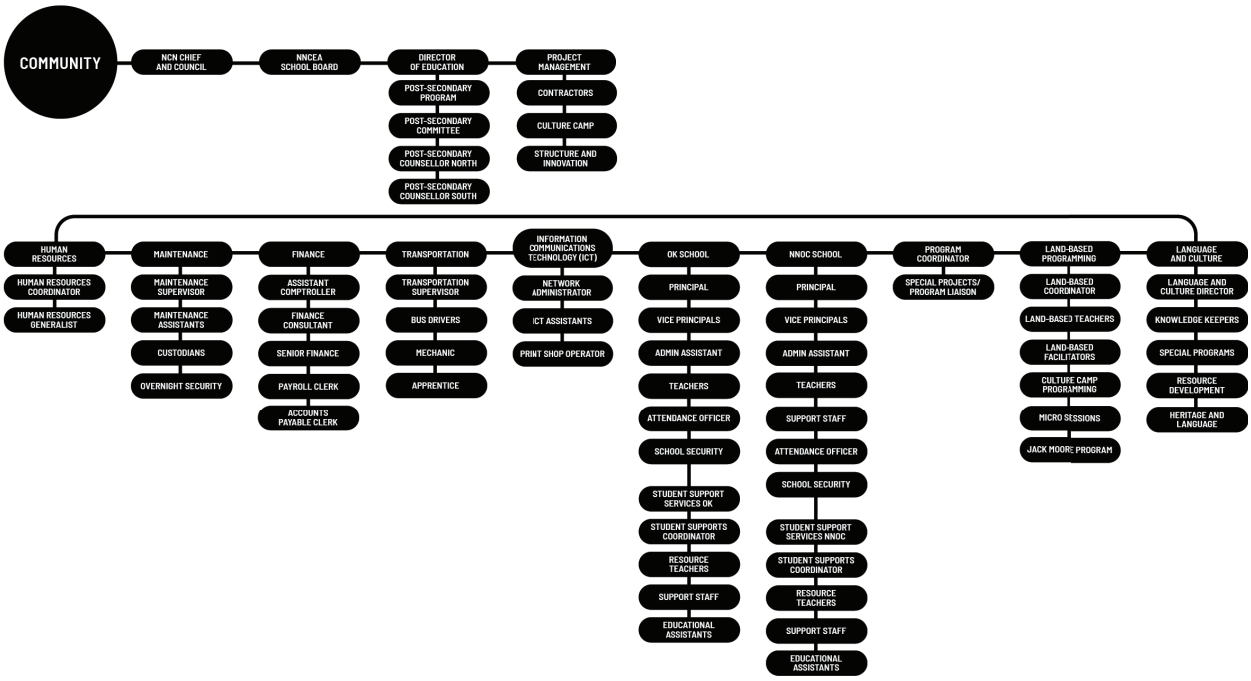
The foundational intent of this work is reflected in the statement: *"We want our children to be proud of who they are and where they come from, so they will know where they want to go."*

The PATH planning statement and vision of *"Setting a strong path for our children"* continues to guide the NNCEA's educational priorities. The Board affirms that education is one of the most powerful tools a Nation can provide to its youth; therefore, the intentional integration of language, culture, history, and 21st-century learning skills is viewed as essential to supporting student success and advancing community well-being.

The organizational structure responsible for aligning educational goals, policies, and programs consists of an elected Board of Trustees and a management team, supported by a series of operational units responsible for program delivery and implementation. The NNCEA's organizational structure is presented in Graphic 1: Organizational Chart.

NNCEA Organizational Chart

AS OF JUNE 2025



Graphic 1. NNCEA Organizational Chart

3.1.1. Board of Trustees

The NNCEA is governed by a publicly elected Board of Trustees consisting of five members. The Board is responsible for governance oversight of the NNCEA school system, including policy development, strategic direction, and accountability for educational programming. In addition, the NCN Chief and Council appoint two Education Portfolio Holders who serve as liaisons between the Chief and Council and the Board.

The Board of Trustees meets monthly to fulfill its governance responsibilities. Core functions include establishing system direction through policies and strategic priorities; overseeing implementation of Board policies; approving staffing decisions; setting the school calendar and hours of operation; allocating funding across education programs, including the Mature Student and Post-Secondary programs; and establishing expectations and guidelines for Post-Secondary sponsorship and access. The Board provides governance oversight of the two on-reserve schools and the Mature Student and Post-Secondary programs.

Evidence from the November 2025 Board meeting indicates that Trustees are actively engaged in system-level oversight and are familiar with long-standing challenges affecting NNCEA, particularly student attendance, academic achievement gaps, and community engagement. Trustees demonstrated openness to evaluative feedback and engaged constructively with early findings related to student achievement, attendance, program coordination, and system coherence.

Board discussion highlighted a shared recognition that, despite more than 40+ years of local control, NNCEA lacks a formal, community-driven strategic plan that clearly articulates long-term outcomes for students and families. Trustees identified the current evaluation as a critical opportunity to support the development of a comprehensive strategic framework addressing language and culture revitalization, academic achievement, attendance, land-based learning, student services, and community education.

Trustees emphasized the importance of values-based education, cultural grounding, and land-based learning, which is key in improving student engagement and attendance. Discussion reflected a view that strengthening cultural identity and rebuilding community confidence in education are foundational to addressing persistent attendance and achievement challenges.

Trustee Perspectives:

Findings from the completed Board of Trustees survey are consistent with meeting observations. The responding trustee indicated a clear understanding of the Board’s governance role and expressed general confidence in the Board's effectiveness, including its decision-making processes, meeting structure, and working relationship with the Director of Education. Responses suggest that trustees feel able to express differing views respectfully and support collective decisions once made.

The survey identified system resilience as a key strength of NNCEA, noting the Authority’s ability to sustain operations and gradually improve despite significant external pressures and funding constraints. At the same time, the trustee identified priority areas for further attention, including strengthening language and culture programming, increasing parental engagement, and expanding community education. These priorities align with themes raised during Board discussions and elsewhere in the evaluation.

Overall satisfaction with student achievement and community involvement was reported as generally positive, while recognizing the need for continued improvement and more coordinated system-wide strategies.

Both Board discussions and survey feedback reflect strong confidence in the Director of Education. Trustees described the Director as effective, responsive, and highly engaged in system leadership. The Director is viewed as a key driver of operational progress and coordination across programs.

At the same time, trustee feedback raised concerns related to organizational sustainability. The need for increased delegation and additional senior administrative capacity, such as an Assistant Director role, was identified to strengthen system management, reduce reliance on a single leadership position, and improve implementation tracking and reporting.

Overall, evidence indicates that the NNCEA Board of Trustees is engaged, informed, and committed to system improvement. Trustees demonstrate a strong understanding of governance responsibilities and a willingness to engage in critical reflection on persistent challenges. However, findings also point to the need for a clearer strategic framework, improved system coordination, and strengthened administrative capacity to support consistent implementation, monitoring, and accountability across NNCEA programs.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Board of Trustees support the development and adoption of a comprehensive NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan, led by the Director of Education, as outlined in Section 3.2.1. of this Evaluation. The Board should provide governance oversight, direction, and approval to ensure that the Strategic Plan establishes a coherent, aligned, and accountable framework for all NNCEA programs and services.

The Strategic Plan should clearly articulate NNCEA's vision, mission, system priorities, goals, and expected outcomes; define measurable indicators of success; and identify specific actions, timelines, and responsible parties across all major program areas, including student attendance and engagement; language revitalization and cultural integration; student achievement and instructional improvement; parent and community engagement; interagency coordination and wraparound supports; policy modernization; and system alignment across early years, K-12, Mature Student, Post-Secondary, and staff capacity-building initiatives.

As part of the 5-Year Strategic Plan, it is recommended that a dedicated Board Governance section be developed to clearly articulate the Board of Trustees' role in system stewardship and oversight. This section should:

- outline how the Board will strengthen oversight of system-wide implementation and accountability;
- enhance governance capacity through clear role definition and ongoing professional learning;
- support sustainable leadership through strengthened administrative capacity;
- establish Board-level commitments to embedding language revitalization,

culture, and land-based learning as core governance priorities;
- strengthening community and parent engagement at the governance level.

Inclusion of this section will ensure that governance responsibilities are explicitly aligned with system priorities and that the Board's leadership role in advancing coherence, accountability, and community trust is clearly defined and sustained over time.

It is recommended that the Board of Trustees lead the development and formal adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NNCEA and NCN, as established in Section 3.2.1. The MOU should define shared educational expectations, including approaches to social promotion; establish clear protocols for interagency collaboration; and strengthen alignment between NCN's strategic priorities and NNCEA's educational mandate.

Together, the Board-approved 5-Year Strategic Plan and NCN/NNCEA MOU will provide the governance, policy, and accountability framework necessary to promote system-wide coherence, support consistent implementation, strengthen inter-organizational collaboration, and ensure that recent improvements translate into sustained, measurable outcomes for students, families, and the community.

It is recommended that Board members attend community education meetings, when possible, in order to listen, collaborate, and strengthen their understanding of the community perspective.

3.1.2. Policies

In 2011, NNCEA developed a comprehensive set of policies and guidelines to provide clear direction for the management and operation of NCN's education programs and schools.

The NNCEA Policies, Guidelines, and Procedures Manual is organized into eleven policy series and three appendices, summarized in Table 1 and publicly available at: https://nncea.ca/policies/

Table 1: NNCEA Policies, Guidelines, Procedure's Manual Summary

Policies	Section	Summary of Covered Areas
Series 100	Foundations and Beliefs	NNCEA: Legal Status, Philosophy, Goals, Control, Community and Staff Involvement, Decision Making Process, Relationship with Chief & Council, Province and Federal Government. Recognition & Accomplishments.
Series 200	Board Governance and Operations	School Board: Powers and Duties, Organizational Structures, Elections, Code of Ethics, Honorarium, Meetings, Information Programs, Policy Dissemination and Implementation, Administrative Decisions, Consultants, etc.
Series 300	General Administration	Director of Education: Compensation, Benefits, and Professional Development. Program; School and System Evaluation; School Year Calendar; Staff Meetings; Approval of School Handbooks; and Reports of Accidents.
Series 400	Business Finance Administration	Budget; Capital; Authorized Signature; Bank Borrowing; Obsolete Property; Tendering; Purchasing; Payroll; Government Forms; Post-secondary Students Advance; HR & Staff; Deposit of Education Funds; Replacement of Equipment; Inventories; etc.
Series 500	Personnel and Employee Relations	Employee Relations; Staff Ethics, Conduct, Recruitment; Employment Contracts; Personnel Records; Staff Assignments; New Staff Orientation; Staff Conflict of Interest, Complaints and Grievances
Series 600	Programs & Services	Instructional Goals; Curriculum Guides and Course Outlines; Curriculum Development and Approval; Distance Education Program; Mature Student Program; Post-secondary Education Opportunities; Cree (Nîhitho) Language Instruction, Religion, Spirituality Instruction; etc.
Series 700	Public Relations	Community Information Program; Community Involvement; Visitors to the School; Public Complaints; Relations with other Schools, Colleges and Universities; Student Teaching and Internships; School/Parent Advisory Council.
Series 800	Support Services	Safety Programs; Emergency Closings; School Closure Due to Cold Weather; Non-closure of School for Funerals; Non-availability of School Gymnasium for Funerals; Student Transportation Services; School Bus; Accidents and Emergencies; Use of School Board Owned Vehicles.
Series 900	Facilities	Building and Grounds Inspection and Management; Security; Board-owned Residences; Building Access and Control.
Series 1000	Students	Rights and Responsibilities; Equal Education Opportunities; Entrance/Exit Age; Non-resident students; Student Records, Referrals, Attendance and Marks. Student Safety and Supervision. Administering Medicine to Students. Student Evaluation, Examinations, Reporting, Awards, Discipline,

		Interrogation and Searches. Suspension and Expulsions; etc.
Series 1100	Information Technology	Computer Use; Network Security; Email; Data Management; Awareness of the Policy; Non-compliance; Personal Electronic Devises.

While the Director of Education has identified the need for a full review and update of the 2011 policy framework to ensure alignment with current needs and priorities, a number of revised and updated policies have been developed in the interim to support ongoing operations and program delivery. These interim policies reflect current practices and emerging needs across NNCEA schools and programs.

The following revised policies have been developed and are accessible through the NNCEA website.

- Cell Phone Policy
- School Attendance Policy
- No Smoking Policy
- Anti-Gang Policy
- Respect and Mediation Practices
- Cold Weather Policy
- Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Policy
- Harassment and Violence Policy
- Donation Policy 426
- Social Media Policy
- Senior Years Late Enrolment Policy
- Senior Years Return to School Policy
- Bullying Policy
- Staff Attendance Policy

Based on annual reports and feedback from NNCEA staff, it is evident that between 2016 and 2025, NNCEA has consistently strengthened governance and operational practices through policy reviews and updates, modernization of the policy manual, improvements to communication systems, and expanded professional development. These efforts demonstrate a clear commitment to improving staff capacity, cultural revitalization, and organizational accountability. However, these initiatives have been implemented unevenly and have not yet been consolidated into a fully integrated, system-wide approach.

As a result, several foundational gaps persist. Annual policy updates have been reported as inconsistent or delayed, and a system-wide professional development needs assessment is needed. This has been identified as “urgently needed” across multiple reporting periods.

It was also observed that several policies are not consistently followed, despite efforts to increase visibility through newsletters, the NNCEA website, and postings throughout school facilities. This may be partly attributable to limited awareness or understanding of policy expectations among staff, students, parents, and community members.

Limited knowledge or acknowledgment of existing policies, roles, and responsibilities directly affects how parents, caregivers, and the broader community perceive the school system. As a result, policies must be situated within a broader, comprehensive strategy that emphasizes awareness, clear communication, and consistent application.

Comments and Recommendations

NNCEA is to be commended for its continued efforts to develop, update, and communicate policies that guide key aspects of administration and program operations.

It is recommended that NNCEA conduct a comprehensive review and modernization of the 2011 policy framework to ensure alignment with current operational realities, emerging challenges, and strategic priorities. Revised policies should be formally consolidated into an updated policy manual to strengthen governance, accountability, and educational effectiveness.

It is recommended that a summarized policy handbook be developed, following approval of the revised policies, to improve accessibility and understanding for staff, students, parents, and community members. The development and socialization of this handbook present an important opportunity for inclusive community engagement, feedback, and shared ownership of policy expectations and enforcement responsibilities.

It is recommended that targeted training be provided to all NNCEA staff to establish clear protocols for policy awareness, communication, and consistent enforcement.

It is recommended that policy communication, awareness, and enforcement be embedded within the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan to ensure alignment, consistency, and long-term sustainability.

3.2. Leadership

3.2.1. Director of Education

The administration of the NNCEA education system is overseen by a full-time Director of Education, supported by a full-time Project Coordinator. In accordance with Policy 301, the Board designates the Director as the Chief Educational Officer, responsible for managing all professional and support staff, school operations, and NNCEA resources. The Director is accountable to the Board and responsible for ensuring that all schools comply with Board policies and strategic priorities.

The current Director has served in this capacity for two years, following a promotion from the role of Principal at NNOC. The Director's prior experience within NNCEA, combined with the continuity afforded by the former Director's presence on the Board of Trustees, has contributed to a smooth leadership transition. This continuity has supported the sustained implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations, particularly those related to cultural programming, staffing stability, and internal administrative alignment.

Since the 2017-2018 evaluation, notable progress has been achieved in strengthening cultural programming, which has expanded in scope and is widely regarded as a positive development within the community. Teacher retention has also improved, with minimal departures reported over the past two years. The evaluation further noted strong alignment between NNCEA administration and leadership, as well as a constructive relationship with the union. A new collective agreement (including forthcoming pay harmonization with the provincial grid) positions NNCEA favourably relative to other First Nations in Manitoba.

Administrative and financial capacities have also expanded. Human Resources now provides more comprehensive support across benefits administration, workplace processes, and reporting, aided by new software systems. In Finance, capacity has increased through the addition of trained personnel and enhanced reporting mechanisms, including the use of monthly financial statements. Nevertheless, because core funding flows first through NCN before reaching NNCEA, funding processes continue to require improvements in timeliness, transparency, and monitoring.

Staff professional learning has strengthened, particularly through the integration of First Nations history modules that aim to deepen cultural understanding and situate teaching practices within the community's historical context. These efforts represent meaningful progress toward strengthening culturally responsive education.

Despite these advances, the Director identified several persistent system-level challenges. The most pressing concern remains chronically low student attendance. In recognition of the limited feasibility of previous targets (e.g., 90% attendance), NNCEA has adopted incremental improvement goals (e.g., 65% → 67%), paired with an emphasis on sustained community outreach/engagement to reinforce the importance of attendance.

Language revitalization, while a stated priority, continues to lag behind cultural programming. Gaps remain particularly in early years supports (ages 0-4), including daycare and Head Start, which were identified as critical areas for future intervention.

Inter-agency collaboration also requires significant strengthening. Current collaboration is highly

dependent on individual relationships rather than formalized protocols, resulting in inconsistent coordination across services. The evaluation found persistent program silos and limited integration between educational, cultural, and student support services.

Social Promotion (Social Passing):

Social promotion was identified as a significant issue during the evaluation. Although it was highlighted as a major concern in the 2017-18 evaluation, it remains a persistent and pressing challenge requiring coordinated intervention at both the school and community levels.

Academically, social promotion undermines the development of foundational literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills, contributing to lower achievement and reduced graduation outcomes. Students who advance through grade levels without mastering essential competencies often reach high school underprepared to meet course expectations. This increases the likelihood of course failure, credit deficiency, disengagement, and eventual withdrawal. Over time, these patterns limit access to post-secondary education and employment opportunities, reinforcing cycles of underachievement.

At a systemic level, social promotion weakens confidence in academic standards and contributes to inconsistent expectations across grade levels. It places strain on school resources, as intensified remediation and intervention become necessary in later years. Emotionally, students who become aware of significant skill gaps may experience frustration, anxiety, or diminished self-confidence, which can manifest as avoidance behaviours or classroom disruption.

Overall, social promotion negatively impacts student success, contributes to teacher burnout, and undermines community trust in educational outcomes. Addressing this issue requires strengthened early identification systems, consistent assessment practices, clear promotion criteria, and coordinated support structures across NNCEA schools.

Assistant Director of Education:

The evaluation identified that the current scope and complexity of responsibilities assigned to the Director of Education are substantial and continue to expand as NNCEA advances system-wide improvements across governance, instructional practices, student supports, and program delivery.

In response, NNCEA has taken an important step by initiating the staffing of an Assistant Director of Education position. It is recommended that NNCEA ensure the effective onboarding and operationalization of this role, with a clear mandate to support system leadership, ensure continuity of operations, and advance the coordinated implementation of the recommendations outlined in this evaluation.

Given the nature of the responsibilities associated with this role, it is critical that the position be filled by a highly qualified individual with demonstrated experience in educational leadership, system-level planning, and organizational improvement. The Assistant Director should be positioned to support system-wide coordination, strengthen interdepartmental alignment, and contribute to the planning, monitoring, and reporting of key initiatives.

The successful integration of this role will help alleviate operational pressures on the Director of Education while establishing the leadership capacity required to ensure that the recommendations of this evaluation are implemented in a structured, coordinated, and sustainable manner.

Overall Assessment:

Throughout the evaluation process, ongoing dialogue with the Director of Education was instrumental in developing a comprehensive understanding of existing programs, priorities, and system pressures. While meaningful progress since 2018 was acknowledged, the evaluation highlighted the need for NNCEA to consolidate its diverse initiatives and talented personnel into a more unified, coherent system. Standardizing approaches and strengthening consistency across programs will be essential to improving the overall effectiveness of the system.

In summary, while NNCEA has made significant advancements, major challenges remain, most notably student attendance, student achievement, cultural and language integration, fragmented program structures, limited parent and caregiver involvement, and outdated policies. Addressing these issues will require a coordinated, multi-stakeholder commitment to long-term, system-wide improvement.

Comments & Recommendations:

The evaluation team acknowledges the significant progress and sustained efforts of NNCEA leadership in addressing long-standing challenges and strengthening educational programming. Despite these positive developments, evaluation findings indicate an urgent need for greater system-wide coherence, alignment, and strategic integration. While many initiatives are individually strong and responsive, they are currently operating in parallel rather than as components of a unified educational system. The absence of consolidated methodologies, standardized approaches, and institution-wide accountability structures limits NNCEA's ability to sustain improvements and consistently measure progress across programs.

Accordingly, it is recommended that NNCEA prioritize developing a comprehensive and institution-wide Five (5) -Year Strategic Plan. This plan should clearly articulate NNCEA's vision, mission, system priorities, goals, and expected outcomes; define measurable indicators of success; and outline specific actions, timelines, and responsible parties across all major program areas. The Strategic Plan should incorporate priority areas identified by the Director of Education and the evaluation team, including:

- student attendance and engagement;
- language revitalization and cultural integration;
- student achievement and instructional improvement;
- parent and guardian involvement and community engagement;
- interagency coordination and wraparound supports;
- policy modernization and enforcement; and
- system alignment across early years programs (e.g., Head Start), O.K. School, NNOC, the Mature Student Program, Post-Secondary, and staff capacity-building initiatives (e.g., B.Ed. and Educational Assistant training).

It is recommended that NNCEA and NCN collaborate to address core educational challenges through a community-integrated approach embedded in the Strategic Plan. To support this alignment, NNCEA and NCN should collaboratively develop and formalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This MOU should:

- define shared educational expectations, including approaches to social promotion, and establish a Community-Created Student Progression Policy.
- affirm a shared responsibility between NCN and NNCEA to collaboratively address family and community factors that impact student attendance, engagement, and academic performance, recognizing that educational outcomes require collective responsibility beyond the school system alone.
- establish clear protocols for interagency collaboration; and
- strengthen alignment between NCN's strategic priorities and NNCEA's educational mandate.

Together, the 5-Year Strategic Plan and the NCN-NNCEA MOU will provide the structural and governance foundation necessary to promote system-wide coherence, support consistent implementation, strengthen accountability, and ensure that the improvements achieved in recent years translate into sustained, measurable gains for students, families, and the broader community.

It is recommended that NNCEA ensure the effective onboarding and operationalization of the Assistant Director of Education position, with a clear mandate to strengthen system leadership, support continuity of operations, and drive the coordinated implementation of the recommendations outlined in this evaluation. This role should provide dedicated capacity to support the Director of Education in advancing strategic priorities, improving cross-departmental alignment, and ensuring consistent execution of system-wide initiatives.

3.2.1.1. Project Coordinator:

The Project Coordinator plays a central coordinating and operational role within NNCEA, supporting major capacity-building, enrichment, and organizational initiatives across the school system.

A primary responsibility is to manage the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.). Program partnership with the University of Winnipeg, including student tracking, monthly reporting, communication with students and mentors, liaison with the University of Winnipeg program manager, and coordination of academic supports, expectations, and compliance with student contracts. While the B.Ed. The program is referenced here for context; however, the evaluation scope did not include an assessment of the B.Ed. program itself.

The Project Coordinator also oversees the design and delivery of Micro Sessions for staff, community members, and students by developing proposal systems, scheduling sessions, arranging logistics (refreshments, transportation), and administering honoraria. Additionally, the role provides high-level oversight of after-school programs at both OK and NNOC Schools, ensuring clubs operate daily, coordinating transportation, maintaining schedules, and facilitating payment processes, though without direct responsibility for collecting participation data.

The Project Coordinator also contributes to policy work by supporting the review and updating of HR policies and collaborating with the HR department on revisions. The role also performs finance-related tasks, including reconciling monthly visa statements, properly coding expenses, and ensuring purchases align with NNCEA policies.

Other responsibilities include ongoing communication and coordination with school administrators and program assistants, attending regular check-ins, completing logistics-related errands, and responding to operational needs and directives from the Director of Education.

Overall, the Project Coordinator is responsible for coordinating key educational programs, ensuring smooth logistical operations, supporting professional learning initiatives, and improving administrative processes that enhance student success and organizational effectiveness.

Based on the meeting with the Project Coordinator and observations throughout the evaluation, key gaps and challenges were identified in this position, including a lack of clear role definition and structured work planning, resulting in a largely reactive workflow driven by incoming tasks rather than a proactive, strategic approach.

The position is also stretched across multiple programs (B.Ed., after-school activities, micro sessions, HR/policy updates, and finance tasks) without sufficient systems, benchmarks, or data to effectively measure program impact or guide decision-making. Communication challenges with B.Ed. students, inconsistent reporting, and limited accountability mechanisms further strain the role.

Additionally, the Project Coordinator lacks access to meaningful professional development aligned with program coordination, time management, and communication skills. Limited involvement in broader strategic planning and unclear responsibility for tracking evaluation recommendations leave the role operating in isolation rather than as part of an integrated implementation framework.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that a formal annual work plan be developed for the Project Coordinator, including timelines, milestones, and deliverables for all program areas. The workplan should clarify the scope and prioritize responsibilities, reducing ad hoc tasks and aligning duties more closely with the job description.

It is further recommended that the NNCEA:

- Develops and implements KPIs and benchmarks for the B.Ed. program (retention, communication compliance, course completion).
- Strengthen accountability measures in the B.Ed. program (clear consequences for missed reporting, attendance issues, or lack of communication).
- Create consistent check-in routines with B.Ed. students, after-school coordinators, and principals.
- Develop simple participation-tracking tools for after-school programs and micro sessions.
- Establish shared calendars, program timelines, and annual session calendars with school assistants and admin teams.
- Improve interdepartmental collaboration (attendance, guidance, wellness, cultural programming).
- Provide the Project Coordinator with targeted PD: e.g., time and workload management; program design and evaluation; communication and influence with adult learners; and project coordination and planning tools.
- Introduce an expense-management platform (e.g., Float) to reduce reconciliation time and administrative load.
- Reduce non-essential duties (e.g., errands, supply pickup) to preserve capacity for core responsibilities.

3.3. Administration

3.3.1. Human Resources

NNCEA's Human Resources (HR) capacity has improved substantially in recent years. As indicated in the 2024-2025 Annual Report, HR has expanded its role in benefits administration, workplace relations, and reporting, supported by the introduction of new software tools. HR has also led the development of new workplace policies, including the Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy, and supported the establishment of a Workplace Health and Safety Committee, as well as clearer reporting tools and training on workplace expectations.

HR has further contributed to system improvements by supporting policy updates and assisting with staffing, recruitment, job description reviews, and staff orientation. These functions appear consistently across annual reports from earlier years (2018-2024), reflecting the gradual development of a more structured and mature administrative function.

Despite the evident progress since the last evaluation, evaluators have observed that several persistent gaps remain. Annual reports consistently identify legacy issues stemming from outdated policies that require modernization and clearer communication with staff. The need for an updated, accessible policy manual has been emphasized repeatedly since 2018.

Although HR capacity has increased, NNCEA still lacks a system-wide professional development planning framework. Reports also point to inconsistent adherence to policies, suggesting gaps in policy awareness, communication, and enforcement across programs and schools.

Operational alignment challenges also remain. Processes related to payroll coordination, financial workflows, and interdepartmental collaboration require stronger alignment among HR, Finance, and Administration to improve efficiency and reduce operational strain.

Recruitment and retention remain ongoing concerns, particularly in building local teaching capacity and ensuring sufficient supervisory and mentoring support. While incremental improvements have been noted, these areas continue to require sustained attention.

Overall, the evidence indicates that NNCEA's HR function is increasing in capacity, structure, and proactivity. However, its effectiveness remains constrained by system-level gaps in policy modernization, communication, professional development planning, and cross-departmental alignment.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that Human Resources Modernization be integrated into the 5-Year Strategic Plan. The 5-Year Strategic Plan should include a dedicated Human Resources component that aligns workforce planning, policy modernization, professional development, and organizational capacity-building with NNCEA's system-wide priorities. This component should articulate long-term staffing objectives, capacity needs, and accountability structures rather than focusing solely on isolated operational initiatives. The HR components of the Strategic Plan should also:

- Establish a system-wide professional development framework aligned with instructional priorities, cultural revitalization, leadership development, and succession planning. Professional development should be treated as a coordinated, multi-year investment linked to strategic outcomes rather than ad hoc or program-specific activities.

- Improved alignment among HR, Finance, and Administration should be identified as a strategic objective within the 5-Year Plan. This should include clear protocols for payroll coordination, financial workflows, data sharing, and operational planning to improve efficiency and reduce system fragmentation.

- Align Recruitment, Retention, and Local Capacity-Building with Long-Term System Goals. Recruitment and retention strategies (particularly those focused on building local teaching and leadership capacity) should be explicitly tied to the Strategic Plan's long-term workforce sustainability goals. This includes integrating mentorship, supervisory support, and succession planning into the broader system strategy.

- Clarify Accountability for Policy Implementation and Workforce Practices within Strategic Governance Structures. The Strategic Plan should clearly define roles and responsibilities related to policy enforcement, workforce management, and compliance across HR, Administration, and school leadership. Embedding these expectations into the Strategic Plan will strengthen consistency, transparency, and accountability throughout the planning cycle

3.3.2. Finance

NNCEA's financial management capacity has evolved significantly since the previous comprehensive evaluation in 2017. At that time, the financial structure consisted of a Finance Comptroller supported by a Payroll Administrator. The 2017 evaluation identified a lack of clarity regarding budget allocations, fund transfers, and financial authority between NCN and NNCEA. These concerns were echoed by community members, who repeatedly asked whether education funding from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) was fully transferred to NNCEA for school operations.

Between 2017 and 2023, the flow of funding and the division of financial responsibilities between NCN and NNCEA remained unclear, contributing to ongoing operational challenges. School principals reported limited access to school-level budget information and minimal involvement in the budgeting process. This constrained their ability to plan effectively, manage resources, and make informed operational decisions. In addition, inconsistent and delayed financial reporting created uncertainty, contributed to staff frustration, and weakened confidence in financial governance processes.

A significant structural shift occurred in 2022-2023, when NNCEA reported regaining direct control over its finances from NCN. This transition represented a major improvement in governance, transparency, and organizational autonomy.

While an administrative fee continues to be applied, it is now capped at $1,000,000, representing a substantially smaller share of overall funding (less than 5%) than under previous arrangements. This change has resulted in a greater share of federal education funding being available to directly support NNCEA schools and programming.

Since this transition, the NNCEA Finance Unit has expanded its capacity through the addition of a Financial Controller, Accounts Payable support, and increased collaboration with NCN's newly hired Chartered Accountants, as noted in the 2023-2024 Annual Reports. Financial management practices have strengthened through the introduction of monthly financial statements, improvements to internal controls, and more consistent and timely fund transfers.

Despite the evident progress since the last evaluation, some challenges remain. Education funding continues to flow through NCN before being transferred to NNCEA, introducing administrative delays and limiting NNCEA's ability to conduct real-time financial forecasting. While the transfer process has improved, evaluators observed that it still requires ongoing monitoring to ensure consistency and timeliness. The adoption of new financial and administrative software tools, including expanded use of HUMI for HR and payroll integration and the consideration of expense-management platforms, has improved record-keeping and reporting but has not yet resulted in a fully integrated, end-to-end financial management system.

Annual Reports from 2023 to 2025 indicate that NNCEA is strengthening its financial independence; however, several persistent gaps continue to affect system efficiency and effectiveness, such as:

- School-Level Budget Authority: While principals now receive more financial information than in 2017, available evidence does not confirm that full budget authority has been delegated to the school level. School-level budget literacy and decision-making capacity appear to remain limited.

- Complex Internal Processes: Reconciliation of receipts, credit card statements, honoraria, and reimbursements remains labour-intensive and reliant on manual tracking by program-level staff rather than centralized financial systems.

- Financial Planning and Forecasting: Multi-year financial forecasting, program costing, and long-term budget planning frameworks require further development to support system-wide strategic planning.

- Financial Policy Modernization: Key financial policies (including procurement, approval thresholds, expense claims, proposal reporting, and internal controls) remain dated and require updating to align with current practices and digital systems.

Overall, NNCEA's Finance Unit has made substantial progress since 2017, particularly in regaining financial control, strengthening staffing capacity, improving reporting practices, and ensuring that ISC education funding is fully directed to educational purposes. However, continued system development is required to achieve a fully transparent, efficient, and autonomous financial governance structure. Further modernization of financial systems, clarification of financial agreements and processes between NCN and NNCEA and strengthened delegation of financial authority to school leadership will be critical to sustaining progress and supporting long-term system effectiveness.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that the NCN-NNCEA Memorandum of Understanding (Section 3.2.1) explicitly formalize financial governance roles, responsibilities, and funding flows. The MOU should clearly define timelines and protocols for the transfer of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) education allocations to NNCEA, clarify financial authorities, and establish shared accountability mechanisms. Formalizing these commitments will strengthen transparency, reduce administrative delays, and support NNCEA's ability to implement the Strategic Plan effectively.

It is recommended that the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan include a dedicated Finance component to establish a system-wide approach to school-level budget transparency and accountability. This should include implementing a standardized annual budgeting process that provides O.K. School and NNOC with clearly defined school-level budgets at the beginning of each fiscal year. The Strategic Plan should further commit to building school leadership capacity by providing targeted training for principals and program managers on budget interpretation, expenditure tracking, and financial decision-making. Ongoing monthly budget-to-actual reporting should be embedded as a standard practice and shared with school leadership to support evidence-informed planning, strengthen accountability, and improve communication between schools and central administration.

The finance component of the 5-Year Strategic Plan should also identify the modernization of internal financial controls and documentation systems as a system-wide improvement priority. This should include documenting and standardizing financial workflows (e.g., procurement, payroll, reimbursements, credit card reconciliation, and honoraria), strengthening expenditure approval thresholds and sign-off authorities, and conducting periodic internal compliance reviews.

It is recommended that the Finance Unit's capacity be strengthened through targeted professional development. Targeted training should be provided to finance staff, including Chartered Accountants, in ISC funding models and compliance requirements, grant management and reporting systems, and advanced budgeting, forecasting, and financial analysis techniques. Strengthening internal financial expertise will enhance system resilience, improve long-term planning, and support accountability under both the Strategic Plan and the NCN–NNCEA MOU.

3.3.3. Report Keeping Procedures

Effective record-keeping is foundational to the administration of any education system, supporting accurate decision-making, program planning, accountability, and reporting. Across evaluation periods, record keeping has remained one of NNCEA's persistent operational challenges, affecting the reliability of information available to school administrators, educators, and leadership.

The 2017 School Program Evaluation identified record-keeping as an area requiring substantial improvement. Evaluators noted the absence of a formal, coordinated system capable of efficiently organizing, tracking, and retrieving key education data. Critical records, such as staff attendance, student enrolment, nominal roll documentation, and student incident reports, were found to be inconsistent, difficult to locate, or unavailable in a standardized format.

A review of NNCEA's record-keeping procedures across multiple annual reports (2016-2025) indicates gradual progress, yet ongoing structural weaknesses in data management, standardization, and system integration remain evident. Historically, NNCEA relied heavily on manual, paper-based, or school-specific processes, leading to inconsistent documentation practices, gaps in institutional memory, and challenges accessing historical information. Many records (particularly in personnel files, program monitoring, attendance tracking, and financial documentation) were not systematically organized or centralized, increasing the risk of missing, incomplete, or duplicative data.

The recent introduction of PowerSchool and Humi represents an important shift toward modernizing NNCEA's record-keeping and administrative systems. However, the extent to which these tools are currently being used remains limited. Evaluators noticed that PowerSchool is presently used only for attendance tracking, rather than in its full capacity as a comprehensive student information system. As a result, valuable functionalities such as grade reporting, student progress monitoring, behavioural documentation, parent communication, scheduling, and multi-year data analytics remain underutilized. Consequently, attendance data is available, but broader student achievement, socio-emotional indicators, and longitudinal student profiles are not yet systematically captured or analyzed.

Similarly, the integration of Humi within the Human Resources Unit is a positive development, particularly for managing personnel files, contracts, payroll-related documentation, job postings, staff onboarding, and performance records. The reports indicate that HR has benefited from clearer tracking processes and reporting tools since adopting Humi. Nonetheless, this transition remains at an early stage, with no evidence yet of system-wide standard operating procedures, staff-wide training, or a full historical data migration. Without comprehensive implementation planning, Humi's potential as a centralized HR information system may not be fully realized, particularly in supporting long-term succession planning, workload analysis, and personnel performance metrics.

Furthermore, according to the 2024–2025 annual report, NNCEA's record-keeping responsibilities include ensuring that "up-to-date and accurate files are maintained for NNCEA" and securing NNCEA's property and equipment that may require off-site storage. This indicates that NNCEA has formally assigned responsibility for maintaining accurate, current records as part of its administrative operations. The same section underscores the need for ongoing maintenance and storage structures, suggesting recognition that record organization and safekeeping are essential administrative functions.

Overall, while NNCEA has begun incorporating modern software systems, record-keeping practices remain uneven, partially digitized, and inconsistently aligned across departments. PowerSchool's limited use restricts NNCEA's ability to link attendance to academic achievement, early interventions, or student service planning. Humi, though promising, requires standardized processes and fuller adoption to support robust HR record management. As a result, NNCEA continues to face challenges with information consistency, data accuracy, and its capacity to produce timely, evidence-based reports that can guide planning, performance monitoring, and accountability.

Continued modernization of record-keeping practices will require not only the adoption of software tools but also structured implementation, cross-departmental alignment, staff training, and clear data governance protocols. The potential for system-wide improvements exists, but the transition from fragmented legacy practices to fully integrated digital systems is still in its early stages.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA prioritize developing a modern, integrated record-keeping system and an implementation plan that leverage existing tools (PowerSchool/Humi) and introduce formal structures for data management, accountability, and standardized procedures. Given past findings (2017-18) and current operational challenges, improvements must focus on system-wide consistency, digital integration, staff training, and clear policies to ensure data accuracy, accessibility, and timely reporting. The plan should:

- Define what data must be collected, by whom, when, and in what format.
- Standardize data-entry processes across all schools and departments.
- Design protocols for storage, retrieval, archiving, and disposal of records.
- Embed clear accountability for data accuracy, reporting timelines, and quality assurance.
- Expand the use of PowerSchool beyond attendance to include achievement data, student profiles, behaviour/incident reports, assessment results, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and graduation tracking.
- Identify specific training for all school administrators, teachers, and support staff in consistent usage.
- Ensure the full implementation and integration of Humi for HR and Administrative Record Keeping

3.3.4. Inter-Agency Supports and Integration

Inter-agency collaboration remains a critical yet underdeveloped component of the NNCEA educational system. Analysis of annual reports from 2018 to 2025, combined with interview data and survey feedback collected during the current evaluation, demonstrates that while NNCEA maintains positive relationships with many external service providers, coordination remains inconsistent, informal, and overly dependent on individual staff relationships rather than system-wide protocols or structured processes.

Across reporting years, schools have noted periodic collaboration with agencies. These relationships have contributed to select programs, such as counselling support, health screenings, cultural land-based initiatives, and student wellness activities, but partnerships remain largely ad hoc. Annual reports do not reflect a sustained, formalized inter-agency framework, and the intensity of collaboration varies considerably across years, schools, and individual administrators.

This assessment is consistent with the results of the inter-agency surveys administered as part of the evaluation. Respondents representing multiple programs (including the Wellness Centre, Environmental Public Health Services, NCN Health, Headstart/Daycare, CFS, and Jordan's Principle) expressed a clear desire for more frequent communication and stronger coordination mechanisms with schools. Many respondents noted that, while they are generally satisfied with their current level of involvement and support for NNCEA, there is a recognized need for more structured opportunities to meet with schools and jointly problem-solve. This includes preferences for regularly scheduled meetings, shared planning sessions, and improved referral systems.

In addition to survey data, several partners provided verbal feedback to evaluators, expressing concerns about student performance, referral procedures, and the educational system's overall responsiveness to at-risk students. Although individual staff members in schools maintain positive working relationships with external professionals, these interactions are often reactive, isolated, and lacking clear communication pathways.

Overall, the assessment demonstrates that the foundations for effective inter-agency collaboration exist, there is goodwill, shared commitment to student well-being, and positive individual relationships. However, NNCEA lacks a formalized, system-level inter-agency collaboration framework, resulting in inconsistent communication, uneven service integration, and missed opportunities for comprehensive student support. To address these gaps, NNCEA will require clear protocols, shared information pathways, routine coordination structures, and explicit referral processes to ensure inter-agency collaboration is consistent, proactive, and aligned with student needs.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan, supported by the NCN-NNCEA Memorandum of Understanding, include a formal system-mapping process to document all inter-agency programs and services operating within NCN. This inventory should identify each agency's mandate, level of interaction with NNCEA, designated points of contact, referral pathways, and areas of service overlap or gaps. Embedding this inventory within the Strategic Plan will clarify existing collaborations, strengthen accountability, and identify priority areas for strengthening

or newly establishing inter-agency partnerships under the MOU framework.

The NCN-NNCEA MOU and the 5-Year Strategic Plan should jointly establish a standing Inter-Agency Committee as a core mechanism for system coordination. This committee should include representatives from NNCEA and key NCN service providers and meet on a regular schedule (e.g., monthly or quarterly). Its purpose should be to support consistent communication, align interventions for students and families (within appropriate confidentiality parameters), monitor referral processes, and develop coordinated action plans. Formalizing this structure through the Strategic Plan and MOU will institutionalize collaboration and reduce reliance on informal or individual-driven relationships.

The 5-Year Strategic Plan should prioritize strengthened collaboration with early-years' service providers, including Head Start, daycare programs, Public Health, Jordan's Principle services, and Child and Family Services. In alignment with the NCN-NNCEA MOU, this work should focus on shared protocols for early identification of developmental needs, coordinated family outreach, and clearly defined transition pathways into Nursery and Kindergarten. Strengthening early-years integration is critical to addressing long-standing system challenges in attendance, school readiness, language development, and the continuity of supports prior to formal school entry.

The 5-Year Strategic Plan should identify the importance of having one staff member serve as a liaison to inter-agency partners who work with and support children and youth within NNCEA schools. The Inter-Agency Section of the Plan needs to be developed on how to work with and strengthen these partnerships, and allow for measuring results and impacts that support student success.

3.4. NNCEA Services

3.4.1. Nîhitho Language & Cultural Programs

The Language and Cultural Programs remain a central priority for preserving and revitalizing the Nîhitho language and the community's cultural identity. Since the last comprehensive School Evaluation (2017-18), NNCEA has undertaken meaningful initiatives, secured additional funding, expanded cultural programming, and developed infrastructure to support land-based learning. These efforts include proposal-driven funding acquisition, expansion of cultural staffing capacity, increased land-based education days, development of Culture Camp programming, and the establishment of culturally grounded infrastructure such as the Granny/Grandpa Cabin model and seasonal learning sites.

Students in Grades 1-6 receive bi-weekly Nîhitho language instruction, and plans are currently underway to address immersion and language gaps.

The Grade 1-6 Cree class model operates alongside weekly Traditional Teachings classes, and cultural programming includes hunting, fishing, medicine picking, hide preparation, cooking, fire starting, ceremonial participation, drumming, and seasonal cultural fashion events. Land-based education outcomes have been mapped to the Manitoba provincial curriculum areas of Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, and the Arts.

These developments represent meaningful structural and cultural progress.

However, despite these investments and a visible cultural presence within school spaces, the current evaluation finds that progress in Nîhitho language acquisition remains inconsistent, fragmented, and, in some areas, regressive. The disconnect between administrative reporting and actual classroom implementation is of particular concern, as are gaps in curriculum structure, coordination with Elders, and continuity across grade levels.

Instructional Quality and Classroom Implementation:

Despite a continuing visual commitment to culture, including murals, syllabic signage, seasonal artwork, and thematic displays, the instructional quality and degree of Cree language use in classrooms vary widely.

Classroom observations revealed that while early years students demonstrate enthusiasm for Cree syllables, greetings, songs, and drumming, teachers frequently lack:

- Clear lesson plans;
- Defined grade-level outcomes;
- Scaffolded vocabulary progression;
- Systematic repetition routines;
- Structured assessment practices.

Student tasks often rely heavily on colouring sheets, isolated vocabulary identification, or one-off cultural activities without cumulative reinforcement. Integration into daily routines, such as weather, time, greetings, classroom commands, and transitions, remains minimal despite significant opportunity for immersion-style repetition.

Although informal assessment occurs through teacher observations, report card comments (Grades 1-6), and occasional portfolio demonstrations, there is no standardized assessment framework or proficiency-tracking system in place. The absence of measurable language benchmarks prevents accurate monitoring of cumulative student growth.

One teacher estimated that Grade 6 students know approximately forty (40) Cree words, an outcome that signals extremely limited progress relative to grade-level expectations and is far below the aspirations expressed by the community in 2018.

It was observed that there is currently no formal Cree immersion stream within NNCEA.

Curriculum and Alignment:

Although it has been reported that a Cree language curriculum has been developed or is under development, the evaluation found no evidence of a formally implemented or system-wide-deployed Cree language curriculum at the time of the review. As a result, no evidence was observed of:

- Established curriculum maps;
- Defined proficiency benchmarks by grade;
- Documented cumulative vocabulary targets;
- Vertical alignment across grade bands;
- Annual or monthly pacing guides.

While land-based programming aligns with provincial curriculum standards, Cree language instruction lacks a coherent proficiency pathway.

As a result, continuity between grades is weak. Instructional delivery depends heavily on individual teacher initiative rather than a centralized curriculum framework. Substitute teachers assigned to Cree instruction were frequently unprepared and delivered sessions with little instructional purpose, further contributing to inconsistency.

Elders and Knowledge Keeper Integration:

The Elders' role, once a major strength of the 2018 model, has become structurally disconnected from classroom instruction. Although Elders continue to participate in culture camps, ceremonial events, community gatherings, drum groups, and seasonal programming, their classroom presence during the 2025-26 academic year was observed and reported to be minimal.

Staff and Elders expressed confusion regarding:

- Reporting structures;
- Role clarity;
- Scheduling expectations;
- Evaluation participation;
- Communication protocols.

At the time of data collection, Elders were reporting to the Nisichawayasihk Government Youth and Elders Program rather than NNCEA, which contributed to accountability gaps and limited coordination in intergenerational learning.

As of December 2025, this structural separation has been addressed, with Elders now reporting under NNCEA through the Nîhitho Language, Culture and Heritage Unit. This transition represents an important step toward strengthening alignment, coordination, and integration of Elders within the education system.

Notwithstanding this progress, earlier communication challenges, such as Elders not being informed of the evaluation visit, highlight the continued need to formalize governance protocols and ensure consistent communication and coordination mechanisms moving forward.

Discrepancies Observed Between Reporting and Practice:

Annual reports consistently describe strong integration of language and culture. However, on-the-ground observations indicate:

- Few student-created Cree language artifacts were displayed;
- Limited evidence of routine structured Cree language instruction;
- No documentation of cumulative student proficiency;
- Minimal integration of Cree into daily academic practice;
- No formal Cree immersion stream within NNCEA.

These findings suggest that while cultural visibility remains strong, measurable language acquisition outcomes remain limited.

The gap between reporting and practice indicates the need for internal monitoring systems that generate reliable, evidence-based data.

Program Strengths and Persistent Challenges:

It is important to acknowledge the significant progress and strengths demonstrated within the program, as well as the substantial investment in cultural revitalization, both of which reflect strong institutional commitment and intent. Despite these strengths, the system currently lacks the structural elements required to support sustained and measurable language development. A summary of the identified strengths and persistent challenges is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Nîhitho Language & Cultural Programs, Strengths and Persistent Challenges	
Strengths	Persistent and Persistent Challenges
Community Support and Commitment: The community remains deeply supportive of revitalizing the Nîhitho language. Elders, parents, and leadership consistently reiterate concerns about language loss and the urgency of intervention.	**Structural Deficiencies Limiting Language Growth:** While NNCEA continues to prioritize language revitalization in principle, the system currently lacks critical structural elements necessary for sustained language development:

NNCEA continues to articulate language revitalization as a strategic priority.	• A unified Cree language curriculum; • Annual and monthly instructional plans; • Defined learning outcomes by grade level; • A reliable student assessment framework; • Processes for monitoring instructional quality; • Accountability measures for substitute teachers; • Proficiency tracking and cumulative vocabulary targets; • A defined bilingual or immersion progression pathway.
Increased Financial and Staffing Capacity NNCEA has: • Secured increased proposal-driven funding for language and culture initiatives. • Expanded cultural staff capacity (e.g., Culture Unit). Introduced staff professional development tied to First Nations history and cultural competency.	**Consistent Integration of Elders into Classroom Learning:** Multiple staff reported rare encounters with Elders during the school year. Elders expressed confusion and discontent about school visits and evaluation activities, indicating gaps in communication and role clarity. At the outset of the evaluation process, Elders indicated that they did not report to NNCEA and instead fell under the NCN Youth & Elders Program. This governance structure was subsequently revised in December 2025, with Elders now reporting under NNCEA.
Program Strengths: • Expanded land-based learning opportunities; • Weekly cultural programming structures; • Approximately 200 students engaged in bilingual programming; • Student enthusiasm for drum groups and ceremonies; • Development of land-based course credits (Outdoor Education, Indigenous Studies); • Partnerships with local organizations; • Cree-language keyboard installation on school devices; • Growing student leadership in cultural mentorship activities.	**Discrepancies Between Administrative Reporting and Classroom Reality:** Annual reports consistently highlight strong language and culture integration; however, on-the-ground observations contradict these claims: • Few student-created Cree language artifacts are displayed in classrooms. • Limited evidence of routine, structured Cree language teaching. • No documentation of student progress or language outcomes.

Corrective Actions Initiated:

In the context of this evaluation, and following the presentation of preliminary findings, NNCEA leadership acknowledged the fragmented and inconsistent implementation of Cree language programming across the system.

Management recognized that current student fluency levels fall short of both community aspirations and institutional responsibilities, and that the absence of centralized leadership and a coherent curriculum framework has undermined sustained progress. In response:

- A Nîhitho Language Coordinator position was posted (October 2025);
- Integration of Elders under NNCEA (December 2025), which strengthens alignment between cultural knowledge holders and the formal education system.
- Nîhitho Language & Culture SMART Goals were developed (Dec 2025-Jan 2026);
- Staff focus groups were conducted;
- A community consultation survey was circulated.

At the time of report closure, SMART Goals remained in the consultation phase pending Board approval.

These actions represent an important shift toward centralized accountability and structured reform.

Overall Assessment:

It is important to acknowledge the significant progress achieved over the years, as affirmed by both the evaluators and the Cree Language Specialist. NNCEA has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to revitalizing the Nîhitho language and culture through expanded funding, strengthened land-based programming, increased cultural staffing capacity, and visible integration of cultural elements within school environments.

However, meaningful language revitalization now requires a transition from visibility and activity to structured system design, measurable outcomes, curriculum coherence, and instructional accountability. Without coordinated curriculum maps, clearly defined proficiency benchmarks, systematic monitoring processes, and formalized Elder integration protocols, student fluency levels are unlikely to improve in a sustained and measurable way.

The revitalization of the Nîhitho language remains both an urgent priority and a significant opportunity for intentional, system-wide restructuring that can achieve sustainable outcomes aligned with community aspirations.

Comments & Recommendations:

The NNCEA and the schools are to be congratulated on their ongoing efforts to integrate the Nîhitho Language & Culture and to rebuild and restore it within the school system.

It is recommended that the soon-to-be-approved "Nîhitho Language & Culture SMART Goals" be formally integrated into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan, positioning language revitalization as a core educational priority rather than a standalone initiative. This integration should include clearly articulated objectives, implementation timelines, performance indicators, and alignment with curriculum development, staffing models, professional learning, Elder engagement, and student assessment. Embedding the Language and Cultural Strategy within the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan will enable the allocation of appropriate tools, human resources, and dedicated budget lines, strengthen accountability at the Board and senior management levels, and support sustained, system-wide implementation.

It is recommended that NNCEA support the development of short Cree language-learning videos featuring commonly used words, phrases, and expressions, as well as demonstrations of language use connected to land-based skills and cultural activities. These videos could be created by instructors, language teachers, or Knowledge Keepers and used as classroom resources to reinforce daily language learning.

Drawing inspiration from widely used formats such as "Cree Word of the Day" or "Repeat After Me," these resources could be shared within classrooms, through the NNCEA website, and through community communication channels to encourage language practice both in school and at home. Developing locally produced digital resources would help strengthen the visibility and accessibility of the Nîhitho language while supporting consistent language exposure for students and families.

It is further recommended that:

- The Nîhitho Language Curriculum (currently under development) incorporate year-long and monthly plans, explicit learning outcomes, vocabulary progression, oral language benchmarks, assessment tools, and grade-level proficiency expectations from Nursery through Grade 12; in the interim, the provincial Cree curriculum should be implemented alongside locally developed resources.

- A formal Language and Culture Framework is established for the entire school system, outlining the relationships among classroom instruction, land-based learning, the Elders Program, and community cultural initiatives. This framework should clarify roles, schedules, responsibilities, and intended outcomes for teachers, Elders, cultural staff, and administrators.

- Instructional quality and consistency across classrooms are strengthened by requiring teachers to develop detailed lesson plans, maintain student work displays, demonstrate continuous review and repetition of previously taught vocabulary, and use structured strategies that reinforce acquisition of the

Nîhitho language.

- The Elders in Schools Program is rebuilt/re-established around clear expectations, schedules, and integration protocols, ensuring Elders are meaningfully involved in daily instruction, storytelling, thematic units, seasonal learning, and cultural teachings. Elders should receive orientation and a weekly plan aligned to curriculum goals. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined and communicated to both Elders and school staff.

- Communication and coordination with Elders improve by establishing an advance-notice system for school visits, sharing evaluation timelines respectfully and in a culturally appropriate manner, and strengthening relationships through regular meetings jointly led by school and cultural leadership.

- A dedicated Cree language classroom is assigned to improve staffing stability, especially in Grades 4-6, and ensure continuity of instruction. Substitute teachers must receive prepared teaching guides, vocabulary lists, and activity plans aligned with the curriculum.

- A formal assessment and a reporting system for Nîhitho language learning are developed, including rubrics, vocabulary checklists, oral proficiency tasks, and student portfolios containing artifacts such as recordings, writing samples, artwork, land-based reflections, and seasonal projects.

- The Nîhitho Language and Culture Steering Committee is reinstated with defined Terms of Reference, ensuring representation from Elders, teachers, cultural staff, school administration, and community partners. The committee should oversee the curriculum, guide program implementation, and ensure accountability.

- A long-term sustainability plan is developed to address staffing succession, Elder recruitment, training pipelines, program funding, material development, and the preservation of locally developed resources (e.g., dictionaries, culture booklets).

3.4.2. Land-Based Programming

The Land-Based Education Program has emerged as one of the most promising and impactful components of NNCEA's cultural revitalization strategy. Over the past several years, the program has expanded significantly, offering a comprehensive range of experiential learning opportunities rooted in Nîhitho land-based knowledge, seasonal practices, and community expertise.

Early development focused on establishing a clear land-based scope and sequence, selecting an appropriate culture camp site, and acquiring foundational resources and equipment. By 2020-21, the program had secured dedicated funding, developed a multi-year PATH plan, and constructed the primary culture camp building. These milestones laid the foundation for piloting land-based curricula for the early, middle, and senior years.

Since that time, the program has steadily grown into a dynamic and culturally grounded learning model. Students participate in activities such as canoeing, portaging, trapping, hide preparation, medicine harvesting, seasonal mapping, fishing and filleting, and harvesting and preparing traditional foods. These experiences strongly align with Nîhitho cultural priorities and offer authentic, meaningful learning that strengthens identity, builds survival skills, and connects students with local Indigenous knowledge systems.

Programming is now available to students from Grades 4-12 through structured rotations and course offerings at both OK and NNOC schools. Students in Grades 4-6 engage in regular outdoor blocks focused on trial-based learning, vegetation identification, snaring, snowshoeing, fishing, and other seasonal activities. Grades 7-8 students participate in more advanced experiences, including moose and waterfowl harvesting, trapping, ice fishing, visits to Elders' cabins, and game processing, often guided by respected local land users. High school students access double-credit Cultural and Interdisciplinary Science courses delivered at the camp, featuring syllabic star chart lessons, medicine picking, canoeing, snowshoeing, shelter building, hide preparation, and full processing of harvested animals.

The program provides several notable structural strengths. Infrastructure has improved substantially through trail and trapline clearing, the creation of walking routes, utility restoration, and the implementation of safety protocols. Equipped with canoes, boats, and other outdoor equipment, the site now supports routine, reliable land-based activities.

High school students benefit from elective courses that integrate cultural knowledge with science curriculum, while certification pathways (such as Boating Safety, Food Handling, PAL, and Trapper's License) offer tangible credentials linked to employment and traditional land-based livelihoods. The program also demonstrates strong intergenerational and community engagement, supported by local land users and knowledge keepers, and by partnerships with trappers, commercial fishers, post-secondary institutions, and regional school divisions.

Despite these strengths, the evaluation identifies several key structural limitations. Documentation of student learning remains inconsistent, with gaps in course outlines, learning outcomes, and assessment rubrics.

Although student journals, portfolios, and cultural artifacts exist, they are not yet collected or used systematically as evidence of learning. Instructor availability fluctuates, affecting access to certifications. Scheduling challenges across grade levels also limit equitable participation; while

rotations exist for K-6, field experiences for Grades 7-8, and electives for Grades 9-12, access still depends heavily on individual teacher coordination and limited weekly capacity, resulting in repeat opportunities for some students and insufficient access for others.

Elder and language integration requires further development. While Elders and knowledge keepers contribute meaningfully, involvement is currently informal, with no formal roster, schedule, honoraria structure, or clearly defined roles. These gaps limit opportunities for linguistic reinforcement, cultural education, and the transfer of historical knowledge. The absence of a multi-year scope and sequence for the land-based curriculum further limits consistency and alignment with classroom Cree instruction and broader curricular goals.

The program also faces emerging sustainability and management challenges. The Land-Based Coordinator brings significant expertise, including graduate-level training in Indigenous land-based education, and contributes to professional learning communities. However, the coordinator presently carries a broad range of responsibilities, including logistics, procurement, instruction, partnerships, and reporting. The program's internal plans call for a more distributed staffing model, including field guides, a cultural or spiritual lead, administrative support, a clear program plan, a multi-year sustainability strategy, and formalized agreements with certification providers. Without these supports, the program remains vulnerable to staff turnover, inconsistent instructor availability, and funding fluctuations, despite strong community demand and student engagement.

These gaps highlight the need for stronger system-level structures to support long-term continuity and integration. The land-based program is well positioned to serve as a cultural and linguistic driver across the entire school system; however, it requires coordinated curriculum development, aligned language strategies, clear assessment frameworks, and a stronger organizational foundation. The current disconnection between land-based vocabulary and classroom Cree instruction remains a significant barrier to cumulative language acquisition across grades.

Nevertheless, the program's strengths represent a major achievement and a powerful foundation for future growth. The Land-Based Education Program demonstrates the transformative impact of learning grounded in Nîhitho worldviews, land-based identity, and intergenerational knowledge. With improved curricular alignment, defined Elder and language roles, strengthened coordination mechanisms, and consistent assessment practices, the program is exceptionally well-positioned to become a central pillar of NNCEA's long-term language and cultural revitalization strategy.

Comments & Recommendations:

The evaluation identifies the Land-Based Education Program as one of NNCEA's strongest and most culturally grounded initiatives; however, its long-term success will depend on the development of clear structures, documentation, staffing models, and system-wide integration. Therefore, it is recommended that a formalized planning framework be developed that clearly articulates its vision, goals, staffing structure, and seasonal schedule. Establishing a concise program plan will provide teachers, Elders, and administrators with a shared roadmap for consistent delivery. These documents should be accompanied by clear assessment rubrics and expectations for student portfolios to ensure that the rich experiential learning occurring at the camp is captured, evaluated, and linked to credit attainment.

It is recommended that the role of Elders, knowledge keepers, and the Cree language within the program be strengthened. A formal Elder roster, standardized honoraria practices, advance scheduling protocols, and articulated role descriptions would support both continuity and clarity for all involved. Similarly, language learning would benefit from a structured Cree Language Plan. This plan should ensure vocabulary, phrases, and land-based concepts introduced at the camp are reinforced through classroom Cree instruction and documented in student portfolios.

It is recommended that equitable access for all students be ensured. A leadership-endorsed access policy, supported by a transparent rotation schedule, would help guarantee that all students participate in land-based learning without repeated or missed opportunities. The creation of a participation dashboard to track attendance, engagement, certifications, and demographic patterns would provide leadership with evidence to monitor equity, strengthen planning, and inform resource allocation.

It is recommended that a credential map be developed outlining expected certifications for each grade band, from introductory safety skills in the middle years to advanced certifications, such as the Possession and Acquisition License (PAL), Trapper's License, Food Handling, Guiding/Outfitting, Survival, and Snowmobile Safety in the senior years. Formal agreements with certification providers, post-secondary institutions, and regional partners will secure instructor availability and support long-term planning.

It is recommended that a written phasing plan be developed, including milestones for maintenance, staffing, safety expectations, and asset management. The camp has reached a functional stage, but reliable water, heat, equipment maintenance, and winter accessibility must be prioritized before larger infrastructure projects are considered. The plan will help stabilize operations and ensure the site remains safe and functional.

It is recommended that land-based learning be aligned with NNCEA's broader language and culture objectives. Co-planning between the land-based team, Cree language teachers, Elders, and the Nîhitho Language and Culture Unit will help develop a coherent cultural progression pathway from Nursery to Grade 12. This alignment will ensure that land-based vocabulary, seasonal teachings, and cultural skills are intentionally reinforced in classrooms and embedded within the evolving Nîhitho language curriculum. Reinstating a cross-departmental Culture and Language Steering Committee will support governance, implementation, and accountability while strengthening communication among schools, leadership, and community partners.

3.4.3. Information Communications Technology (ICT)

Over the past five years, NNCEA's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Unit has undergone extensive development and modernization. Annual reports and interviews consistently highlight substantial upgrades in digital infrastructure, enhanced connectivity between schools and administrators, improvements in hardware and software systems, and an expanded role in school safety, student information systems, and staff support. These developments represent a marked improvement since the 2017-18 evaluation and reflect sustained investment in technological modernization.

A key accomplishment has been the full installation of fibre-optic internet across NNCEA schools, teacherages, and administrative facilities, significantly improving system stability, speed, and access to digital and virtual learning tools. The 2020-21 Annual Report confirms the transition to fibre optics and the complete rewiring of schools to replace outdated cabling, while subsequent reports reaffirm that network upgrades have completely upgraded and stabilized NNCEA's systems. According to the IT Manager, these improvements have fundamentally transformed daily operations, reduced system outages, and enabled more reliable use of multimedia and online platforms across the education system.

Classroom and School Technology:

At O.K. School, all classrooms received new SMART Boards, additional cameras, wireless access points, and dedicated technology lockers containing iPads for early years students and laptops for older grades. These investments have significantly expanded access to instructional technology and brought NNCEA schools closer to contemporary provincial standards.

However, as reported by teachers, the current system presents both capacity and access challenges that affect instructional efficiency. Teachers consistently reported concerns about the centralized print-making service, noting delays and inconvenience from relying on a single printing location. Limited printer access disrupts instructional flow and increases preparation time.

Device availability is also constrained. Classrooms currently have approximately five tablets each, and the school shares a single tablet cart, limiting flexibility for whole-class or simultaneous technology integration. Teachers indicated that additional tablet carts would significantly improve equitable access across grade levels.

Wi-Fi reliability was identified as an ongoing concern, with disruptions interfering with digital learning activities and reducing instructional confidence in technology-based lessons. In addition, there is currently no structured implementation of Google Classroom or a comparable learning management platform, limiting opportunities for digital organization, assignment distribution, and blended learning.

At NNOC, the opening of the new high school was accompanied by the installation of new computers, SMART Boards, networking infrastructure, laptop carts, and comprehensive security systems.

The ICT Unit also oversees school and housing security infrastructure, including comprehensive camera systems supporting real-time monitoring of hallways and outdoor areas, vape detectors in NNOC washrooms linked to camera alerts, and standardized security systems in teacherages

to enhance staff safety. ICT involvement further extends to administrative facilities, including modernization of the AMEC building with upgraded workstations, a dedicated finance server, and centralized camera monitoring.

ICT Organizational Capacity and Service Model:

Since 2018, the scope of ICT operations has expanded considerably. In 2018, ICT supported approximately 150 staff; today, it supports more than 320 staff across schools and administration, as well as a significantly larger and more complex technology ecosystem.

Current staffing includes a Network Administrator, three Network Technicians, ICT support staff, and two Print Shop operators. While this represents meaningful growth, the IT Manager noted that demand continues to increase alongside system complexity and user expectations. There is currently no formal ticketing system in place, and support is managed through direct requests and prioritization, with printer communication issues cited as the most frequent technical challenge across sites

The IT Manager identified ongoing capacity pressures and noted that an additional on-site support position at O.K. School would improve responsiveness and enable more proactive system oversight across facilities. While cross-training and internal documentation have helped mitigate risk, the workload associated with maintaining networks, devices, security systems, and software platforms remain substantial.

Student Information Systems and PowerSchool:

The evolution of NNCEA's student information systems has been complex. The ICT Unit previously supported the transition from Maplewood to Datavan, followed by the more recent migration to PowerSchool in 2023-24. While Datavan offered extensive customization, escalating costs and growing complexity prompted the shift to PowerSchool, now used by approximately 80% of Manitoba school divisions. Notably, some historical digital attendance data was not migrated due to cost constraints at the time, resulting in partial legacy data gaps

PowerSchool adoption represents a significant advancement in NNCEA's potential capacity for data management, accountability, and reporting. Currently, the system is used primarily for attendance and Gradebooks, with additional modules such as BrightArrow installed but largely inactive due to incomplete and unreliable student contact data. Parent portals, analytics dashboards, early-warning indicators, and progress-monitoring tools are not in use at this time, largely due to data quality issues, staffing limitations, and uncertainty about return on investment.

Implementation remains uneven across programs. NNOC demonstrates stronger compliance, with approximately 70% of teachers maintaining complete Gradebooks and over 95% daily attendance compliance, supported by administrative monitoring and timely follow-up. In contrast, implementation at O.K. School is inconsistent, and the Mature Student Program has effectively opted out of meaningful use of PowerSchool, resulting in limited data collection for that program. These disparities reflect variations in enforcement, historical practice, and staff readiness rather than system limitations.

Data Quality, Reporting, and Compliance:

Both the evaluation team and NNCEA's PowerSchool support specialist identified data accuracy as the most pressing issue limiting system effectiveness. Missing MET numbers, outdated addresses, incomplete guardian and emergency contact information, duplicate records, and inconsistent legacy data significantly constrain PowerSchool's functionality and compromise safety and the reliability of reporting. While office staff are working to address these gaps, progress has been slow given the scale of the task. As emphasized during the interview, "PowerSchool is only as powerful as the data we feed into it."

Formal data dashboards, trend analyses, and system-wide reporting tools are not currently in use, largely because such reports have not been formally requested by administrators or leadership. Data retention practices rely heavily on a hybrid system of digital records in PowerSchool and paper-based Cumulative (Cume) files stored at schools and later archived at AMEC. While this approach ensures records are preserved, it limits accessibility, consistency, and long-term analytic capacity.

Training, Change Management, and Policy Context:

The ICT Unit provides regular training to teachers, administrators, and new staff on Office 365, PowerSchool, and other systems, with onboarding handled directly by the IT Manager. Training is role-specific but varies in consistency and depth. Resistance to change among some long-serving staff, combined with limited enforcement at the outset of PowerSchool implementation, continues to affect adoption levels. The evaluation also noted unresolved tensions regarding the use of artificial intelligence tools in schools; while discussions occurred, no formal policy or guidance framework has been established to date

Overall Assessment:

The evidence demonstrates that NNCEA's ICT Unit has become a well-developed, stable, and high-functioning division, achieving nearly all technology-related recommendations from the 2017-18 evaluation. Improvements in connectivity, infrastructure, security, and system reliability are substantial and widely recognized by staff. At the same time, the increasing complexity of systems, under-utilization of PowerSchool's full capabilities, and persistent data quality issues point to the need for stronger governance, clearer expectations, and sustained investment in data management capacity.

Maximizing the return on NNCEA's technology investments will require an authority-wide strategy that strengthens data ownership, improves accuracy and consistency, reinforces administrative enforcement, and aligns system use across all programs, including Adult and Mature Student education. Without such coordination, NNCEA risks under-leveraging one of its strongest operational assets despite having a capable and committed ICT team in place.

Comments & Recommendations:

The NNCEA is to be congratulated on the substantial upgrades in digital infrastructure, enhanced school and administrative connectivity, and improvements in hardware and software systems.

It is recommended that NNCEA strengthen System-Wide Utilization of PowerSchool. PowerSchool is a powerful tool, but it is currently underutilized. Therefore, it is essential to establish clear, non-negotiable expectations for all programs and schools regarding Gradebook use, attendance entry, data entry standards, and reporting timelines. PowerSchool use should be expanded beyond attendance and marks to include:

- Parent communication and family portals;
- Behaviour tracking and incident reporting;
- Automated progress notifications;
- Graduation tracking and credit audits;
- Analytics dashboards for school leadership.

It is recommended that NNCEA launch a Targeted Student Data Cleanup Initiative to create a time-bound authority-wide plan to correct and complete all student information in PowerSchool, including MET numbers, contacts, addresses, custody information, and emergency contacts.

It is recommended that NNCEA develop a multi-year ICT Strategic Plan to provide clarity, consistency, and predictable technology investments across the education system. The plan should include the following:

- Long-term infrastructure goals;
- Replacement cycles for hardware and devices;
- Cybersecurity protocols and audits;
- Software adoption and licensing;
- Staff skills inventory, gaps, PD requirements. Including moving beyond initial training sessions in PowerSchool, toward a continuous, practical professional development model that includes coaching, peer support, refresher workshops, and easy-to-use guides.
- Support models for schools and teacherages;
- Budget forecasts for ICT upgrades;
- Annual maintenance reviews, including network performance assessments; wireless coverage mapping; camera and security system testing; evaluation of emerging needs (e.g., vape detector expansion); assessment of technology use in instruction. These reviews should inform yearly budget planning.

It is recommended that NNCEA assess the training required for staff to effectively use existing school software/technology. PD should be a priority for standardizing procedures and ensuring full utilization of technology tools. Recommended areas include:

- Effective use of SMART Boards and interactive technology
- Microsoft 365 tools (OneDrive, Teams, Forms, SharePoint)

- Email best practices and communication protocols
- Safe digital practices for staff and students
- Using PowerSchool for data-driven instruction

Provide staff training on content updates and ensure the website supports parent engagement and transparency. A strong website is essential for public communication and community confidence.

It is recommended that NNCEA continue strengthening cybersecurity measures, including regular security audits and risk assessments. Formal incident-response procedures should be introduced, and backup and recovery systems should be tested annually. A proactive cybersecurity strategy protects students, staff, and data integrity.

It is recommended that coordination between ICT and school-based leadership be strengthened. As technology becomes more integrated across school operations, the ICT unit should work closely with school administrators to support implementation, troubleshooting, and strategic planning. As technology becomes more integrated across operations, ICT should work closely with school administrators to:

- Identify school-specific technology needs;
- Plan device replacements
- Support the implementation of digital learning tools
- Align ICT initiatives with school improvement plans
- Provide structured timelines for upgrades and installations

3.4.4. Maintenance

The Maintenance Unit plays a central, highly demanding role within the NNCEA system, responsible for the upkeep, repair, and operational continuity of a growing, increasingly complex portfolio of infrastructure. Over the reporting period from 2018 to 2025, annual reports consistently highlight both the significant progress in improving facilities and the substantial pressures on the maintenance team as NNCEA expands its buildings, teacherages, program spaces, mechanical systems, and security infrastructure.

Scope of Responsibility and Organizational Structure:

NNCEA currently oversees two schools (O.K. School and NNOC), the Alice Moore Education Centre (AMEC), a transportation building, a maintenance shed, cultural and land-based camp facilities, and approximately forty-seven teacherage units, all of which require year-round custodial, mechanical, structural, and seasonal maintenance. The Maintenance Unit comprises one Maintenance Supervisor and six helpers, with staff possessing a range of skill levels and no Red Seal-certified tradespersons. Custodial teams operate within schools, and external contractors are relied upon for specialized work such as plumbing, roofing, electrical services, and construction.

Prior to the creation of NNCEA's internal Transportation Unit in 2020-21, the Maintenance Unit also supported aspects of bus operations and equipment servicing. With NNCEA's decision to assume full responsibility for busing beginning in August 2021, transportation-related responsibilities were transferred to a newly established Transportation Unit. This structural change allowed Maintenance to refocus on facilities and grounds, though close coordination between the units remains necessary during peak operational periods and seasonal demands.

Governance, Oversight, and Work-Order Processes:

The 2017-18 Evaluation recommended that the Maintenance Supervisor be allocated greater authority to reduce the need for senior administration's direct involvement in daily maintenance planning. As of the current evaluation, this recommendation has not been fully implemented. The Director of Education remains heavily involved in maintenance operations, including budgeting, purchasing supplies, prioritizing work, and daily oversight.

Maintenance requests are submitted primarily via email to the Maintenance Supervisor, with the Director of Education copied on all requests. In practice, the Director of Education also photographs maintenance issues and posts them daily on a whiteboard in the maintenance shed, where the Supervisor reviews and assigns tasks. While this informal process is reported to be effective, it places a significant operational burden on senior leadership and lacks a formal work order tracking system. There is currently no standardized method for logging requests, tracking response times, monitoring completion, or analyzing recurring maintenance issues, which limits long-term planning and accountability.

Facilities Improvements and Asset Management:

Despite capacity constraints, annual reports document substantial infrastructure improvements between 2018 and 2025. O.K. School received major upgrades, including roof replacement, eaves troughing, LED lighting, accessibility enhancements, new hot water tanks, washroom fixture upgrades, and extensive interior and exterior painting. NNOC's new facility was

completed in 2022 and further enhanced with improved signage, landscaping, specialized program rooms, and mechanical system refinements. AMEC renovations improved ventilation, flooring, office layouts, meeting spaces, and mechanical equipment.

Teacherage units (fully occupied and in high demand) have received ongoing attention, including furnace servicing, electrical upgrades from 150-amp to 200-amp service, window replacements, hot water tank upgrades, alarm system improvements, and the installation of fibre-optic connectivity by 2022-23. These upgrades have significantly improved staff housing safety, comfort, and connectivity, but also continue to generate substantial maintenance workload.

Operational Demands and Equipment:

The Maintenance Unit manages extensive daily operational demands. Snow removal is consistently identified as one of the most time-intensive responsibilities during winter months, consuming a significant portion of staff capacity. Additional routine duties include garbage removal, groundskeeping, HVAC servicing, mechanical inspections, emergency repairs, and support for school and community events.

The unit maintains and operates a sizable fleet of equipment, including a dump truck, heavy-duty pickups, skid steers, zero-turn lawnmowers, snow-clearing equipment, and specialized tools essential for grounds and facility maintenance. While mechanical oversight of buses now resides within the Transportation Unit, coordination between departments remains essential.

Capacity Constraints and Workforce Sustainability:

NNCEA's infrastructure footprint has expanded steadily, while maintenance staffing levels have remained relatively limited. Recruitment of skilled maintenance workers has proven challenging, particularly for advanced trade skills. Although no serious unresolved maintenance failures were identified during this evaluation, the absence of certified trades staff increases reliance on external contractors and raises long-term sustainability concerns.

The evaluation also notes the absence of formal preventative maintenance schedules, annual staff evaluations, or structured workforce development initiatives. While communication between the Director of Education and the Maintenance Supervisor is strong and effective, the current model relies heavily on individual leadership rather than formal systems.

Stray Dog Safety Issue:

The 2017-18 School Evaluation identified stray dogs on O.K. School grounds as an **urgent** and **serious safety concern**, documenting incidents in which students were knocked down, chased, or had food taken directly from their hands. At that time, evaluators emphasized that unrestricted dog access posed a significant liability and recommended immediate intervention, including consideration of perimeter fencing.

A review of NNCEA Annual Reports from 2018 through 2025 reveals no reference to the stray dog issue, despite its severity. While the reports document substantial investments in infrastructure, security systems, and safety staffing, the absence of any mention of dog-related risks represents a significant reporting gap.

Evaluator observations during the October, November and January 2025-2026 site visits confirm that the issue persists. Although perimeter fencing and gate supervision are now in place, dogs continue to breach school grounds and, on multiple occasions, enter the school building during high-traffic transition times. Evaluators witnessed staff actively struggling to remove dogs from hallways and common areas, underscoring an ongoing risk to student safety and well-being.

The continued presence of dogs indicates that existing physical and supervisory measures are insufficient. The lack of formal documentation, monitoring, or policy-based response over multiple years suggests the issue has not been systematically addressed or integrated into NNCEA's broader safety planning. Renewed coordination with NCN Chief & Council, community safety officers, Public Works, and animal control services is urgently required, supported by clear protocols, designated responsibilities, monitoring mechanisms, and regular reporting.

Security Operations:

NNCEA's Security operations have undergone steady modernization between 2018 and 2025. Early reports noted vandalism-related incidents that required a heightened security presence, while subsequent years documented the formalization of Security as an operational unit. By 2021-22, NNCEA had hired additional hallway monitors and four School Safety Personnel, significantly strengthening supervision at both schools.

These staffing enhancements were accompanied by major infrastructure investments, including comprehensive camera systems, key-fob access controls, and centralized monitoring stations at O.K. School and NNOC. Teacherage units were also upgraded with external security cameras. By 2023-24, NNCEA reported that it had installed optimal camera and security systems across its facilities.

However, while surveillance capacity has expanded, annual reports do not provide data on security incidents, trends, or recurring challenges beyond 2018-19. Issues such as unauthorized access or stray dogs are not reflected in system-level security reporting. This gap suggests the absence of a formal incident-tracking and reporting framework, limiting the ability to assess risk patterns or the effectiveness of security investments.

Fire Safety and Emergency Response Management:

NNCEA has demonstrated periodic attention to fire safety and emergency preparedness, particularly during major infrastructure changes. The 2018-19 Annual Report documented completion of ten mandated fire drills at NNOC, including evacuation times, reflecting a structured approach during that period. In 2021-22, NNCEA finalized an updated Emergency Response Plan, revised fire-route maps to reflect new building layouts and installed muster-point signage across facilities.

Infrastructure improvements addressed earlier deficiencies, including the replacement of a failed fire alarm system at O.K. School. Reports also reference fire-prevention measures during public events, such as designated smoking distances.

However, since 2019, annual reports have lacked consistent documentation of fire-safety practices. Missing elements include regular fire drill records, inspection schedules, alarm testing logs, compliance audits, and staff training updates. Given NNCEA's expanding infrastructure

and increased building complexity, the absence of consistent reporting makes it difficult to assess ongoing preparedness and compliance.

Overall Assessment:

Taken together, the Maintenance, Security, and Emergency Management functions demonstrate meaningful progress in infrastructure quality, safety systems, and operational responsiveness since 2018. The dedication of staff and the strong involvement of senior leadership have enabled NNCEA to manage an increasingly complex facilities portfolio under demanding conditions.

The evaluation also identifies systemic risks arising from informal processes, limited staffing capacity, inconsistent reporting, and heavy reliance on senior administrative involvement. Persistent safety issues (most notably the unresolved stray dog problem) underscore the need for stronger coordination, formal monitoring, and cross-departmental planning.

To sustain recent gains and ensure long-term facility safety and operational reliability, NNCEA will need to strengthen internal systems for work-order tracking, preventative maintenance, safety reporting, emergency preparedness documentation, and workforce development. Doing so will be essential to supporting NNCEA's educational mission and providing safe, predictable environments for students, staff, and families.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA formally delegate greater operational authority to the Maintenance Supervisor to reduce the Director of Education's day-to-day involvement. This should include clearly defined decision-making authority for routine repairs, work prioritization, and contractor coordination, supported by written role descriptions and reporting expectations.

It is also recommended that NNCEA:

- Introduces a standardized work-order and tracking system for all maintenance requests across NNCEA facilities. The system should record the nature of requests, response times, completion dates, and responsible personnel. This will improve communication with schools and departments, support workload planning, enable trend analysis, and reduce reliance on informal processes.

- Establishes a comprehensive preventative maintenance schedule covering all schools, teacherages, administrative buildings, and program facilities. The schedule should identify routine inspections, servicing timelines, seasonal preparations, and responsible staff, and be reviewed monthly to proactively address issues before they become critical or costly.

- Conducts a formal assessment of maintenance staffing levels relative to the current and projected infrastructure footprint. Based on this assessment, consider:

    i. Adding maintenance staff to reduce pressure on existing personnel;
    ii. Exploring the need for an additional work vehicle to improve

efficiency;

iii. Establishing an in-house apprenticeship or trainee program targeting local high-school graduates, with clear criteria and mentorship under the Maintenance Supervisor.

- Implements annual performance evaluations for maintenance staff to clarify expectations, identify training needs, and support professional growth. Evaluations should be paired with individualized development plans that include opportunities for trade certification, safety training, and leadership development, where appropriate.

- Develops and implements a formal, multi-departmental strategy to address the ongoing presence of stray dogs on school grounds. This strategy should involve NNCEA, NCN Chief & Council, Public Works, community safety officers, and animal control services, and include clear protocols for prevention, immediate response, monitoring, and reporting. As part of this strategy, NNCEA should assess the feasibility of establishing a temporary holding kennel at or near the school site to safely contain dogs that enter the school grounds, with clear procedures for animal care, owner notification, and a defined timeframe for transfer or relocation if animals are not claimed. Progress and incidents should be documented and reviewed regularly to ensure student safety and reduce recurring risk.

- Enhances security operations by introducing a system-wide incident tracking and reporting framework. This framework should capture data on unauthorized access, safety incidents, dog intrusions, and other recurring risks, and be reviewed periodically by senior administration to inform decision-making and resource allocation.

- Standardizes and documents fire safety and emergency response practices across all NNCEA facilities. This should include annual fire drill schedules, evacuation records, alarm testing logs, inspection reports, staff training documentation, and periodic reviews of emergency response plans to ensure ongoing compliance and readiness.

- Ensures that maintenance, safety, and security issues (particularly recurring or unresolved concerns) are consistently documented in NNCEA Annual Reports. Transparent reporting will support accountability, enable trend analysis, and ensure that critical safety issues are visible at the Board and community levels.

- Develops a multi-year facilities and maintenance planning framework aligned with NNCEA's strategic plan. This framework should account for anticipated growth in buildings, teacherages, and programs, and identify corresponding staffing, equipment, budget, and safety requirements to support sustainable operations.

3.4.5. Transportation

The NNCEA Transportation Unit has evolved into a well-organized, essential operational division that provides daily busing, fleet maintenance, and transportation support for student programming across the system. Over the reporting period from 2018 to 2025, the transportation function transitioned from a contracted service into a fully in-house operation staffed by a Transportation Supervisor, a team of bus drivers, a full-time mechanic, and an apprentice. This shift has strengthened NNCEA's ability to ensure safe, reliable, and responsive transportation for students across all schools and program areas.

The transition to an internal Transportation Unit began in 2020-21, when NNCEA announced its intention to assume full responsibility for school busing, effective August 2021. As part of this transition, NNCEA created key positions, including a Bus Supervisor, a Bus Mechanic, and five full-time drivers, marking a significant structural change in how the division manages student transportation.

By the 2021-22 school year, the new unit was fully operational, staffed with one Supervisor, five Drivers, a Mechanic, and an Apprentice, responsible for all bussing services, fleet maintenance, and support for emergency procedures and special transport needs. By 2023-24, the Transportation Unit had grown to include six bus drivers, reflecting increasing demand for transportation services across NNCEA.

The fleet currently includes seven school buses (72-passenger, 48-passenger, and wheelchair-accessible units), all in daily use. Additional vehicles include vans for transporting students who become ill, delivery vans, and four 15-passenger vans (three supporting commuter transport and one for extracurricular programming). The transportation team also supports athletics, cultural trips, land-based education programming, and special events, ensuring that students have consistent access to learning opportunities both within and outside the community.

A significant operational enhancement has been the development of a dedicated six-bay bus garage. This facility allows on-site servicing of school buses, NNCEA vehicles, and heavy equipment. The mechanical division is supervised by a certified Red Seal mechanic, who oversees an apprentice, providing both high-quality technical oversight and internal capacity building. The mechanic prioritizes safety-critical systems, including brakes and steering components, and maintains a stock of essential parts to allow immediate repairs, reducing downtime and increasing fleet reliability.

Maintenance records, inspection checklists, and safety protocols are maintained systematically and reviewed by both internal and external auditors. This structured documentation strengthens accountability and demonstrates alignment with transportation safety expectations. The integration between the Transportation and Maintenance Units remains strong, particularly during winter months when snow removal, vehicle reliability, and mechanical demands intensify.

Supervision and student safety measures have also expanded. Ride-along adults and Educational Assistants (EAs) are increasingly present on buses to support student management and safety. Training initiatives are underway for transportation staff, including Narcan administration, defibrillator use, and CPR certification, reflecting a proactive approach to student well-being and emergency preparedness.

Policy clarity has also improved. Updated bus policies now restrict students to their assigned

buses, with exceptions permitted only through a parental note or direct phone confirmation. This measure enhances accountability, reduces confusion during dismissal times, and strengthens safety-tracking procedures.

Overall, the NNCEA Transportation Unit is a strong and essential operational pillar within the education system. The move to an internal model has significantly enhanced responsiveness, safety oversight, mechanical capacity, and service integration. The presence of a certified Red Seal mechanic, structured maintenance documentation, expanded supervision on buses, and strengthened policy clarity all represent substantial progress since the 2017-2018 review.

At the same time, the unit is now operating at full capacity, with all buses in daily use. The next phase of development requires strategic planning in fleet renewal, redundancy, communication systems, and driver sustainability to protect service continuity and align with long-term growth.

With continued investment in fleet modernization, workforce development, structured reporting, and safety infrastructure, the Transportation Unit is well-positioned to remain reliable, accountable, and responsive to the evolving needs of NNCEA students and families.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA prioritize acquiring an additional school bus as a spare unit, given that all seven buses are currently in daily use. This will reduce vulnerability to service disruptions caused by mechanical breakdowns, scheduled maintenance, or unexpected emergencies.

In addition, it is recommended that NNCEA:

- Develop and Implement a Formal Fleet Lifecycle and Replacement Plan. NNCEA should determine the projected life expectancy of each bus in the fleet and establish a structured, multi-year capital replacement schedule. This recommendation, originally identified in the 2017 review, remains outstanding and is now increasingly urgent given full fleet utilization. A lifecycle plan will support proactive budgeting and prevent future service interruptions.

- Establish an Ongoing Local Driver Recruitment and Training Strategy. NNCEA should continue to recruit and train local community members as bus drivers to strengthen workforce sustainability, reduce dependence on a limited pool of personnel, and support succession planning. Consideration should also be given to mentorship pathways and certification support.

- Conduct a Comprehensive Route Timing and Efficiency Review. A detailed analysis of existing bus routes and timing schedules should be undertaken to improve operational efficiency, reduce driver stress, optimize fuel use, and ensure equitable transportation coverage across service areas.

- Implement Monthly Driver Meetings and Structured Support Mechanisms. The Transportation Unit should formalize monthly driver meetings to:

    i. Address operational stressors and workload concerns,

ii. Review route challenges and propose improvements,
iii. Reinforce positive student behaviour management strategies,
iv. Strengthen team communication and cohesion.
v. These meetings would contribute to both safety and staff retention.

- Strengthen Bus Incident Reporting and Communication Protocols. NNCEA should review and improve communication processes between bus drivers, school administration, and parents regarding transportation-related incidents. Clear reporting timelines, standardized documentation, and transparent follow-up procedures would enhance shared accountability and trust.

- Resolve Radio Connectivity Gaps Across Service Routes. Given the safety implications of unreliable communication, NNCEA should assess and implement a solution to ensure consistent radio or communication coverage across all transportation routes. Options may include upgraded radio systems, signal boosters, or alternative communication technologies.

3.5. Otayitiskiwin Kiskinwamahtowekamik Elementary School

Otayitiskiwin Kiskinwamahtowekamik (OK) School is NCN's elementary school, offering programming from Nursery to Grade 6. The school serves approximately 518 students (total registry for the 2025-26 school year) and employs a staff complement of 155, including teachers, resource professionals, counsellors, educational assistants, office staff, custodial personnel, and security staff.

Students at O.K. School complete the standard Manitoba Provincial Curriculum from Nursery through Grade 6. In addition, they receive instruction in music, Cree language, outdoor education, and life skills. The school also operates a nutrition program that provides breakfast and lunch to participating students, as well as morning snacks.

Although the NNCEA website states that the school offers Cree immersion in Nursery and Kindergarten, as well as in Grades 1, 2, and 3, evaluators observed that the Cree Curriculum is still under development. As a result, the immersion program has not yet been implemented. The school also provides a range of after-school programs for students, including computer club, science club, ball hockey, and the Jr. Chief and Council, among others.

3.5.1. School Program, Curriculum & Pedagogical Methods

O.K. School delivers programming from Nursery through Grade 6 within a complex instructional environment shaped by chronic absenteeism, variable student readiness, uneven implementation of support systems, and high social-emotional need. The school operates under NNCEA Policy Series 600 and provincial curricular expectations, while integrating Cree language programming, inclusive education supports, and school-wide literacy and numeracy initiatives.

Evidence from survey responses, administrative meetings, the school plan, and Annual Reports indicates that the instructional program is structured around foundational literacy and numeracy development, cultural integration, and differentiated support. However, implementation consistency and system-wide instructional coherence remain areas for strengthening.

Instructional Leadership & Program Oversight:

Instructional leadership at O.K. School follows a distributed model. The Principal and two Vice-Principals oversee grade-band portfolios:

- One Vice-Principal supervises Grades 1-3 with emphasis on early literacy interventions, particularly foundational reading development in Grade 1.

- The second Vice-Principal supervises Grades 4-6 with a focus on numeracy, including implementation of Jump Math training and resource deployment.

- A Literacy Coach supports instructional alignment, and elements of a multi-tiered support framework (RTI-style structure) are present:

    - Tier 1 universal classroom instruction;

- Tier 2 small-group literacy and counselling supports;

- Tier 3 individualized programming through alternative and inclusive education supports.

While these components reflect structural alignment with intervention-based models, systematic benchmarking, consistent progress monitoring, and centralized data analysis are not yet fully embedded into instructional oversight processes. PowerSchool is primarily used for attendance and reporting, with limited integration for academic performance tracking to inform school-wide instructional planning.

Curriculum Awareness, Differentiation & Instructional Complexity:

Teachers at O.K. School demonstrate clear awareness of provincial curriculum guidelines and grade-level expectations. Curriculum documents and benchmarks inform overall instructional outcomes and assessment practices. Educators understand the standards students are expected to meet and plan with that awareness.

However, instructional planning is appropriately adapted to meet students' actual readiness levels rather than rigidly adhering to grade-level pacing. Given that a significant proportion of students are functioning more than one grade below expected academic level, teachers must routinely differentiate instruction across multiple readiness bands within the same classroom.

This creates substantial pedagogical complexity, whereas teachers must:

a) Maintain familiarity with curriculum expectations across multiple grade levels;
b) Deliver tiered instruction within literacy and numeracy blocks;
c) Provide foundational skill remediation while advancing grade-level competencies;
d) Adjust pacing in response to fluctuating daily attendance.

Effective differentiation, therefore, depends heavily on teacher capacity and experience. In some classrooms, differentiation is structured and intentional; in others, it is more reactive and shaped by immediate attendance realities.

Chronic absenteeism further disrupts instructional sequencing. Teachers frequently reteach content to returning students while maintaining forward progress for regularly attending students. This ongoing instructional fragmentation limits curriculum continuity and reduces cumulative skill development.

Literacy & Numeracy Programming:

Literacy and numeracy remain central priorities within the school plan. Early literacy interventions are emphasized in the primary grades, and Jump Math has been introduced in the upper elementary grades. Retention policies implemented in 2023-24 (particularly for students with attendance below 65%) represent a significant shift in how social promotion is addressed.

However, the evaluation identifies variability in instructional delivery across classrooms. The absence of a clearly articulated, school-wide instructional framework results in inconsistencies in:

- Lesson structure;

- Classroom management routines;
- Behaviour expectations;
- Assessment practices;
- Academic monitoring tools.

While grade-level expectations guide planning, the school lacks a cohesive benchmarking system to systematically track student progress toward curriculum standards. As a result, instructional effectiveness depends more heavily on individual teacher capacity than on unified pedagogical systems.

To strengthen literacy coherence and reduce reliance on a single support role, O.K. School would benefit from a more structured leadership and assessment framework. Staff appointed to literacy support roles should receive formal onboarding and transitional guidance, with regular administrative check-ins to monitor progress and alignment with schoolwide priorities.

Early Years literacy assessment training should occur during the first professional development days in September, with experienced staff leading small mentoring groups that continue to provide support throughout the year.

Literacy testing should be completed by the end of September to ensure timely intervention planning, and assessment data (alongside IEP information) should be included in June transition meetings to support continuity. The establishment of formal Early Years and Middle Years Literacy Committees, including participation from administrative and Resource Teachers, would strengthen data review, instructional consistency, and cross-grade alignment. These committees could support the development of classroom literacy profiles to inform EA allocation and new staff onboarding, while promoting a literacy-rich environment across the school. Collectively, these measures would distribute leadership capacity, enhance communication, and create a more systematic approach to literacy improvement.

Library and Literacy Infrastructure:

Teacher feedback suggests limited clarity regarding the instructional purpose of library periods. Several staff members indicated that library time often serves as preparation time, with students colouring or watching recorded read-alouds rather than engaging in structured literacy activities.

The space was described as “in flux” during cataloguing. Observations noted:

- Windows facing the hallway are covered, limiting visibility and inviting presence.
- Large tables occupy most of the floor space, reducing flexibility.
- Limited signage or navigation supports are present.
- Students are not permitted to sign out books.
- No clearly designated return area or structured circulation system exists.
- In its current configuration, the library does not serve as a central driver of literacy within the school.

The library has strong potential to serve as the school's literacy hub, supporting both English and Cree language development. Beyond book storage, a well-structured library should function as:

- A center for independent reading and borrowing

- A storytelling and oral language space
- A venue for cultural sharing and Elder engagement
- A showcase for student writing
- A bridge between school literacy and community engagement

Allowing students to borrow books is particularly important, as home access to reading materials strengthens literacy exposure. Even unreturned books may still contribute positively to household literacy.

At present, the O.K. School Library is not operating as a structured literacy engine. However, the space represents a high-potential asset. The evaluation identifies the library not as a deficit area but as a literacy infrastructure that requires intentional activation.

Social-Emotional Learning & Behavioural Integration:

Social-emotional learning frameworks such as PAX and Second Step have been introduced historically but are not currently implemented consistently across all classrooms. Counsellors provide targeted interventions and classroom presentations, and restorative practices are utilized when incidents arise.

Operational adjustments (e.g., split lunch periods, enhanced supervision) have reduced some behavioural incidents. However, these measures address symptoms rather than establishing a fully unified school-wide behavioural framework.

Behavioural management capacity varies across classrooms, and administrative involvement remains high in some grade bands. This variability directly affects instructional flow and continuity.

Inclusive Education & Tiered Supports:

The school has demonstrated flexibility in developing alternative and inclusive programming for high-needs students, successfully reintegrating several previously disengaged learners. However, the following systemic weaknesses persist:

- IEPs and SSPs are not consistently completed or shared with teachers;
- Resource oversight capacity is stretched;
- EA deployment is affected by absenteeism;
- Documentation and progress monitoring lack standardization.

As a result, differentiation and support are often informal rather than systematically documented and evaluated.

Nîhitho Language & Cultural Programming:

Cree language and cultural integration continue to represent visible and intentional priorities at O.K. School. Recent system-level efforts reflect administrative commitment to strengthening Nîhitho language instruction and cultural presence within the school environment. Notable initiatives include:

- The hiring of a Cree Language Program Facilitator to provide program-level coordination;
- Expansion of Cree instructional staffing;
- Construction of additional dedicated Cree language classrooms;
- Implementation of incentive structures to encourage student use of Cree; and
- Organization of cultural programming, such as Cree Bee competitions and choir initiatives.

These developments demonstrate meaningful investment in language revitalization and cultural visibility within the school setting.

However, the evaluation identified structural and program-coherence challenges that limit the depth and sustainability of language-development outcomes. While the Cree language is evident and supported through staffing and activities, the absence of clearly articulated curriculum frameworks, defined proficiency benchmarks, and systematic progress monitoring has constrained measurable advancement in fluency.

Further analysis of these structural considerations is provided in Section 3.4.1.

Attendance:

Attendance instability remains the most significant structural factor influencing pedagogy at O.K. School. Nursery and Kindergarten attendance is particularly concerning, as it affects foundational skill development.

Attendance incentives and recognition programs are in place; however, attendance benchmarks are not yet systematically embedded in instructional planning. Curriculum pacing, differentiation intensity, and academic progression are all directly influenced by fluctuating student presence.

Without attendance stabilization, even well-designed curriculum frameworks face implementation barriers.

Overall Assessment:

The School Program at O.K. School reflects strong professional commitment and awareness of curriculum standards. Teachers demonstrate adaptability, relational strength, and willingness to differentiate instruction in response to student need. Leadership has taken meaningful steps to strengthen literacy, numeracy, Cree programming, and inclusive education.

However, the evaluation identifies the need for stronger instructional coherence and systematization. Current strengths are largely driven by individual teacher capacity rather than unified frameworks.

In summary, O.K. School demonstrates professional awareness of curricular expectations and a strong commitment to meeting students academically where they are at. However, the absence of a cohesive, school-wide instructional framework limits consistency and measurable growth. Strengthening alignment between curriculum standards, differentiation practices, data tracking, behaviour systems, and attendance stabilization will be critical to improving long-term academic outcomes across grades K–6.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that O.K. School develop and implement a Cohesive School-Wide Instructional Framework. This framework should align literacy, numeracy, differentiation, behaviour expectations, and assessment practices across all classrooms, including:

- Defined instructional block structures for literacy and numeracy;
- Clear expectations for lesson design and differentiated instruction;
- Consistent classroom management routines;
- Alignment between Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports;
- Shared expectations for formative and summative assessment practices.
- Establish expectations and transition benchmarks for Grade 6 students to ensure they are adequately prepared for the transition to Grade 7.

It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen its academic benchmarking and progress monitoring systems. The school should implement systematic benchmarking and progress-monitoring protocols to track student growth relative to curriculum standards. This should include:

- Scheduled literacy and numeracy benchmark assessments;
- Clear grade-level academic benchmarks tied to promotion standards;
- Regular data review meetings led by administration;
- Expanded use of PowerSchool or other tools to monitor academic progress;
- Alignment between assessment data and instructional interventions.
- Embedding data-informed instructional cycles will improve academic accountability and reduce reliance on reactive instructional adjustments.

It is recommended that O.K. School formalize differentiation and multi-grade curriculum planning supports. This may include:

- Professional development focused on tiered instruction strategies;
- Planning templates that reflect multi-grade readiness levels;
- Collaborative grade-team planning sessions;
- Clear documentation of targeted interventions;
- Structured support for teachers navigating foundational skill gaps.

It is recommended that O.K. School integrate an attendance strategy with instructional planning, so attendance stabilization efforts can be more explicitly connected to instructional strategy. For example:

- Attendance benchmarks should be linked to academic risk indicators.
- Early-warning identification of students below attendance thresholds;
- Structured re-entry academic support plans for returning students;
- Classroom-based strategies to mitigate learning loss due to absenteeism.

It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen school-wide behaviour and SEL alignment to support instructional flow and classroom consistency. This should

include:

- Consistent implementation of an evidence-based SEL program;
- Clear behavioural expectations across grade levels;
- Defined classroom-to-office referral processes;
- Alignment between behavioural interventions and instructional continuity.

It is recommended that O.K. School develop a library enhancement plan to maximize its potential, based on the following:

- A full-time librarian is recommended if the library is to function as an instructional literacy center.
- Reconfigure layout to create reading nooks and flexible seating areas.
- Introduce comfortable seating and a defined story time/listening space.
- Use windows for visible displays to invite interest.
- Provide clear labelling and navigation signage.
- Establish a designated book return station and circulation system.

It is further recommended that the library sessions should include:

- Returning books
- A short read-aloud or literacy activity
- Guided exploration and borrowing time
- Students should be taught shelving practices to maintain organization.
- Program Expansion Opportunities

Once stabilized, the library could support:

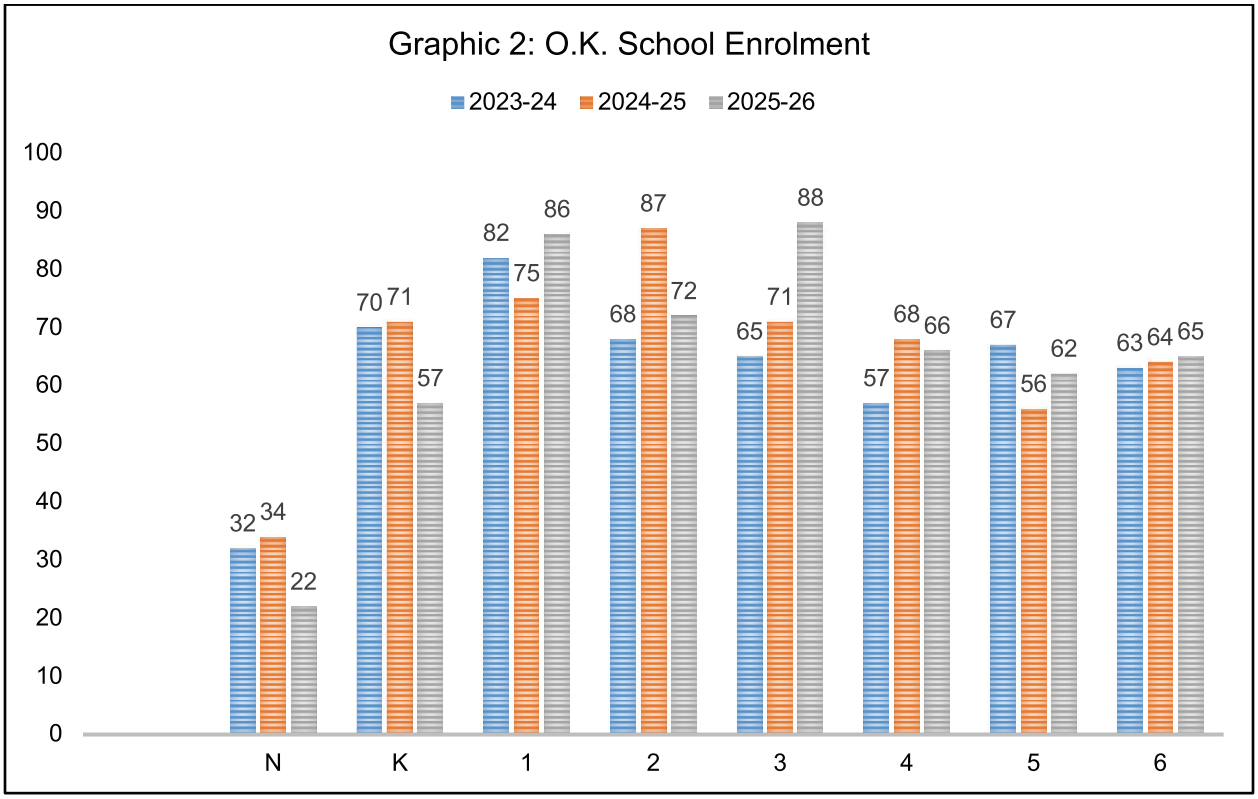
- Elder storytelling and guest readers
- Student writing showcases (English and Cree)
- Evening family literacy events
- Book clubs and writing clubs
- Student “PAGES” volunteers
- Monthly themes, literacy contests, and scavenger hunts
- Outdoor reading spaces

3.5.2. Student Demographics, Performance & Achievement

3.5.2.1. Enrolment

PowerSchool enrolment data (Graphic 2) confirms that O.K. School maintains overall enrolment stability, with predictable cohort patterns rather than long-term decline. The most significant enrolment variability occurs in Nursery and Kindergarten, reinforcing previous findings that early years engagement is the most fragile point in the system.

Once students move beyond the early years, enrolment stabilizes and, in some cases, increases, indicating that families may not be disengaging from the school system, but may be entering it later or inconsistently. This underscores the importance of continued focus on early years engagement, attendance education, and family communication, rather than enrolment recruitment itself.



3.5.2.2. Attendance

Based on the evidence reviewed during the evaluation period, attendance is among the most significant factors shaping student outcomes at O.K. School. While overall enrolment has remained stable, there is a persistent gap between registered enrolment and daily student presence, with chronic absenteeism most pronounced in Nursery and Kindergarten. To support this analysis, Table 3 has been included to summarize and review attendance data from the 2019–20 to 2024–25 school years.

Table 3: O.K. School Attendance 2019-20 to 2024-25

School year	Enrollment			Attendance Rate	Notes
	Start	Leavers	End		
2019-20				64%	ADA% Data Source: NNCEA Annual Report. Data available for Grades 4-8 only. Report notes disruptions (Covid-19, weather, pests, water damage).
2020–21				43%	ADA% Data Source: NNCEA Annual Report. Data available to April. Continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many unforeseen repercussions and frequent school closures due to active COVID cases.
2021–22				57%	ADA% Data Source: NNCEA Annual Report. Data available from September 2021 to April 29, 2022. Attendance Improvement Officer Position was created. COVID 19 continued to play an integral part of school year. Despite safety precautions, many parents were reluctant to send their children to school .
2022–23	492			63%	ADA% Data Source: NNCEA Annual Report. The total attendance average from September to April 2023 was 63%. Nursery to Grade 3 attendance was 59% and Grade 4-6 attendance was 70%.
2023–24	566	60	506	63.7%	ADA% Data Source: PowerSchool. Attendance continues to represent a major challenge at OK. As part of the goal to increase student attendance and engagement in school, the O.K. School developed a school currency (OK Bucks) and created a store where students can spend their earnings.
2024–25	569	32	539	59.4%	ADA% Data Source: PowerSchool.

					It was reported that community and parents have become more aware of the attendance coordinators' role, including home visits conducted after three consecutive student absences . A total of 350 home visits were reported in the year.

Over the past five years, the most significant external disruption to attendance was the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on NCN. O.K. School closed on March 23, 2020, due to a community lockdown and remained closed for the remainder of the school year. This prolonged closure, together with multiple subsequent disruptions related to the pandemic, raised serious concerns about extended periods of students being out of school, with limited access to individualized and whole-class instruction and reduced support for students' social and emotional well-being throughout the third term.

While COVID-19 significantly altered school operations during this period, attendance at O.K. School was already a concern prior to the pandemic, and evidence from previous years confirms this pattern. Before the implementation of PowerSchool, annual reports documented fragile attendance trends, including 64% attendance for Grades 4–8 in 2019–20, a COVID-depressed 43% (to April) in 2020–21, mid-year snapshots in the mid-50% range in 2021–22, and 63% from September to April in 2022–23. Attendance in the early years consistently lagged behind (Nursery–Grade 3 at 59%), while upper elementary grades fared better (Grades 4–6 at 70%). With PowerSchool now in place, O.K. School has access to complete, school-wide attendance data, showing overall attendance rates of 63.71% in 2023–24 and 59.44% in 2024–25.

Behind the percentages is a consistent set of barriers that interrupt instructional sequences and depress assessment coverage, particularly in higher grades with peer dynamics that sometimes include bullying, family responsibilities such as babysitting, unstable contact information and mobility, mental-health stressors, transportation and weather, and short-notice household obligations. When these pressures accumulate, teachers lose minutes to re-entry, reteaching, and catch-up; benchmark windows capture fewer students; and literacy and numeracy trajectories flatten not because students cannot learn, but because they are too often absent when the deliberate practice happens.

In response, OK has built a coherent set of supports and routines that treat attendance as an academic intervention rather than a compliance task. The Attendance Officer role, introduced in 2021-22, anchors home-based follow-up for any student who has missed three or more consecutive days and coordinates next steps with families. Teachers are required to keep the school-home connection active through "glows and grows" calls, letters, or visits that name strengths and challenges and reduce the distance between classroom and home. The school's trauma-informed stance ensures students are met first with safety, empathy, and practical help (rides, food access, counselling referrals) so that barriers are solved rather than punished.

Presence is intentionally made visible and valued. Weekly Student of the Week recognition (including a certificate and 500 OK Bucks) celebrates kindness, positive conduct, and strong attendance. Monthly assemblies also acknowledge students who achieved perfect attendance in the prior month. Together, these practices, relationship-building, concrete supports, and

recognition, are the levers staff consistently report as making a measurable difference.

NNCEA's Attendance Policy (Policy 1007) treats attendance as a shared responsibility and requires each school, OK included, to maintain written attendance regulations approved by the Director and published in the School Handbook, submit a monthly attendance summary from the Principal to the Director, and link attendance to marks by setting a 65% minimum attendance for course credit in Grades 7–12 (with a short re-entry plan required when a student falls below that threshold). At OK, the policy anchors a steady routine: clear procedures, timely follow-up, and monthly reviews that convert outreach and support into consistent, school-wide practice.

Reasons of Absenteeism as Reported by Grades 3-6 in 2025.

Analysis of student survey responses from Grades 3 to 6 provides important insight into why students miss school and confirms that absenteeism is driven primarily by factors outside the classroom rather than by widespread disengagement from learning or dissatisfaction with the school environment.

The most commonly reported reason students missed school was difficulty waking up in time. Over one-third of the surveyed students indicated that challenges with morning routines, including late bedtimes and inconsistent morning supervision, were the primary reason for their absences. This finding suggests that attendance patterns are strongly influenced by household routines and family circumstances, particularly among older students, and highlights the importance of preventive and family-centred approaches to improving attendance.

Health-related absences were the second most frequently reported reason students missed school. A significant proportion of students reported that illness (either their own or in the household) was the main reason for missing full days of school. While these absences are often unavoidable, the frequency of illness-related responses underscores the need for continued attention to student wellness, preventive health practices, and coordination with families during peak illness periods.

Family responsibilities also emerged as a notable contributor to absenteeism. Several students reported missing school in order to care for younger siblings or other family members. These responses reflect the broader caregiving responsibilities some students assume within their households and point to structural and social factors beyond the school's direct control. In these cases, absenteeism is not a matter of student motivation or school engagement, but rather an outcome of family capacity and support needs.

A smaller proportion of students identified low motivation or a preference to stay home as their main reason for missing school. While not prevalent, these responses indicate the importance of continuing to strengthen student engagement through culturally relevant programming, extracurricular opportunities, and positive attendance incentives that reinforce students' sense of belonging and connection to school.

A limited number of students reported emotional factors such as stress, anxiety, or sadness as their primary reason for missing school. Although these responses represent a small percentage of the overall data, they are significant and reinforce the importance of maintaining access to counselling supports, trusted adults, and early intervention strategies to address emotional well-being.

Finally, very few students identified structural or administrative reasons, such as transportation challenges, family travel, or suspension, as the main cause of their absences. These cases appear to be isolated and are best addressed through individualized follow-up rather than system-wide interventions.

Overall, the student survey data clearly indicate that absenteeism at O.K. School is largely shaped by home-based and family-related factors, particularly sleep routines, health, and caregiving responsibilities. These findings suggest that while the school has invested considerable time and resources into attendance monitoring and follow-up, meaningful improvement in attendance rates will likely require a stronger emphasis on preventive, supportive, and family-engagement strategies, alongside continued in-school attendance initiatives.

OK Student Attendance Considerations:

It is important to note that, throughout the evaluation process, there was consistent evidence of the significant efforts NNCEA and O.K. School are making to address and improve student attendance, including ongoing monitoring, follow-up with families, and the allocation of dedicated staff time and resources. However, despite sustained efforts, attendance remains one of the school's most significant and persistent challenges, particularly in the lower grades, the most critical years for establishing foundational academic skills, learning routines, and long-term study habits.

Findings from the student survey provide important context for understanding why these efforts have not yet translated into meaningful improvements in attendance rates. The data indicate that most student absences are not driven by disengagement from learning or dissatisfaction with the school environment, but rather by factors occurring outside the classroom. The most commonly reported reasons for missing school were difficulty waking up in time, illness, and family caregiving responsibilities. Together, these responses point to challenges related to household routines, health, and family capacity rather than to school avoidance or behavioural issues. This suggests that attendance at O.K. School is influenced as much by broader family and community conditions as by school-based practices.

O.K. School carries a critical responsibility in preparing NCN children with the foundational skills, routines, and attitudes they need to succeed at NNOC and beyond. Whether students pursue further education or transition directly into adult roles within the community, the consistency and quality of their early educational experiences will play a decisive role in shaping how they participate, contribute, and thrive later in life. Persistent absenteeism in the early grades, therefore, represents not only a short-term operational challenge but a longer-term risk to student success and community well-being.

Given the central role that NCN as a community, and parents and caregivers in particular, play in establishing attendance patterns, the evaluation highlights the need for NNCEA to strengthen its macro-level approach to attendance. This includes clarifying shared educational expectations and responsibilities, assessing whether existing attendance tools and interventions are appropriately aligned with the underlying causes of absenteeism, and ensuring that strategies extend beyond compliance-based follow-up to include preventive, family-centred supports.

Finally, while evaluators acknowledge the commitment and ongoing efforts to reduce absenteeism, the findings also identify specific gaps between current attendance strategies and

the root causes identified through student feedback. Addressing these gaps represents an opportunity to strengthen existing approaches and improve outcomes.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that strategic attention shift from enrolment growth toward early-years participation, attendance consistency, and stronger alignment among enrolment, attendance, and achievement, ensuring that registered students are consistently present and benefiting from instructional programs.

It is recommended that NNCEA, in collaboration with O.K. School, implement a centralized system for monitoring and tracking the impact of attendance-related home visits conducted by the Attendance Officer, to systematically document, analyze, and measure their effectiveness. While home visits are currently being tracked, the evaluation identified an opportunity to strengthen the use of this information to assess whether interventions are producing measurable improvements in student attendance over time.

- The proposed system should take the form of a structured matrix or database that integrates existing attendance thresholds already used by O.K. School to flag concerns. Each student record should include baseline attendance data at the time a threshold is triggered; the date and purpose of the home visit; key issues identified during the visit (e.g., morning routines, illness, caregiving responsibilities, transportation); and the follow-up actions agreed upon with the family.

- Critically, the system should be designed to support longitudinal tracking, allowing O.K. School to compare attendance patterns before and after home visits at defined intervals (e.g., 2, 4, and 8 weeks post-intervention). This will enable the school and NNCEA to distinguish between short-term improvements and sustained changes in attendance, and to identify which types of interventions are most effective for different attendance barriers.

- In addition, the database should be able to generate standardized summary reports at the classroom, grade, and school levels. These reports should highlight the number of students flagged at each attendance threshold, the number and frequency of home visits conducted, follow-up actions completed and observed changes in attendance outcomes. Such reporting would provide NNCEA and school leadership with an evidence-based tool to assess the impact of attendance interventions, refine strategies, and allocate resources more effectively.

In addition, it also recommended that:

- Publish a two-page O.K. School Attendance Playbook (approved and included in the Handbook). The playbook should define a simple school-wide process for identifying, contacting, and supporting absent students, including roles (Attendance Officer, teachers, Principal, Counselling/Resource), timelines, communication scripts, a menu of family supports (transportation,

food access, counselling referrals, after-school supports), and case escalation procedures.

- Hold a 15–30 minute monthly case review involving the Attendance Officer, Principal, and Counselling/Resource staff.
- Maintain compassionate and practical outreach practices grounded in trauma-informed approaches, pairing contact with concrete supports and using positive teacher communication (“glows and grows”) to strengthen the school–home relationship.
- Reinforce the visibility and value of attendance by continuing weekly Student of the Week recognition (including O.K. Bucks) and the monthly perfect-attendance assembly.
- Use PowerSchool as the single source of truth for attendance data, establish minimum data standards, and maintain a one-page monthly dashboard (ADA%, chronic absenteeism counts, grade-level trends, improvement cohorts) to guide supports and supervision.

3.5.2.3. Student Performance & Achievement

Across the period reviewed (2017-2025), evidence consistently shows that O.K. School has a dedicated staff, strong relationships, and pockets of effective classroom practice. Literacy and numeracy initiatives, collaborative efforts, and targeted interventions have produced localized and short-term gains. However, overall student outcomes remain mixed and uneven, with sustained, cohort-wide improvement constrained by foundational conditions for learning that are not yet reliably in place across classrooms and months.

Performance Conditions Affecting Learning:

The dominant performance factors shaping both daily learning and longer-term achievement are consistent across evaluation cycles:

- Irregular attendance, which reduces instructional time, disrupts continuity, and forces cyclical reteaching.
- Rising social-emotional and behavioural needs, which erode time on task and increase classroom variability.
- Inconsistent implementation fidelity of common instructional routines, assessment practices, and behaviour/SEL frameworks.
- IEP/IPP handoff and follow-through gaps, which limit the effectiveness of inclusive education supports and small-group instruction.

These conditions affect not only what is taught, but how consistently learning time is protected and how clearly progress is monitored and acted upon.

Achievement Evidence:

a) Literacy:

Repeated findings since the 2017-18 evaluation indicate that Grades 3-4 are the highest-need band, with students struggling in foundational reading and writing. Early evaluations indicated that many students at these levels were unable to complete written surveys independently, reflecting weaknesses in decoding, comprehension, and written expression.

While Fountas & Pinnell (F&P) reading levels are collected and literacy programming is widely implemented (guided reading, literacy centres, phonics-based interventions, celebrations), assessment data have not always been leveraged through a consistent assessment-to-instruction feedback loop. Where teams maintained regular guided reading, phonics routines, and monthly checks, progress was more visible. Where attendance volatility or routine fidelity faltered, teachers reported flat trajectories and repeated reteaching.

Targeted interventions did generate measurable short-term gains, most notably in 2021-22, when recorded F&P levels increased significantly between fall and spring. However, these gains did not consistently translate into sustained, cohort-wide achievement over time.

b) Numeracy:

Student engagement in numeracy is strongest when instruction is scaffolded, hands-on, and clearly structured. Growth patterns, however, vary by grade because there is no consistently protected numeracy block across the school. Where common unit checks, fluency work, and targeted small groups were maintained, progress was steadier. Where coverage gaps occurred due to absence, staffing pressures, or uneven uptake of routines (e.g., JUMP Math), growth slowed or plateaued.

c) Inclusive Education (IEP/IPP) and Educational Assistants:

Inclusive education remains a direct determinant of both performance and achievement. Interviews and survey data repeatedly point to:

- Delays or unclear handoffs of IEP/IPP plans from Resource to classroom teachers
- Uncertainty around accommodations versus modifications
- Variability in EA roles and alignment to instructional goals

When plans do not provide clear, classroom-ready guidance, or when accommodations are implemented inconsistently, identified students do not achieve the intended progress.

d) Behaviour/SEL and Learning Time:

Multiple behaviour and SEL tools exist division-wide, but the absence of a single, fidelity-coached Tier 1 framework has led to inconsistent classroom routines. Transitions and incident responses vary by room, instructional minutes are lost, and progress monitoring (particularly reading checks) becomes uneven and incomplete.

Across all years reviewed, attendance emerges as the dominant constraint on achievement. Chronic absenteeism (exacerbated during COVID years but persistent before and after) shortens instructional time, reduces participation in assessments, and prevents interventions from compounding into sustained gains. Even well-designed programs cannot produce consistent results when students attend sporadically.

Implementation fidelity is the second major constraint. In 2024-25, reports that some teachers were “not receptive” to literacy centres and JUMP Math illustrate how uneven uptake weakens the impact of schoolwide initiatives. Without clear non-negotiables, coaching, and follow-through, interventions function as programs rather than embedded practice.

Capacity pressures related to EA deployment and IEP/IPP coordination further dilute small-group instruction for the students who need it most.

In summary, O.K. School is doing many of the right things. However, student achievement remains constrained because time-on-task (attendance) and implementation fidelity (common routines and data use) are not yet consistently secured across classrooms and over time. Effort and intention are strong; however, the missing element is a small number of simple, schoolwide structures that reliably protect learning time and translate strategy into daily practice.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that O.K. School re-establish a clear academic baseline by reintroducing standardized assessments (e.g., Canadian Test of Basic Skills) to establish cohort benchmarks, identify system-level strengths and gaps, and track progress over time, as recommended in the 2017–18 evaluation.

It is also recommended that O.K. School:

- Establish a clear assessment-to-instruction cycle by publishing a one-page assessment calendar. Make assessment-to-instruction a non-negotiable loop. Publish a one-page assessment calendar (initial literacy/numeracy checks in September; common unit checks; re-checks every 6-8 weeks for students below benchmark). Use walkthrough "look-fors" tied to learning targets, checks for understanding, and small-group instruction.

- Develop a Reading Progress Dashboard to monitor student progress. Maintain the collaborative spirit of data walls while transitioning to a portable, up-to-date digital dashboard (PowerSchool or a shared sheet). Log F&P levels three times per year (Sept/Jan/May) and monthly running records for students below grade level. Review monthly in PLCs, documenting next-step strategies for each below-benchmark student.

- Strengthen IEP/IPP handoff and classroom implementation. Deliver updated IEP/IPP plans and a one-page learner profile to teachers within 10 school days. Hold monthly grade-team case huddles with Resource/Counselling. Maintain a permissioned folder with version control so teachers know plans are current.

- Treat attendance as an academic intervention and follow recommendations in Section 3.5.2.2.

- Implement coached professional development cycles. Identify 2–3 model classrooms for brief peer learning labs. Run 6 to 8-week coaching cycles focused on guided reading, small-group math, and formative assessment.

- Protect learning time through consistent routines. Establish a protected numeracy block with common expectations (fluency, problem solving, quick checks). Anchor Tier 1 behaviour/SEL routines with coaching to fidelity to reduce variability and reclaim instructional minutes.

3.5.3. Special Education & Student Support Services

3.5.3.1. Student Support Programs, Assessment & Referral Procedures

O.K. School has established a broad, multidisciplinary student support system intended to address academic, behavioural, social-emotional, attendance, and wellness needs. Evidence from annual reports and interviews confirms that the school recognizes the complex realities affecting students and families, including trauma, grief, inconsistent attendance, learning gaps, and social-emotional regulation challenges.

Across the NNCEA system, more than 360 students, between O.K. School and NNOC, received IEPs in 2023-24, indicating a significant scale of inclusive education programming. O.K. School accounts for a substantial portion of this demand and operates in a high-volume special education environment.

Student supports at O.K. School are delivered through a combination of Inclusive Education services, counselling and guidance supports, attendance interventions, and culturally grounded programming.

Inclusive Education at O.K. School includes:

- Five Resource teachers
- Two part-time counsellors
- One Literacy Support teacher
- One Speech support staff member
- A Special Education Assistant
- A Sensory Room
- Scheduled visits from a Psychologist and an Occupational Therapist
- Approximately 66 EAs, with 1-3 EAs assigned per classroom

An alternative classroom is also available within the school to support students with complex needs. Support materials and manipulatives are available in the Resource Room, and classrooms access these resources to varying degrees.

This staffing structure reflects significant NNCEA investment in student support. A majority of student services staff are experienced classroom teachers from the community who have pursued additional training in student services areas, strengthening cultural relevance and contextual responsiveness.

IEPs are generally prepared by the end of Term 1 (late November) and are developed collaboratively by Resource Teachers in consultation with the support team and families. Plans are adapted throughout the year based on student progress. However, feedback indicates that preparing updated IEPs before June transition meetings would improve continuity across grade levels and reduce delays in plan revisions at the start of the school year.

The Resource Team is described as internally collaborative and committed; however, workload pressures are significant. The Resource Coordinator is responsible not only for program organization but also for training and overseeing approximately 66 EAs. Given the scale of

supervision required, this portfolio alone represents a substantial leadership function. Planned additions in the 2024-25 SEP Workplan, including two additional learning support teachers for O.K. School, indicate that demand continues to outpace capacity.

Counselling and student wellness supports have expanded and diversified in recent years. The current counselling team provides individual counselling, classroom-based social-emotional learning (SEL), crisis response, restorative and sharing circles, and collaboration with families and external agencies. Counsellors report high levels of student need related to trauma, grief and loss, emotional regulation, bullying, unstable home environments, sleep deprivation, and food insecurity. These needs significantly affect students' readiness to learn and ability to remain regulated in classrooms.

Attendance-related supports form another critical component of the student support system. The Attendance Officer role, which functions similarly to a home liaison position, includes monitoring attendance data, conducting home visits, engaging families, and reporting to administration. Evidence indicates that home visits often result in short-term improvements in attendance; however, documentation, benchmarking, and systematic tracking of impact remain inconsistent, limiting the school's ability to assess the effectiveness of attendance interventions over time.

Cultural and land-based supports further complement formal student services. Elders in schools (limited at the time of the evaluation), cultural counselling, language programming, land-based learning, and culture camps are consistently described as stabilizing and protective supports that foster belonging, identity, and engagement, particularly for students who struggle in conventional classroom settings.

Assessment Practices:

Assessment practices at O.K. School rely on a combination of classroom-based assessment, literacy screening tools, teacher observations, and informal progress monitoring. Literacy initiatives, such as guided reading and early literacy assessment, are used to identify students who require additional intervention. Assessment information is typically used to inform classroom instruction, assign EAs, and trigger referrals to Inclusive Education or counselling supports.

However, across multiple sources, assessment practices are described as unevenly implemented and insufficiently systematized. While individual teachers and support staff use assessment data effectively in their own classrooms, there is limited evidence of a consistent, schoolwide assessment cycle that tracks student progress over time, evaluates the impact of interventions, and informs timely adjustments.

Teachers would benefit from additional training in baseline assessment practices and differentiation planning to ensure consistent instructional response to identified learning gaps. Resource teachers have expressed interest in developing structured differentiation strategy guides and modelling practices for classroom teachers, although time constraints limit implementation.

The underutilization of PowerSchool for academic, behavioural, and intervention tracking further constrains data-informed decision-making.

Referral and Follow-Up Procedures:

Referral to student support services typically follows a teacher-initiated process, with the administration's support. Teachers identify concerns related to learning, behaviour, attendance, or well-being and refer students to administration, counselling, or Inclusive Education. Counsellors use a tiered prioritization system (urgent, ASAP, within days) to manage referrals, with immediate response for crisis situations and structured protocols for suicide risk assessment, safety planning, and mandated reporting.

In practice, referral pathways are functional but not consistently formalized or documented. There is no standardized referral template across Resource, Speech, or other services, and meeting structures vary in documentation rigour. The evaluation identified the need for:

- A standardized referral process
- Regular interdisciplinary meetings with clear action tracking
- Consistent administrative presence at Resource meetings
- Formal meeting minutes with assigned responsibilities and follow-up timelines

Teachers, EAs, and counsellors report variability in how classroom-level interventions are attempted before referral and in how follow-up information is shared. Effective outcomes depend heavily on classroom follow-through and teacher engagement: where this occurs, student behaviour and regulation improve; where it does not, progress is limited or short-lived.

Parental engagement in assessment and referral processes remains challenging. While parents are invited to participate in meetings and consent processes, counsellors report that meaningful engagement often requires home visits and direct, in-person contact, frequently facilitated by the Attendance Officer. Sustained family involvement in intervention planning remains limited, reflecting broader socio-economic pressures.

EA Deployment and Classroom Integration:

With approximately 66 EAs assigned across classrooms, staff support is significant. However, there is variability in how effectively EAs are deployed and utilized. Some classroom teachers integrate EA support strategically and effectively; others require additional training to maximize its impact. Likewise, while many EAs are highly engaged, others demonstrate inconsistent classroom participation.

Despite NNCEA developing the EA Handbook, which clearly outlines the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of EAs and emphasizes their importance in supporting inclusive and culturally responsive educational programming, the evaluation identified the need to strengthen regular short-cycle training, ongoing reinforcement of expectations, and structured monitoring processes. These supports must be implemented consistently and reviewed periodically. Given the scale of the EA workforce, more formalized supervision structures and clearly defined work plans would further enhance accountability, role clarity, and alignment across schools.

Overall Assessment:

Evidence demonstrates that O.K. School has assembled a wide range of student support programs and committed professional staff who are responsive to student needs and deeply invested in student well-being. The availability of resource teachers, counsellors, attendance outreach, EAs, clinical supports, and culturally grounded programming represents a significant strength of the system.

At the same time, the impact of these supports is constrained by systemic factors, including inconsistent attendance, uneven classroom implementation of differentiation and behavioural strategies, limited coherence in assessment, workload strain within the Resource portfolio, and insufficient data tracking to measure outcomes.

The evaluation evidence suggests that the primary challenge is not the absence of services but the need for stronger structural coherence, formalized referral processes, clearer accountability mechanisms, and system-level monitoring to ensure that student support programs operate as an integrated, measurable framework rather than parallel efforts.

A summary of the key findings is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Student Support Programs – Key Findings

1	**The primary challenge is system coherence, not program availability**	*The evidence indicates that O.K. School does not lack student support services; rather, it lacks a unified framework that clearly defines roles, expectations, referral thresholds, and accountability across classrooms, support staff, and administration. Without this coherence, the effectiveness of even strong programs is diluted.*
2	**Reactive support models are not sustainable.**	*The current reliance on crisis response and individualized intervention places ongoing strain on counselling and student services staff. Without stronger prevention, classroom-based SEL ownership, and attendance stabilization, demand will continue to outpace capacity, limiting long-term impact.*
3	**Attendance must be treated as a foundational condition for success.**	*Student support programs cannot compensate for chronic absenteeism. Attendance improvement requires explicit messaging, consistent tracking, and shared responsibility across school, family, and community systems. Without this shift, gains in counselling, inclusive education, and academic support will remain fragile.*
4	**Data and documentation are essential to improvement, not optional.**	*The absence of consistent data on referrals, interventions, and outcomes limits the school's ability to move from effort-based reporting to evidence-based decision-making. Strengthening assessment, referral documentation, and use of PowerSchool is essential for understanding what works, for whom, and under what conditions.*
5	**Classroom capacity-building is the leverage point.**	*Improving consistency in classroom management, SEL reinforcement, and use of student support recommendations represents the most powerful opportunity for improving outcomes. Counselling and student services are most effective when they support (not replace) strong, confident classroom practice.*

Comments and Recommendations:

It is recommended that O.K. School develop and implement a clearly articulated student support framework that defines:

- Roles and responsibilities of teachers, counsellors, resource staff, EAs, and administration
- Referral thresholds and required pre-referral classroom interventions
- Expectations for collaboration, documentation, and follow-up

It is recommended that O.K. School gradually shift counselling and student services from a predominantly crisis-response model toward a more preventive and developmental approach, including:

- Regular classroom-based SEL programming
- Proactive skill-building for emotional regulation and behaviour
- Ongoing staff coaching and consultation

It is recommended that O.K. School implement standardized school-wide processes, including:

- Clear documentation of classroom interventions prior to referral
- Consistent use and sharing of IEPs/SSPs with classroom teachers
- Centralized tracking of referrals, interventions, and follow-up

It is recommended that attendance be treated as a foundational condition for learning, including:

- Establishing clear benchmarks (e.g., chronic absenteeism thresholds)
- Systematically tracking attendance trends and intervention outcomes
- Pairing attendance data with academic and behavioural reporting to families
- Framing attendance as a shared responsibility between the school, families, and community leadership

It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen classroom implementation as the primary leverage point for improvement by prioritizing consistent classroom practices, including:

- Clarifying expectations for behaviour management and SEL reinforcement
- Providing targeted professional development and coaching
- Reinforcing teacher ownership of classroom-level interventions before escalation

3.5.3.2. Nutrition Programs

Nutritional programming at O.K. School has emerged as a core student support and equity measure, rather than a peripheral service. Evidence from annual reports, staff interviews, and administrative meetings consistently identifies food security as a foundational condition that influences attendance, behaviour, emotional regulation, and students' readiness to learn. In this context, O.K. School's nutritional programs serve both as a basic-needs intervention and as strategic educational support.

O.K. School operates an enhanced school nutrition program that provides regular access to meals during the school day. The program is designed to ensure that students (many of whom arrive at school without adequate sleep or nutrition) can participate meaningfully in learning activities. Evaluation evidence indicates significant financial and operational investment in the nutrition program, with annual expenditures estimated at hundreds of thousands of dollars, underscoring NNCEA's commitment to student well-being.

Nutrition services are delivered universally rather than selectively, reducing stigma and ensuring that students experiencing food insecurity are supported without the need for formal identification or referral. This universal approach aligns with trauma-informed and equity-based practices, recognizing that food insecurity is widespread and often interconnected with housing overcrowding, poverty, and family instability.

Stakeholders consistently describe the nutrition program as one of the most effective and stabilizing supports at O.K. School. Administrators, counsellors, and evaluators note that reliable access to food contributes directly to:

- Improved student regulation and focus
- Reduced behavioural escalation linked to hunger
- Increased willingness of students to remain at school throughout the day
- A more welcoming and supportive school climate

For students experiencing trauma, grief, or chaotic home environments, the nutrition program provides predictability and care that supports emotional safety. Staff report that students often associate school with being fed, safe, and supported, an important factor in engagement for students who might otherwise disengage.

The nutritional program is closely intertwined with other student support services. Counsellors and administrators consistently identify nutrition as a precondition for the effectiveness of counselling, behaviour interventions, and academic supports. Students who are hungry or food insecure are less able to benefit from counselling sessions, classroom instruction, or SEL programming.

However, while nutrition is clearly recognized as foundational, the evaluation evidence suggests that its role is not always explicitly articulated within a broader student support framework. The nutrition program operates effectively, but largely as an assumed background condition rather than as a formally integrated component of attendance, behaviour, and learning strategies.

The primary strength of O.K. School's nutritional programming is its scale, consistency, and normalization. The program demonstrates NNCEA's recognition that learning cannot occur

when basic needs are unmet, and it reflects a culturally grounded understanding of collective responsibility for children.

Operational challenges are not centered on program intent or commitment, but rather on sustainability and integration. The program requires substantial financial resources, staffing, and coordination, and its long-term sustainability depends on continued funding stability and infrastructure investment. Planned kitchen renovations and facility improvements referenced in recent reports signal awareness of these operational pressures and a proactive approach to maintaining program quality.

Overall, the evaluation finds that O.K. School's nutrition programs are a significant strength and an essential foundation for student success. The program directly mitigates the impacts of food insecurity, supports emotional regulation, and enhances the effectiveness of other educational and wellness interventions.

At the same time, the evaluation suggests that the nutrition program's strategic value could be further strengthened by explicitly positioning it within a coordinated student support and attendance framework, where its contribution to learning, behaviour, and engagement is formally acknowledged, monitored, and communicated. Doing so would reinforce nutrition not simply as a service, but as a core educational strategy aligned with O.K. School's holistic approach to student success.

Comments and Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA, Chief and Council, and funding partners explicitly reaffirm their commitment to maintaining and supporting the nutrition program at O.K. School. The evidence clearly demonstrates that reliable access to nutritious food is foundational to student attendance, emotional regulation, engagement, and learning. Continued investment should be framed not as a supplementary service, but as an essential component of student success and community well-being.

It is recommended that the nutrition program be formally integrated into the broader student support and attendance framework. Nutrition should be identified as a prerequisite for effective counselling, behaviour support, and classroom learning, and referenced in attendance messaging to families as part of the school's holistic approach to supporting children and youth.

It is recommended that documentation and communication of the program's impact be strengthened. While the benefits of the nutrition program are widely recognized, simple documentation practices should be developed to capture its impact (e.g., attendance stability, reduced behaviour incidents linked to hunger, and student and staff feedback). Sharing this information with the Board, Chief and Council, and the NCN community will reinforce the program's value and support ongoing advocacy for funding.

It is recommended that NNCEA explore, where feasible, culturally relevant and community-connected enhancements to the nutrition program. Where capacity and resources permit, the evaluation encourages NNCEA to further align the nutrition program with NCN values and community strengths, including incorporating traditional foods, community harvesting initiatives, school gardens, and partnerships

with local programs that reinforce cultural identity while supporting food security.

3.5.4. School Climate & Perception

3.5.4.1. Teachers & Staff

Across the period reviewed, from the 2017-18 evaluation through recent annual reports and the 2025 Teacher Survey, the climate at O.K. School is characterized by strong collegial commitment operating under persistent operational strain. The earlier evaluation documented low staff morale linked to resource constraints, facility concerns, student behaviour pressures, print-shop bottlenecks, and a perceived lack of senior-administration support. Those themes echo in subsequent reports, where teachers and administrators repeatedly cite escalating behaviour complexity, uneven attendance, and gaps in day-to-day supports as defining features of the working environment.

The 2025 Teacher Survey quantifies that pressure. A large majority of respondents identified social-emotional needs as a top classroom stressor, followed closely by attendance concerns and family-related factors that affect participation and follow-through. Teachers also flagged practical frictions that intensify workload, including technology reliability, duty coverage, and delays or uncertainty around IEP/IPP handoff and Resource guidance. Roughly a third described difficulty accessing timely, classroom-ready accommodations or clarity on modifications. These conditions contribute to perceptions that discipline and support routines are not applied with equal consistency across classrooms, feeding a sense of strain and undermining confidence that schoolwide efforts will “stick.”

At the same time, the school's relational core is notably strong. Staff generally appreciate the Administration’s efforts to support both students and educators. Teachers recognize visible leadership engagement throughout the building, regular administrative presence in hallways and classrooms, and structural improvements, such as the implementation of a security FOB system and revised timetabling to support calmer daily transitions. Relationships between teaching staff and the administration are described as having improved over time, with administrators viewed as accessible, supportive of professional development, and committed to strengthening school operations.

Collegial trust among teachers remains a significant asset. Consistent with 2017-18 findings, staff describe their colleagues as committed, generous with materials and planning time, and united by a desire to “do right by kids.” Many report positive experiences with peer collaboration, literacy coaching cycles, and shared problem-solving around students of concern. Trauma-informed practices have improved conversations with students and families, and recognitions (e.g., Student of the Week; monthly attendance assemblies) help rebuild classroom tone after difficult stretches.

However, emerging staff climate pressures warrant attention. Concerns were raised regarding accountability processes, particularly when staff attendance or rule compliance issues are perceived as being addressed broadly rather than through individual corrective action. Reliable staff report burnout risk when repeatedly covering for absent colleagues, and Educational Assistants report experiencing heightened workload strain in classrooms that depend on consistent adult support. Scheduling overlaps have also reduced protected wellness time, contributing to fatigue.

Communication clarity was identified as an area for improvement, including the need for more structured face-to-face engagement and better coordination among classroom teachers,

Resource staff, and administration. Staff acknowledge that administrators are managing high operational demands; however, inconsistent communication and follow-through can amplify existing stressors.

Overall, O.K. School's climate is best understood as high-commitment operating under high friction. The school benefits from caring adults, visible and engaged leadership, and a staff culture that values teamwork and student wellbeing. Yet chronic absenteeism (both student and staff), complex behavioural demands, uneven execution of core routines, and accountability gaps continue to place sustained pressure on morale and limit the full impact of instructional initiatives.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that OK Administration works towards "making the day predictable (one schoolwide playbook). Adopt a single behaviour/SEL framework coached to fidelity; set clear hallway/bus duty maps, calm-start routines, and end-of-day "stick" activities; run a 20-minute monthly data huddle (AO–Admin–Counselling/Resource) and a weekly ops memo (duties, supervision hot spots, key students, upcoming events).

It is recommended that O.K. strengthen accountability structures with clear, individualized follow-through. To protect morale and reinforce professional expectations, O.K. School should formalize clear accountability protocols for staff attendance, duty compliance, and professional conduct. Staff concerns indicate that inconsistent enforcement contributes to perceptions of inequity and burnout among reliable employees.

It is recommended that O.K. School establish more structured, predictable internal communication mechanisms to address reported communication gaps and strengthen coherence among the Administration, Resource staff, and classroom teachers. This could include:

- Scheduled face-to-face briefings between Administration and grade teams;
- Clear documentation of decisions and action items from support meetings;
- Defined communication pathways regarding IEP/IPP updates and classroom expectations;
- Clarified roles and reporting lines within interdisciplinary teams.

3.5.4.2. Students

Across the reporting period, O.K. School's student climate can be characterized as a system in active transition, the school has implemented multiple, deliberate approaches to strengthen safety, belonging, and positive behaviour, while continuing to face persistent pressures related to bullying, inconsistent attendance, and student trauma-related needs.

The reports describe a sustained emphasis on strengthening the foundations of a positive school climate through whole-school and classroom-based behaviour supports. In 2019-2020, the school reported school-wide success in reducing bullying when classes resumed, and emphasized the structured implementation of the PAX program (aligned with PBIS), which was framed as a proactive approach to building learning environments that prevent problem behaviour and explicitly teach pro-social skills. This work was also connected to the school's broader commitment to becoming a trauma-informed environment, with staff intentionally working toward that goal over multiple years.

In 2020-2021, the reports indicate measurable progress in student behaviour outcomes, particularly in the middle years. The school documented a major reduction in behavioural infractions, comparing earlier data (255 incidents as of Feb 2019-2020) to 27 incidents as of Feb 2021, including a decrease in the proportion of severe incidents and suspensions.

The report attributes this reduction to consistent leadership expectations and trauma-informed practices, reinforcing the view that when supports are implemented consistently, student behaviour outcomes can improve.

More recently, the 2023-2024 report describes additional schoolwide climate-building efforts focused on student engagement and strengths-based reinforcement, including the introduction of a school currency and store (OK Bucks) as part of PBIS implementation. The report notes this initiative as "tremendously successful" in motivating students to attend, participate, and demonstrate prosocial behaviour, while also recognizing that attendance still requires improvement.

Despite these proactive strategies, the 2021-2022 reporting period highlights a significant climate concern: bullying is described as a "major issue" with emotional, physical, and educational impacts on students. Importantly, the report notes that even with multiple student safety plans in place, students remained reluctant to attend school, indicating that safety planning alone did not fully restore a sense of security and trust among students and families during that period.

This points to a deeper climate dynamic as bullying was not only an incident-management issue but a factor influencing school participation and perceived safety.

A key development in recent years is the strengthening of student support services, which directly shape student climate. Counselling, SEL, crisis response, and culturally grounded wellbeing supports. O.K. School has a comprehensive counselling program designed to support students' social, emotional, and academic development, fostering a safe and inclusive environment.

The Cultural Support & Counselling documentation references structured tools and processes such as a crisis team plan, referral forms, action plans, safety plan, reinstatement programming,

and restorative approaches (e.g., sharing/restorative circles).

Overall, it is evident that O.K. School has a clear awareness of climate-related risks (particularly bullying and safety perceptions) and a multi-year trajectory of investing in solutions: PBIS/PAX implementation, trauma-informed practices, increased student engagement incentives, comprehensive counselling/SEL, and culturally grounded restorative supports.

School Climate:

The overall school climate at O.K. School can be described as warm, caring, and welcoming for students who attend regularly, while also experiencing ongoing pressures related to attendance, inconsistent supervision, variable classroom management, and external safety factors. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to student wellbeing, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness; however, the effectiveness of climate-related practices varies across settings and is influenced by both internal capacity and broader community conditions.

Students who consistently attend O.K. School generally enjoy being at school and feel comfortable in the environment. Many students demonstrate strong attachment to the school, including reluctance to leave during the day and a preference to remain at school even when feeling unwell. This reflects O.K. School's role as a stable, supportive space for children, reinforced by access to meals, after-school programming, counselling supports, and culturally grounded activities.

Parent and caregiver engagement initiatives (particularly student-led conferences and family engagement evenings) have contributed positively to school climate by strengthening relationships between home and school. These approaches have significantly increased family participation compared to previous models, reinforcing a shared sense of responsibility for student success and wellbeing.

The operational changes introduced in recent years have mattered. At O.K. School, controlled-access procedures and bell/buzzer-based movement controls, along with a staggered lunch structure supported by designated supervision leads, have reduced unsupervised student movement during high-traffic periods and improved overall flow and monitoring. Where these controls are paired with posted expectations and visible adult presence, students experience quieter corridors, fewer unplanned classroom disruptions, and smoother re-entry following breaks.

At the same time, supervision practices remain a concern. Inconsistent active supervision during recess and lunch, combined with ongoing issues related to staff cell phone use while on duty, continues to affect perceptions of safety and predictability. While the principal and administration have taken steps to reinforce expectations and increase oversight, the consistency of supervision remains uneven, placing additional pressure on leadership and highlighting the need for clearer accountability structures.

Attendance continues to be a critical factor shaping school climate. Chronic absenteeism (particularly in Nursery and Kindergarten) undermines continuity of learning, peer relationships, and classroom routines. The principal identified multiple systemic and community-based factors influencing attendance, including grief and loss, overcrowded housing, food insecurity, and income-assistance payment cycles.

Evaluators observed that classroom climate varied significantly across O.K. School. Some classrooms demonstrated strong engagement, predictable routines, and positive behaviour, while others rely heavily on administrative intervention for discipline. A substantial proportion of classrooms regularly refer students to the office for behaviour-related issues, including minor concerns, indicating inconsistent classroom management practices and thresholds.

Although professional development has been provided in classroom management and inclusive practices, the principal identified confidence and empowerment, rather than lack of knowledge, as key limiting factors. This variability affects students' experiences of consistency and fairness, contributing to uneven perceptions of safety and behavioural expectations across the school.

O.K. School benefits from a strong counselling and mental health support team, providing individual counselling, crisis response, restorative and sharing circles, and classroom-based instruction on topics such as peer relationships, harassment, and online behaviour. These supports play a critical role in addressing social-emotional needs and mitigating behaviour challenges in a community context marked by trauma and instability.

A significant strength influencing school climate is the inclusive education/alternative program, which has successfully brought previously non-attending students with complex needs into regular attendance. This initiative has had a positive effect on both attendance and overall climate by offering flexible, strengths-based supports. However, broader inclusive education systems remain strained, with ongoing challenges in the timely completion of IEPs/Student Support Plans and in supervising educational assistants.

External safety factors continue to affect school climate. Of particular concern is the ongoing issue of roaming dogs on school grounds, which has resulted in incidents involving students and contributes to anxiety during outdoor periods. While mitigation efforts are in place, inconsistent responses from external agencies limit the school's ability to fully address this risk, underscoring the importance of coordinated, community-level solutions.

In summary, O.K. School demonstrates many foundational elements of a positive school climate, including strong relationships with attending students, counselling supports, inclusive programming, and thoughtful operational controls to manage student movement and supervision. However, climate remains fragile in areas where attendance is inconsistent, supervision practices vary, and classroom management expectations are unevenly applied.

Sustained improvement in school climate will depend on continued alignment between operational structures, staff practices, and system-level expectations. Attendance, behaviour, supervision, and student well-being are deeply interconnected; progress in one area is likely to reinforce gains in others. Strengthening consistency, accountability, and communication, while maintaining the school's relational and culturally grounded strengths, will be essential to further improving the student climate at O.K. School.

Electronic Devices at the School:

Electronic devices at O.K. School are not considered a formal student discipline concern; however, their indirect impact on the school climate is evident. Staff cell phone use during recess and lunch supervision has been identified as a persistent challenge, contributing to inconsistent active supervision and reduced visibility during unstructured times. In response, school leadership has reinforced expectations and is working toward clearer accountability

mechanisms. For students, electronic devices are most relevant in the context of social media use and online behaviour, with the school addressing these issues through counselling supports and classroom-based education focused on harassment prevention and digital responsibility.

Surveys & Perception:

Results from the Grades 3-6 student survey provide valuable insight into how students experience the climate at O.K. School. Overall, student responses suggest a school environment with strong adult–student relationships and a general sense of belonging, alongside ongoing challenges related to peer interactions, bullying, and bystander confidence.

A clear strength identified in the survey is students' connection to adults at the school. Most students report that adults care about them, that they have at least one trusted adult they can talk to, and that they generally enjoy being at school. A similar proportion indicates that they feel safe and that they belong at O.K. School. These findings point to a solid relational foundation and suggest that many students experience the school as supportive and welcoming, particularly in their interactions with teachers, educational assistants, and administrators.

However, perceptions related to peer-to-peer climate are notably weaker. Fewer students report that classmates are kind to one another compared to those who feel supported by adults. Perceptions of fairness are also less consistent, with a sizeable minority of students indicating that adults are not always fair or that bullying rules are unclear. This gap between adult support and peer behaviour highlights a key area where school climate is experienced unevenly by students.

Survey responses related to bullying further underscore this concern. Many students report experiencing or witnessing bullying behaviours periodically, with verbal harassment (name-calling and teasing) emerging as the most common form. Physical aggression, damage or theft of belongings, and unkind behaviour during games or online are also reported by a substantial portion of respondents. In addition, over half of the students reported feeling unsafe going to or from school at least some of the time. While these experiences do not reflect all students, they are frequent enough to meaningfully shape perceptions of safety and well-being for a segment of the student population.

The survey also reveals important information about help-seeking and bystander behaviour. On a positive note, most students can identify specific adults they would approach for help, most often teachers, educational assistants, and school administrators. This suggests that reporting pathways exist and are visible to many students. At the same time, responses indicate that students are less confident about what to do in the moment when bullying occurs. Only a minority report that they often or almost always speak up, tell an adult, support the student being bullied, or refrain from joining in. Many students report at least some uncertainty about how to respond, particularly as bystanders.

Open-ended responses reinforce these findings. Students frequently call for more adult supervision, clearer rules, and stronger or more consistent consequences. When asked what makes them feel safe, students most often reference the presence and actions of adults, rather than systems or policies. This suggests that students associate safety and fairness with visible, consistent adult engagement, especially during unstructured times and in peer interactions.

Taken together, the student survey results indicate that O.K. School has a strong foundation of

adult support and a sense of belonging, which serves as an important protective factor for student well-being. At the same time, peer-to-peer climate remains fragile, with bullying and uncertainty about bystander action continuing to affect students' experiences. Addressing these concerns will likely require sustained attention to setting clear expectations, providing explicit guidance to students on how to respond to bullying, ensuring consistent adult follow-through, and maintaining visible supervision, particularly in settings where students report feeling less safe.

Student Mental Health Concerns:

Student mental health is a significant underlying factor shaping the school climate at O.K. School. Across annual reporting and leadership discussions, high levels of grief, trauma, and instability in students' home and community environments are consistently identified as influencing attendance, behaviour, and peer interactions. In response, the school has relied heavily on counselling, crisis response, restorative practices, and relationship-based supports as core climate strategies rather than add-on services.

Student survey results reinforce this picture: many students report strong connections to caring adults and a willingness to seek help, while a smaller but important group continues to experience uncertainty, fear, or reluctance to speak up when issues arise. Behaviour and attendance challenges are frequently framed through a well-being lens, with school leadership recognizing that emotional regulation, safety, and belonging must be addressed alongside academic expectations. Taken together, these findings suggest that student mental health is not separate from school climate at O.K. School, but a central condition for maintaining safety, engagement, and positive relationships.

Comments & Recommendations:

O.K. School demonstrates strong commitment, reflective leadership, and meaningful progress in improving student climate. Sustained improvement will depend on greater consistency, clearer expectations, and stronger system alignment, ensuring that successful practices are not dependent on individual effort but embedded across classrooms, routines, and years. Therefore:

It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen consistency in supervision and adult presence by establishing clear and enforceable expectations for active supervision during recess, lunch, and transitions, including limits on staff cell phone use while on duty. Consistent adult visibility should be treated as a core school climate strategy,

It is recommended that O.K. School clarify and reinforce classroom behaviour expectations by developing shared minimum expectations for classroom management and behaviour responses across grades, reducing variability in students' experiences and reliance on administration for minor issues.

It is recommended that O.K. School explicitly teach bystander behaviour and reporting procedures by integrating age-appropriate guidance into classroom instruction and counselling programming, so students clearly understand how to respond when they witness bullying, beyond simply identifying trusted adults.

It is also recommended that climate-related operational practices be formalized and documented, ensuring that movement systems, staggered schedules, supervision roles, counselling processes, and restorative practices are clearly documented, communicated, and reviewed annually to support sustainability.

It is recommended that O.K. School continue to protect and sustain its counselling and mental health capacity. Given the strong link between student well-being and school climate, counselling, SEL, and crisis-response capacity should be maintained as essential services rather than discretionary supports.

3.5.4.3. Parents & Caregivers

Across the reporting period, parents' and caregivers' perceptions of O.K. School reflect a pattern of relationship-based, event-centred engagement that has gradually strengthened over time, while remaining uneven in depth and consistency, particularly regarding academic learning, attendance routines, student safety, and shared accountability for outcomes. Evidence informing this analysis includes annual school reports, attendance and enrolment data, Principal reflections, evaluator observations, and the O.K. School Parents and Caregivers Survey 2025, conducted for this evaluation.

Survey results and qualitative feedback largely reinforce earlier evaluation findings that families generally view O.K. School as a welcoming and supportive environment, with caring staff and a strong emphasis on relationship-building. Many parents and caregivers who completed the survey expressed positive perceptions of staff respect and approachability, as well as of the school's efforts to foster a sense of belonging among young learners.

At the same time, the survey identified clear, consistent safety-related concerns, particularly regarding dogs being present on or near the playground and bullying among students. A significant proportion of parents identified these issues as areas requiring attention and improvement. Concerns about dogs were primarily framed in terms of child safety, supervision, and anxiety among younger students. Bullying concerns were expressed both in general terms and in relation to how consistently incidents are addressed and communicated to families. These findings suggest that while the overall school climate is perceived as caring, specific environmental and behavioural safety issues meaningfully affect caregiver confidence.

Annual reporting consistently highlights O.K. School's emphasis on a strengths-based, positive approach to engagement with families, particularly in a community context shaped by social, economic, and intergenerational challenges. Survey comments support this emphasis, with caregivers frequently identifying caring teachers, approachable staff, and culturally affirming practices as strengths. Over time, the school has continued to move away from deficit-based engagement approaches, using celebrations, cultural activities, and student-centred events to encourage families to enter the school in positive ways.

Student-led conferences are identified by parents and caregivers as a notable strength. Survey feedback indicates that these conferences improve caregiver understanding of student learning and increase engagement compared to traditional parent–teacher interviews. Families value opportunities for children to share their learning directly, which supports transparency and shared responsibility.

Family engagement evenings and activity nights, when supported with transportation, meals, childcare, and incentives, continue to be well received. Parents identified these supports as critical for reducing participation barriers. Similarly, school celebrations and recognition activities are viewed positively and function as effective, non-punitive entry points for family engagement.

Since 2023, the school's Facebook page has improved communication reach and visibility. Survey responses confirm that social media is an effective communication tool for many families. However, communication gaps remain, particularly regarding academic expectations, student progress, behavioural concerns, and available supports. Parents indicated a desire for clearer, more consistent information about what children are expected to learn at each grade level, how progress is measured, and how concerns such as bullying or attendance are

addressed.

Attendance-related feedback reveals a nuanced area of misunderstanding. Some parents and caregivers indicated that student absences related to medical or other appointments should not be treated as absences. While these absences are often unavoidable and legitimate, from an instructional perspective, they still represent time away from learning. This feedback highlights a potential gap in shared understanding between families and the school regarding how instructional time, attendance, and learning continuity are defined. It suggests a need for clearer communication and dialogue with families about the cumulative impact of missed instructional time, even when absences are justified, and about strategies to minimize learning loss when appointments occur.

While many caregivers expressed satisfaction with the quality of education and basic skill development, areas for improvement identified by parents include clearer communication about academic expectations and progress, stronger and more consistent approaches to bullying prevention and response, improved playground safety (including addressing the presence of dogs), expanded extracurricular, cultural, and physical activity options, and greater clarity around student supports, including social-emotional and behavioural services.

Another recurring theme across survey results and annual reports is the inconsistent implementation of engagement initiatives. Parents noted that engagement is strongest when activities are predictable, well communicated, and supported by adequate resources. When initiatives are sporadic or short-term, participation declines, and momentum is lost, reinforcing the perception that engagement is event-based rather than an ongoing partnership.

The 2025 parent survey represents an important step in capturing the caregiver voice at O.K. School. However, evaluators observed that many surveys were incomplete. This limits the reliability of aggregate perception results and reinforces the importance of interpreting survey findings alongside qualitative comments, participation patterns, and other evidence.

The evidence suggests that O.K. School has established a strong relational foundation for family engagement, grounded in trust, cultural respect, and accessibility. Parents value the school’s welcoming approach and caring staff. At the same time, the survey highlights clear areas for improvement in safety, bullying, communication, understanding of attendance, and academic clarity. Addressing these concerns through consistent messaging, visible action, and sustained engagement structures will be critical to strengthening caregiver confidence and supporting positive student outcomes.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that O.K. School prioritizes addressing parent-identified safety concerns, particularly related to dogs on the playground and bullying prevention and response. This includes establishing and communicating clear expectations regarding playground safety, supervision, and access, alongside reinforcing consistent, transparent processes for identifying, responding to, and following up on bullying incidents. Visible action in these areas will be critical to restoring and strengthening caregiver confidence and ensuring that the school environment feels safe and predictable for all students.

It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen communication with parents and caregivers regarding academic expectations, attendance, and available student supports. This should include a clear explanation of the relationship among daily attendance, instructional time, and learning continuity, including cases of justified absences, such as medical appointments. Communication should also clarify how learning progress is measured, what it means for students to be “on track,” and how families can support learning and attendance at home. Using plain language and preferred communication channels (e.g., social media, direct contact) will support shared understanding and accountability.

3.5.5. Extra-Curricular and Related Programs

3.5.5.1. Extra-Curricular and Before/After Programs:

Extra-curricular and extended-day programming at O.K. School can be characterized as purposeful, student-centred, and supportive of engagement and wellbeing, though not yet formalized as a comprehensive or consistently documented program stream. These programs have developed organically in response to student and family needs, functioning primarily as supportive and protective extensions of the school day, rather than as structured enrichment systems.

O.K. School has offered after-school programming multiple days per week, with activities that emphasize:

- Student engagement and participation
- Cultural and land-based learning opportunities
- Recreational and wellness-oriented activities
- Supervised spaces for students to remain at school beyond instructional hours

While specific program inventories vary from year to year, a consistent intent to provide students with safe, supervised, and meaningful activities outside regular class time was observed. Programming appears to be responsive and flexible, adapting to staffing availability, funding, and emerging student needs.

There is limited evidence of formally designated before-school programs at O.K. School. However, early-day supports such as nutrition programs, early supervision, and access to the school environment prior to instructional time serve similar functions. These supports help ensure students arrive ready to learn, particularly those whose transportation or family circumstances result in early arrival at school.

Extra-curricular and extended-day programming at O.K. School is structured to reduce barriers to participation. Programs are school-based and often paired with meals, supervision, and culturally relevant activities, which increases accessibility for students who may face transportation, supervision, or financial challenges outside of school hours.

This approach reflects an understanding that equitable access requires more than simply offering programs; it requires intentional design that accounts for student and family lived realities.

Although participation data and formal outcome measures are not consistently documented in the reviewed files, annual reports and information gathered during interviews suggest that extra-curricular and extended-day programs contribute to increased student engagement in school-based activities, continuity of adult support beyond the instructional day and positive use of time for students who remain at school after classes end. These benefits are primarily described qualitatively rather than through formal metrics, indicating an opportunity to strengthen documentation and evaluation.

Several limitations to assessing the impact of programs emerged when reviewing reports, for example:

- Inconsistent documentation of program offerings, participation rates, staffing, and duration
- Lack of a formal framework outlining goals, expected outcomes, and success indicators
- Dependence on staffing and funding availability, which affects program consistency and sustainability
- Limited linkage to broader educational planning, including attendance, academic support, or enrichment pathways

As a result, the full value of extra-curricular and extended-day programming is not always visible or systematically assessed.

Overall, Extracurricular and before- and after-school programming at O.K. School represents a meaningful and responsive component of the school's programming, offering students supervised, engaging, and accessible opportunities beyond instructional hours. While these programs clearly serve important functions, their impact remains largely implicit rather than formally articulated or measured.

Further strengthening of this area would benefit from clearer program definition, consistent documentation, and intentional alignment with broader student support and engagement objectives, ensuring sustainability and maximizing benefits for students over time.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that O.K. School formalize extracurricular and extended-day programming by establishing a clear framework that defines the purpose, scope, and expected outcomes of these programs.

It is recommended that O.K. School improve documentation and visibility of programs by maintaining a simple annual inventory of program offerings, participation levels, staffing, and duration to support planning, continuity, and reporting.

It is recommended that O.K. School stabilize program delivery by reducing reliance on short-term or ad hoc arrangements and aligning staffing and funding to support consistent program delivery throughout the school year.

It is recommended that O.K. School continue offering school-based programs that minimize barriers related to transportation, supervision, and cost, particularly for students with limited access to community activities.

It is recommended that basic outcome monitoring be introduced by tracking simple indicators (e.g., participation, student engagement, and program continuity) to better understand program impact and inform future decision-making.

It is recommended that O.K. School explore partnerships with community organizations, cultural leaders, or recreation providers to broaden program offerings while reducing operational strain on school staff.

3.5.5.2. Student Assemblies

Student assemblies at O.K. School have primarily served as brief, recognition-focused gatherings to communicate expectations, celebrate positive behaviour and attendance, and reinforce a sense of school community. More recent practice reflects an intentional shift toward short, structured assemblies (approximately 10-15 minutes) designed to minimize instructional disruption while maximizing impact.

Assemblies are predominantly used for positive reinforcement, including acknowledging Students of the Week and recognizing attendance, rather than for discipline or correction. This strengths-based approach aligns with broader efforts to motivate students through affirmation and visibility of success. In some instances, assemblies are also used to invite parental participation, further increasing their visibility and perceived importance.

While assemblies are frequently referenced in annual reports and leadership discussions, their purpose and outcomes are not formally articulated or evaluated. Documentation focuses on use rather than impact, and there is limited evidence of systematic tracking of frequency, participation, or contributions to broader school goals.

Overall, student assemblies serve as a practical and adaptable engagement tool at O.K. School. Their value lies in reinforcing shared expectations and recognizing student effort; however, their effectiveness would be strengthened through a clearer definition of purpose and modest documentation to ensure consistency and sustainability over time.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that O.K. School continue to facilitate student assemblies to strengthen student engagement, reinforce a sense of school community, and support a positive school climate.

It is recommended that minimal documentation practices be implemented (e.g., brief records of assembly themes, attendance focus, or recognition criteria) to support continuity over time and enable leadership to periodically reflect on whether assemblies reinforce desired behaviours and engagement.

3.5.5.3. Jr. Chief & Council

The Junior Chief & Council (Jr. C&C) at O.K. School is a student leadership and engagement initiative primarily for students in Grades 4-6. The program provides participating students with opportunities to develop leadership skills, contribute to school life, and represent student perspectives within the school and, at times, to the broader NNCEA and community context.

The Jr. C&C includes designated leadership roles: a Junior Chief, a Vice-Chief, and Council members. The Junior Chief serves as the primary spokesperson for the group, with responsibilities that may include speaking at school assemblies, making announcements, and representing the group at school-based events. Council members support leadership activities and contribute to initiatives aligned with school needs.

While these roles are understood and enacted in practice, the evaluation evidence indicates that roles, responsibilities, and expectations are not formally documented in a written framework. Selection processes, terms of participation, and continuity from one school year to the next are similarly informal and dependent on staff involvement and student interest.

Program Activities and Operation:

The Jr. C&C operates flexibly and fluidly, responding to school needs and opportunities rather than following a fixed schedule. The group functions primarily as a school leadership and helpers' group, with students taking on responsibilities such as:

- Supporting school functions and events
- Assisting with school-wide initiatives (e.g., recycling programs)
- Modelling positive behaviour and leadership within the school

These activities contribute positively to school operations and student engagement, particularly by fostering responsibility, cooperation, and a sense of belonging among participating students.

The Jr. C&C is supported by various staff members who act as leads or assistants. Adult support provides guidance and oversight; however, mentorship structures and roles are informal rather than systematically defined. Continuity across years depends largely on staff availability and interest rather than on documented succession planning or established handover processes.

The evaluation evidence suggests that Jr. C&C activities naturally align with leadership development, civic engagement, and cultural values, particularly those associated with governance, responsibility, and collective service within the NCN context. Many activities relate implicitly to curriculum outcomes and leadership competencies; however, these connections are not formally articulated or documented within curriculum plans or school improvement frameworks.

Similarly, while Jr. C&C contributes to school culture and engagement; there is no formal linkage to O.K. School improvement priorities, student leadership outcomes, or measurable indicators.

The Jr. C&C has, at times, engaged beyond the school setting. Members have attended NNCEA Board meetings and delivered presentations outlining their activities and aspirations. In

previous years, Jr. C&C participation in discussions with Chief & Council contributed to broader youth-identified priorities, demonstrating the program's potential to amplify student voice and influence decision-making when opportunities arise.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that O.K. School continue supporting the Jr. C&C initiative, as it represents a positive, culturally aligned leadership initiative that provides meaningful opportunities for student involvement and responsibility while fostering student voice at the elementary level.

It is recommended that the Jr. C&C be strengthened through a light-touch structure and documentation that supports consistency and continuity without diminishing student ownership. This may include developing a concise written framework, clarifying student roles, and introducing simple continuity practices such as annual confirmations and brief activity summaries. These measures would ensure that the program does not rely solely on individual staff involvement and would allow leadership experiences to be sustained as students transition through grades.

It is recommended that the intended outcomes and alignment between Jr. C&C activities, curriculum expectations, and O.K. School improvement priorities be clarified. Defining a small set of age-appropriate leadership and engagement outcomes, alongside minimal reporting (e.g., an annual summary of activities and student reflections), would strengthen evaluative clarity and visibility. This approach would allow the school to articulate the program's contribution to student voice, leadership development, and school culture, while preserving the flexibility that supports meaningful student participation.

It is recommended that the Jr. C&C at both O.K. School and NNOC meet annually with the NNCEA Board as part of their mandate. While this practice has occurred previously, it should be formally established and explicitly included in the program's scope. These meetings should provide an opportunity for student representatives to present a report reflecting the perspectives, priorities, and concerns of the students they represent, thereby strengthening student voice, leadership development, and accountability within the education system.

3.5.6. School Leadership, Management & Staff

3.5.6.1. Principal

The Principal occupies a central leadership position within the NNCEA system, responsible for ensuring that educational, cultural, operational, and safety expectations are met in alignment with NNCEA Policy Series 600 and provincial educational standards. The role requires the Principal to act simultaneously as an instructional leader, an operational manager, and the primary liaison between school practice and system-level priorities.

With an enrolment of approximately 518 students and a staff complement of 155 (including teachers, counsellors, resource professionals, educational assistants (EAs), custodial and security staff), the Principal oversees one of the largest and most complex departments within the NNCEA framework. Ensuring daily continuity of instruction, supervision, safety, and student support across such a large operation requires strong organizational capacity, structured communication systems, and consistent oversight.

According to the O.K. School Plan 2025-2026, the Principal is responsible for leading key instructional initiatives, literacy and numeracy planning, differentiated instruction, student attendance monitoring, behavioural supports, and Cree language integration, while also managing extracurricular offerings, community engagement, and operational routines such as fire drills, lockdowns, hallway supervision, and visitor protocols.

Interviews and meetings conducted during the evaluation process reveal a leader who is deeply aware of student needs and who demonstrates a strong commitment to the well-being of children and staff. The Principal maintains close communication with counsellors, responds proactively to safety concerns, and attempts to mediate increasing demands across student services, inclusive education, cultural programming, and operational oversight. The counselling team is described as collaborative and accessible, and several schoolwide efforts, such as student-led conferences, expanded inclusive education support, and improved safety protocols, illustrate the Principal’s commitment to strengthening student supports.

However, these strengths coexist with substantial systemic challenges that restrict the Principal’s ability to fully implement schoolwide frameworks. Behavioural concerns, including bullying, aggression, and escalating classroom disruptions, continue to place significant pressure on school operations. Both teachers and administrators report that behaviour incidents are becoming more complex, and the lack of a unified behavioural framework has led to inconsistent practices across classrooms. While schedule-based adjustments (such as dividing lunch periods) have reduced some incidents, they do not address the underlying need for coordinated SEL and behaviour systems. Frameworks such as PAX, Second Step, and other SEL programs are available at the school but are not consistently or schoolwide implemented, leaving teachers to rely on individual strategies and contributing to perceptions that classroom discipline varies widely by teacher.

Classroom management skills similarly vary significantly across staff. While some teachers maintain strong routines and effective student engagement, others struggle with inconsistent expectations, reactive approaches, or overreliance on administrative intervention. It was further noted that supervision practices among EAs and staff vary widely, with some individuals disengaged or frequently absent from their posts. High levels of EA absenteeism exacerbate these challenges by reducing classroom support, increasing supervisory pressures on teachers,

and leaving vulnerable students without adequate assistance. These staffing inconsistencies disrupt learning environments, weaken behavioural management capacity, and increase the Principal's workload in filling operational gaps.

Attendance remains another significant pressure point. Although the school maintains an Attendance Officer, evaluators noted limited documentation systems, inconsistent follow-up processes, and growing complexity in coordinating attendance interventions. These challenges are compounded by uneven parent and guardian involvement: while many families are actively supportive, others are difficult to reach or engage, particularly in attendance, behaviour follow-up, homework, and home-school communication. The result is a widening gap in shared expectations between school and home.

Operational safety concerns also persist. Despite the installation of perimeter fencing and dedicated access-control staff, dogs continue to enter the school playground and, at times, the school building, particularly during high-traffic transition periods. Evaluators observed school personnel attempting to remove dogs from hallways and classrooms, highlighting the ongoing operational burden this issue creates and the limits of school-level control over community-level safety challenges.

In the instructional domain, the evaluation identified the lack of a cohesive schoolwide instructional framework. Critical areas such as literacy and numeracy improvement, curriculum alignment, assessment planning, classroom walkthroughs, and teacher supervision are not implemented consistently or effectively. Teachers report varying expectations for planning and instructional delivery, and both interview and targeted meetings indicate that the school lacks a coordinated structure to ensure consistent teaching practices across grades. This contributes to significant variability in student learning experiences and limits the Principal's ability to measure instructional quality or progress. Underuse of PowerSchool further restricts the school's capacity to track achievement, behavioural patterns, attendance, and student progress using reliable, real-time data.

Overall, the Principal operates within a system marked by capacity pressures, staffing instability, inconsistent implementation of key frameworks, and increasing behavioural and operational demands. The gaps identified do not reflect individual shortcomings but rather structural constraints that limit the Principal's ability to fulfill the full scope of leadership responsibilities outlined in NNCEA policy. Strengthening systemwide structures, including behavioural frameworks, data systems, instructional leadership supports, EA workforce reliability, cultural program development, and school-community engagement, will be essential to enabling the Principal to lead more effectively and ensuring that O.K. School's practices align with NNCEA's broader strategic goals.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that O.K. School implement a school-wide instructional framework to reduce pedagogical variability across classrooms. The framework should establish clear expectations for lesson planning, assessment practices, pedagogy, and classroom routines across all grade levels. This framework should include curriculum maps, literacy and numeracy guides, and structured instructional walkthroughs to reduce inconsistencies and ensure coherent, high-quality teaching throughout the school.

It is recommended that O.K. School establish a coordinated school-wide behaviour and social-emotional learning (SEL) system, adopting a unified behavioural framework (e.g., PAX, Second Step, or a blended NNCEA model) with consistent expectations, training, and monitoring. This system should address bullying, aggression, and behavioural escalation through proactive, evidence-based approaches.

It is also recommended that O.K. School strengthen data management structures for counselling by implementing systematic processes to track counselling caseloads, behavioural incidents, interventions, student progress, and attendance patterns. A consistent data system will enhance accountability, support early intervention, and provide reliable evidence to guide resource allocation and decision-making.

It is recommended that NNCEA and O.K. School address staffing instability by strengthening Educational Assistant attendance monitoring and workforce supports.

It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen parent and guardian engagement across attendance follow-up, behavioural interventions, communication, and homework support. This may include targeted family outreach, culturally grounded engagement events, and clearer communication tools to build stronger home-school partnerships.

It is recommended that O.K. School collaborate with NNCEA leadership, community partners, and NCN departments to address the issue of stray dogs entering school grounds and buildings. Strengthen access-control procedures during high-traffic transitions and develop a coordinated community safety plan to reduce disruptions and protect students and staff.

3.5.6.2. Vice-Principals

O.K. School operates under a distributed leadership structure, with a Principal supported by two Vice-Principals. For the purposes of this evaluation, one completed Vice-Principal survey was received; therefore, while the analysis reflects confirmed structural information regarding both roles, the survey's perceptual data represents the perspective of one Vice-Principal.

The administrative model at O.K. School is organized by grade bands:

- Vice-Principal (Grades 1-3). Literacy leadership, including oversight of early interventions in Grade 1.

- Vice-Principal (Grades 4-6). Numeracy leadership, including implementation and support of Jump Math, ensuring materials, instructional consistency, and teacher support.

Both Vice-Principals:

- Oversee discipline within their respective grade bands, with serious matters escalated to the Principal.
- Collaborate with the Principal in assigning Educational Assistants (EAs) to classrooms.
- Oversee scheduling within their grade divisions and ensure classroom timetables are visible (including laminated schedules posted on classroom doors).
- Support attendance monitoring, family communication, and operational coordination.

This structure reflects a purposeful distributed leadership model designed to balance instructional oversight, behaviour management, and operational responsibilities across the school.

The grade-band structure provides a strong foundation for targeted instructional leadership.

In the early years (Grades 1-3), literacy is a defined leadership priority. The focus on early Grade 1 interventions is a high-leverage strategy that recognizes the long-term academic impact of early reading proficiency. The Vice-Principal overseeing this division plays a critical role in supporting intervention planning, monitoring student progress, and coordinating supports.

In the middle years (Grades 4-6), numeracy leadership is structured around the implementation of Jump Math. Responsibilities include ensuring materials are available, supporting teachers in instructional delivery, and monitoring program consistency. This demonstrates alignment between leadership portfolios and core academic priorities.

Survey responses indicate that instructional systems (assessment practices, interventions, IPP/IEP implementation) are perceived as structurally in place. However, strengthening the depth of instructional leadership, including data monitoring, classroom walkthroughs, and tracking measurable outcomes, remains an area for continued development.

Regarding behaviour management and school climate, Vice-Principals manage discipline within their grade bands, creating clear points of accountability. Serious behavioural issues are escalated to the Principal, reinforcing a tiered response structure.

The presence of grade-band oversight contributes to consistency and relational familiarity with students. However, the evaluation findings suggest that operational and behavioural demands consume significant administrative time, potentially limiting sustained focus on instructional leadership.

Further strengthening of behaviour documentation systems and office-based referral tracking would support consistency and reduce reactive workload pressures.

The Principal and Vice-Principals jointly assign EAs to classrooms. This is a significant administrative responsibility, as EA deployment directly affects student support, inclusion, and behaviour management.

The current structure allows leadership to align EA support with academic intervention priorities, behavioural needs and inclusion requirements; however, formalizing EA allocation criteria and strengthening monitoring of EA work plans would improve transparency, consistency, and impact measurement.

Attendance remains a significant concern, as identified in both scaled and open-ended survey responses. While attendance plans are in place, achieving sustained attendance benchmarks remains a challenge.

Vice-Principals monitor attendance within their grade bands and engage families as needed. The responding Vice-Principal identified family and community engagement as a priority for the coming year, recognizing that attendance and engagement are closely linked. While formal structures for engagement exist, strengthening proactive communication and relational outreach remains an area for improvement.

In addition to instructional and behavioural leadership, Vice-Principals support operational functions including:

- Scheduling oversight
- Classroom timetable visibility
- Coordination with office staff
- Transportation and supervision alignment
- School safety monitoring

The use of visible classroom schedules reflects an emphasis on structured routines, which supports student regulation and predictability.

The survey also identified the need to reinforce visitor sign-in procedures and ID badge compliance, indicating a specific operational area requiring attention.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA formally document and operationalize the distributed leadership structure at O.K. School, clearly defining:

- Grade-band oversight (Grades 1-3 and Grades 4-6),
- Literacy and numeracy leadership portfolios,
- Discipline authority and escalation procedures,

- EA assignment responsibilities.

It is recommended that measurable literacy and numeracy improvement targets be established for each division, with structured monitoring of early literacy interventions and Jump Math implementation. This will ensure that Vice-Principal roles extend beyond coordination and oversight toward demonstrable instructional impact.

3.5.6.3. Teachers

Across 2018-2024, annual reports suggest that committed teachers are working under rising behavioural, attendance, and operational pressures, with uneven EA coverage and inconsistent use of schoolwide frameworks. The 2025 Teacher Survey (developed as part of the NNCEA Evaluation process) largely confirms this picture, with educators expressing strong goodwill toward students and generally positive views of leadership, while pointing to concrete barriers that keep many classrooms operating in a reactive rather than a proactive mode.

Climate & Classroom Conditions:

Teachers report classrooms that are more often positive than not, yet a sizable minority face challenging daily conditions. In the 2025 survey, 59% rated the classroom learning environment positive/very positive, while 31% rated it challenging/very challenging (10% neutral). Reported trends since 2018 and classroom observations align: many classrooms demonstrate strong routines, but variability across grades remains pronounced. Despite this, student engagement is widely observed: 83% of teachers reported that students were very/somewhat engaged, suggesting that stabilizing structures (behaviour, attendance, EA support) could quickly translate effort into greater consistency in learning time.

Behaviour & Student Well-Being:

Long-standing concerns about complex behaviour were reiterated by teachers and administrators across 2018-2024 (bullying, aggression, escalating disruptions). Staff describe multiple SEL tools in use (e.g., PAX, Second Step), but no single, schoolwide behaviour/SEL framework with fidelity checks. The 2025 Teacher Survey quantifies this pressure: 89.7% of teachers named social/emotional needs among their top challenges; 79.3% flagged attendance; and 51.7% cited family issues affecting school. Teachers consistently adapt and care for students, yet uneven practices across classrooms increase variability in incidents and lead to more escalations directed towards administration.

Special Education procedures also emerged as a concern in both teacher interviews and the 2025 survey. Eight of 29 teachers (28%) explicitly referenced Resource/IEP/IPP/inclusive education issues, such as delays or limited access to plans, uncertainty about accommodations vs. modifications, and difficulty obtaining timely guidance from the Resource Department. O.K. School administration echoed these challenges, indicating visibility and handoff gaps in IEP/IPP communication and coordination.

Relationship with Leadership:

Across the reports, teachers characterize the Principal and counselling team as responsive and accessible, with visible efforts to mediate safety concerns and student services. The survey confirms net-positive sentiment: 69% rate Leadership as Excellent/Good; 75% are Satisfied/Very satisfied with leadership overall; 21% are dissatisfied/somewhat dissatisfied; 4% are unsure. The critical nuance (also reflected in 2018–2024 reports) is the “strategy-to-operations” gap, whereas staff want fewer, clearer, schoolwide practices (behaviour and instruction) backed by reliable staffing and data.

Staffing & EA Deployment:

The reports repeatedly document EA absenteeism and inconsistent deployment as a structural constraint on learning. In 2025 comments, teachers again ask for steadier EA support, clearer daily assignments, and micro-PD on small-group routines and de-escalation. When EA coverage lapses, teachers absorb supervision and individual supports, reducing time for instruction and prep. Teacher turnover is not flagged as acute, but role instability for support staff is a persistent drag on classroom continuity.

Attendance:

Attendance is a cross-cutting pressure and a major time sink. While an Attendance Officer exists, prior evaluations noted inconsistent documentation and follow-up. The 2025 survey underscores the issue, with 79.3% identifying attendance barriers as a top challenge. Teachers describe a widening expectation gap with a subset of families on attendance, behaviour follow-up, and homework. Without a simple, tiered attendance playbook, outreach and case management fall unevenly on classroom and office staff.

Instructional Quality, PD, and Coaching:

Reports highlight the absence of a cohesive schoolwide instructional framework (non-negotiables for lesson flow, checks for understanding, and assessment routines) and limited, routine walkthrough-and-feedback cycles. Teachers value practical PD with modelling and coaching, and the 2025 survey shows a clear, needs-aligned PD demand:

- Literacy/Numeracy (62.1%)
- Classroom Management (58.6%)
- Trauma-Informed Practice (55.2%)
- Indigenous Knowledge (55.2%)
- Inclusive Education (41.4%)
- Technology (20.7%)

These preferences align with the very gaps identified in evaluations: stabilizing behaviour, strengthening core instruction, and equipping staff for complex needs through practical, job-embedded learning.

Data Systems & PowerSchool:

PowerSchool exists but is not fully leveraged. Prior reports observed underuse for real-time assessment, attendance, and behaviour analytics. Teachers want quick, consistent views (e.g., attendance tiers, location/time heatmaps, assessment snapshots). The absence of simple, agreed-upon data non-negotiables blunts the system’s ability to target supports where classrooms need them most.

Safety & Operations:

Operational frictions (door/transition coverage, dog intrusions, and space/equipment pinch points) consume staff and leader bandwidth. Despite perimeter fencing and access controls, dogs can enter playgrounds, and at times, the school adds unpredictable safety measures during transitions. Reports recommend routine duty schedules, bell-time door coverage, and a

community/bylaw collaboration to reduce incidents.

Culture & Language:

Cree language and culture are present in formal programs and valued by teachers and families. Reports and staff indicate opportunities to embed Cree daily (announcements, "Word/Teaching of the Week," bilingual signage) and to use culture/language to steady tone and belonging in hallways, not only in dedicated classes. This would amplify protective factors that teachers already cultivate.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that O.K. School establish one schoolwide Behaviour/SEL framework and coach it to fidelity. OK should select a single behaviour/SEL framework (e.g., PAX or Second Step) and implement it consistently in every classroom, supported by short, job-embedded coaching. This includes a clear Tier 1-2-3 response flow, common classroom routines, and quick fidelity checks (walkthrough, short peer demonstration, monthly refreshers). Clarity of expectations and repetition (not a proliferation of tools) will stabilize hallways and learning time.

It is recommended that O.K. School create a tight IEP/IPP handoff and classroom-ready support model. To address visibility and follow-through gaps, institute a two-step IEP/IPP pipeline:

i. Handoff: new or updated plans reach classroom teachers within 10 school days, accompanied by a one-page learner profile (goals, accommodations, who to contact) and teacher acknowledgment in a simple log;
ii. Use in practice: monthly grade-team "case huddles" (30 minutes) with Resource and Counselling to review what's working, clarify accommodations vs. modifications, and set specific EA roles for the next month. Maintain a permissions-controlled digital folder with version dates so teachers always know they have the latest plan.

It is recommended that NNCEA and OK Administration define 4-6 instructional non-negotiables and align PD, walkthroughs, and coaching. Publish a short list of classroom non-negotiables (e.g., clear learning target; checks for understanding every 8-10 minutes; structured small-group routines; exit check) and use weekly walkthroughs to give bite-sized feedback. Target PD to what teachers asked for (literacy/numeracy routines, classroom management, trauma-informed practice, Indigenous knowledge, inclusive education) with quick modelling and co-planning. Coaching cycles (6-8 weeks) for teachers who need deeper support will move practice faster than large, generic sessions.

It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen EA reliability and role clarity to protect instructional time, including implementing a simple EA coordination structure. Stand up a simple EA operations rhythm, such as a morning assignment huddle, a visible board listing who is supporting which students/rooms, and a small backup pool for coverage. Pair this with a micro-PD series (6x45 minutes) on de-escalation, prompting, small-group routines, and collecting quick learning notes tied to IEP goals. Provide EA role cards per student (what to prompt and what to record) for the

morning huddle to ensure expectations are clear.

It is recommended that O.K. School Administration establish clear PowerSchool data standards and publish a monthly Teaching and Learning Dashboard to support instructional monitoring and decision-making. Agree on minimum data practices (gradebook update cadence, behaviour codes, attendance notes) and provide two-minute video guides to make it easy. Then publish a one-page dashboard each month (attendance tiers, incident heatmaps by time/location, assessment snapshots, walkthrough trends) and use it to decide which supports go where (EA redeployments, coaching focus, supervision hot spots.

It is recommended that O.K. School reinforce daily culture and safety practices by embedding visible Cree language and cultural presence in daily routines (e.g., greetings, announcements, “Word or Teaching of the Week,” refreshed bilingual signage) to strengthen belonging and support positive behaviour outside formal language classes.

3.5.6.4. Educational Assistants

Educational Assistants (EAs) at OK School play a critical role in supporting student learning, behaviour regulation, inclusion, and classroom stability. In a school environment characterized by attendance variability, behavioural pressures, differentiated academic needs, and inclusive programming, EAs represent an essential layer of support within the instructional system.

EAs are assigned to classrooms by the Principal and Vice-Principals. Their deployment reflects administrative decisions based on academic, behavioural, and inclusion-related needs across grade bands.

EAs support:

- Students with Individual Program Plans (IPPs) and other individualized learning needs
- Behaviour regulation and classroom management
- Literacy and numeracy intervention blocks
- Student supervision during transitions, recess, and lunch
- Classroom routines and instructional reinforcement

The development, monitoring, and updating of student plans fall under the responsibility of the Resource Team, which oversees the creation and management of IPPs and related student support documentation. As such, EA deployment is closely linked to Resource Teachers/Coordinator recommendations and student planning processes. Effective collaboration between the Resource Team, administration, classroom teachers, and EAs is essential to ensure that student plans are implemented consistently and with fidelity.

Given the distributed leadership model at OK (Grades 1-3 and Grades 4-6 oversight), EA allocation is intended to align with literacy priorities in the early years and numeracy priorities in the middle years, as well as with individualized supports identified through Resource planning processes.

The presence of structured EA assignment authority within administration is a strength. It allows school leadership to:

- Align support personnel with identified student needs
- Respond to behavioural challenges within grade bands
- Support early literacy interventions and numeracy programming
- Maintain classroom stability

EAs contribute significantly to maintaining predictable classroom environments and to supporting students who require additional assistance. Their presence is particularly important in managing behavioural demands, which have been identified as a recurring administrative pressure point.

Identified Areas for Strengthening:

Despite their central importance, evaluation evidence suggests opportunities to strengthen clarity, monitoring, communication, and impact measurement related to EA deployment.

a) Alignment, Allocation Criteria, and Role Stability. While EAs are assigned by the administration in collaboration with the Resource Team, there is a need for:

- Clear, documented criteria guiding EA allocation
- Transparent alignment between EA placement and student plans
- Structured review cycles to assess whether deployment remains effective

EAs have expressed frustration when frequent reassignments result from staffing shortages or absenteeism. Inconsistent daily coverage can result in shifting responsibilities and reduced continuity for students with exceptional needs. Reliable EAs remaining in consistent roles were identified as a key factor in supporting student progress and classroom stability.

Formalizing allocation criteria and, where possible, stabilizing assignments would strengthen fairness, transparency, and instructional continuity.

b) Work Plans, IEP Access, and Communication.

Strengthening EA work plans would improve clarity regarding:

- Instructional versus behavioural support roles
- Expectations for small-group or targeted intervention support
- Documentation responsibilities
- Communication protocols with teachers, administration, and Resource

EAs reported that limited access to concise IEP details (including student triggers, learning needs, and behavioural expectations) reduces their ability to provide proactive support, particularly when moved between classrooms. Clear, accessible summaries of student plans would improve effectiveness and consistency.

Communication breakdowns were also identified, including conflicting instructions between the administration and the Resource team and limited guidance on expectations. Greater alignment and structured communication channels would improve overall coordination.

Evaluators identified the implementation of standardized daily logbooks as a practical strategy. A structured template could include student triggers, effective strategies, progress notes, and behavioural observations. Such documentation would support substitute EAs, strengthen communication among staff, and contribute to IEP monitoring.

c) EA Attendance and Workforce Stability

School leadership and staff have reported concerns regarding high EA absenteeism. Frequent absences disrupt instructional continuity, reduce the consistency of student support, and increase pressure on classroom teachers and administrators.

In environments where students rely on predictable adult support for behavioural regulation and academic intervention, inconsistent EA presence can significantly affect classroom stability. EAs themselves expressed concern that unreliable attendance among some staff members affects team morale and workload distribution.

High absenteeism also contributes to reactive deployment of available personnel rather than strategic placement aligned with student plans. Monitoring attendance trends, reinforcing clear expectations, and identifying root causes are necessary to improve workforce reliability.

d) Training, Professional Development, and Accountability

EAs expressed interest in additional training, particularly in:

- Strategies for supporting exceptional students
- Behaviour regulation techniques
- Differentiated instructional strategies
- Documentation practices and professional conduct

While EA training is currently coordinated through the Resource Coordinator, expanding training opportunities (including structured summer sessions) was suggested as a strategy to improve readiness and consistency. Inclusion of administration and additional Resource staff in training would strengthen clarity around expectations, confidentiality requirements, professional standards, and medical protocols.

Given the scale of the EA workforce, supervision, monitoring, and professional development represent a substantial leadership responsibility. Strengthening structured accountability mechanisms, including performance monitoring and clearer expectation-setting, would enhance overall program effectiveness.

Survey Participation Note:

EA surveys were provided to the EA Supervisor for distribution; however, completed surveys were not received before this report was completed. As a result, this section is informed by administrative perspectives, informal input from staff and Education Assistants (EAs), structural analysis, and system-level evidence, rather than comprehensive formal survey data. Future evaluation cycles should prioritize collecting structured EA feedback to enhance the completeness and reliability of findings.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA establish a documented Educational Assistant allocation framework, as identified in Section 3.5.3, to clarify deployment and ensure alignment with student learning needs.

It is recommended that NNCEA strengthen accountability, supervision, and instructional integration of Educational Assistants through structured monitoring of EA performance and role implementation.

It is recommended that NNCEA address reported concerns regarding high Educational Assistant (EA) absenteeism by:

- Monitor attendance data and identify root causes
- Develop strategies to improve workforce stability (e.g., substitute coverage planning, attendance recognition strategies, workload review)

- Establish clear expectations regarding attendance and reliability

Improving workforce reliability and role clarity is essential to maintaining instructional continuity, reducing administrative strain, and ensuring consistent implementation of student support plans.

It is also recommended that O.K. School:

- Provide targeted training aligned with early literacy interventions and numeracy programming
- Standardize behaviour documentation and communication protocols
- Clarify reporting lines between EAs, classroom teachers, administration, and Resource
- Implement structured logbooks to support continuity and communication
- Reinforce expectations regarding attendance and continuity of student support

3.5.6.5. Office Staff

The O.K. School Office Staff play a central role in the school's daily operations and serve as the primary point of contact for students, families, visitors, and staff. In a school environment characterized by high variability in attendance, behavioural demands, and extensive coordination across grade divisions, the effectiveness of front-office operations directly influences administrative capacity, school climate, and instructional focus.

The Office Staff are responsible for a broad range of operational duties, including:

- Student attendance tracking and daily record management
- Front-line student supervision and reception
- Visitor sign-in procedures and building access control
- Phone communications with families
- Documentation and filing of behavioural referrals and incident reports
- Coordination of messages between classrooms and administration
- Support for scheduling and logistical organization

Based on available survey responses and administrative feedback, the office demonstrates the capacity to manage routine daily functions and maintain the school's operational continuity. Attendance systems are in place, communication channels for parent contact exist, and general administrative processes support the broader school structure.

The administrative team at OK benefits from a distributed leadership model (Principal and two Vice-Principals), and the Office Staff play a critical supporting role in enabling that structure to function.

Despite these strengths, evaluation evidence suggests that the following office systems require further refinement to fully support administrative leadership:

- Student management procedures at the front office level
- Behaviour tracking and referral documentation systems
- Consistency in communication regarding incidents
- Visitor sign-in and identification badge compliance
- Professional customer-service practices, including ensuring interactions with students, families, staff, and community members are consistently respectful, welcoming, and courteous

One of the most significant implications of office operations relates to instructional leadership capacity. When front-office systems for attendance tracking, behavioural referrals, and documentation are not streamlined, administrative time shifts from proactive instructional supervision to reactive management.

It was also noted that the absence of a dedicated phone line for the Attendance Officer results in a high volume of attendance-related calls flowing through the Office, reducing efficiency and limiting the ability to complete other essential responsibilities. Additionally, the Office space is sometimes used as a holding area for students experiencing behavioural or emotional distress. Supervising upset students in a shared workspace disrupts the workspace and makes concentrated administrative work difficult.

Workload sustainability is a concern. The staff member interviewed reported routinely skipping lunch breaks, working while eating, and rarely taking sick leave due to concerns about operational backlog and the likelihood of receiving calls while absent. This pattern reflects strong professional commitment but also signals structural vulnerability and risk of burnout.

Overall, the Office Staff role is foundational to the school's daily stability. However, the current staffing structure, workspace configuration, and workflow design place disproportionate strain on a single individual, creating sustainability concerns.

Strengthening office systems would:

- Reduce unnecessary administrative interruptions
- Improve clarity and consistency in behavioural communication
- Enhance transparency with families
- Support more timely attendance follow-up

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that O.K. School formalize and streamline front-office procedures to ensure consistency, efficiency, and accountability. This should include:

- Developing clear student management protocols at the reception level
- Standardizing behaviour referral and documentation systems
- Establishing consistent communication procedures regarding incidents
- Reinforcing visitor sign-in and identification badge compliance
- Clarifying attendance tracking and same-day follow-up processes

It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen professional communication standards and client-service practices within the school office, recognizing the office's role as the primary point of contact for students, families, staff, and community members. This may include:

- Clear expectations for respectful and welcoming interactions
- Training in conflict de-escalation and front-line communication
- Regular feedback mechanisms to monitor service quality

Improving the consistency and tone of stakeholder interactions will strengthen relational trust, support family engagement efforts, and contribute positively to overall school climate.

It is recommended that O.K. School implement measures to improve front-office workflow efficiency, including:

- Install a dedicated phone line for the Attendance Officer to reduce call volume on the main office line and improve overall workflow.
- Train and maintain a small pool of substitute secretaries to provide coverage during peak periods (e.g., report cards, parent meetings) and in the event of absences, ensuring continuity of operations.
- Create an alternative supervised cooling-down or waiting area for students requiring temporary support. Where relocation is not possible, ensure an EA is assigned to student supervision to prevent disruption within the office workspace.

- Formally acknowledge the critical role of Office Staff and reinforce professional boundaries to ensure the office remains an operational hub rather than a repository for staff frustrations.

3.6. Nisichawayasihk Neyo Ohtinwak Collegiate (NNOC)

Nisichawayasihk Neyo Ohtinwak Collegiate (NNOC) is the Grades 7-12 secondary school serving students from NCN. NNOC's name (meaning "Four Directions Collegiate") reflects a holistic approach to education that draws on culture, community identity, and academic growth.

NNOC's identity and school motto, "Together We Learn, Together We Grow," underlines a commitment to community-oriented learning where pride in heritage and future aspirations meet. Programming encourages participation in language, land-based learning opportunities, traditional knowledge, and mentoring by community Elders.

As part of the NNCEA education system, alongside O.K. School and the Post-Secondary Support Program, NNOC plays a central role in shaping academic trajectories for NCN youth. With approximately 404 students (total registry for the 2025-2026 school term) and a total staff complement of 86 people, including teachers, educational assistants, Elders, resource teacher, office staff and custodial.

NNOC is a semester-based secondary school offering the Manitoba Provincial Curriculum courses for middle and high school learners. In addition to core academic subjects, the school provides a range of electives and practical experiential programming, and extracurricular opportunities, and student leadership programs are part of daily student life.

Historically, NNOC operated as a secondary program within NCN's education system for many years, with its students previously housed in portable trailer classrooms. These trailers were in use for approximately 12 years, organized along a single hallway with multiple classroom spaces, before a permanent facility was established.

A major milestone for NNOC was the construction of its new building, a modern, purpose-built facility designed to better support student learning and community engagement.

Construction took place from 2019 to 2022, and the school officially opened its doors on April 4, 2022. The facility (approximately 60,400 square feet) includes specialized learning spaces, such as a full-size canteen/kitchen, automotive and carpentry shops, a fitness centre, a senior science lab, a home economics area, and dedicated cultural and community spaces, including an Elders' room.

While NNOC used to serve students in Grades 9-12, the current structure now includes Grades 7 and 8 in the collegiate program. This change means that middle school programming that had previously been administratively associated with O.K. School (since 2022-23) is now part of NNOC's grade span.

3.6.1. School Program, Curriculum & Pedagogical Methods

NNOC delivers programming from Grades 7-12 within a secondary environment characterized by chronic absenteeism, over-age and under-credited learners, academic skill gaps, trauma-related barriers, and variable instructional coherence. While teachers demonstrate awareness of provincial curriculum expectations and graduation requirements, systemic implementation gaps (particularly in benchmarking, data tracking, and structured instructional frameworks) limit consistency across grades.

Curriculum delivery at NNOC must operate within the reality that many students are functioning below grade level and that attendance instability significantly disrupts instructional sequencing. As a result, pedagogy at NNOC is frequently adaptive and relationship-driven rather than tightly structured around standardized pacing models.

3.6.1.1. Grades 7-8

Instructional Context:

Grades 7 and 8 represent a critical transition phase between elementary and high school programming. However, evaluation findings indicate that many students enter junior high with foundational literacy and numeracy gaps that were not fully identified or addressed earlier.

Grade-level standards inform general instructional outcomes and assessments. However, planning is based on meeting students at their actual readiness levels. Given that many students are more than one grade below level, teachers must simultaneously differentiate across multiple curriculum benchmarks.

Literacy & Foundational Skill Gaps:

A significant focus in Grades 7-8 has been the strengthening of literacy practices. Staff previously relied on Fountas & Pinnell assessments but identified gaps in phonics and foundational sound recognition. Key findings included:

- Many Grade 7-8 students struggle with blending sounds and vowel recognition;
- Students can decode superficially but lack phonemic awareness;
- Comprehension gaps are closely tied to limited vocabulary.

In response, staff have transitioned to the UFLI (University of Florida Literacy Institute) program, emphasizing science-based phonics instruction.

It is important to note that UFLI is a structured literacy program with tightly aligned assessments focused on diagnosing and monitoring foundational decoding skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency), whereas Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) primarily measures students' reading levels using levelled texts and emphasizes reading behaviors and comprehension within a guided reading framework. In the context of NNOC, where variability in attendance, gaps in foundational skills, and older struggling readers are persistent realities, prioritizing a UFLI-aligned approach (or another structured literacy diagnostic tool) is highly recommended, as many NNOC students appear to require explicit remediation in decoding and fluency before text-level grouping becomes meaningful.

Small-group guided reading, nonsense-word assessments, and explicit modelling of sound formation are now prioritized and have been reported to yield positive outcomes. Last year, students involved in targeted literacy interventions improved by at least one reading grade level.

However, guided reading implementation is not yet consistent across all junior high classrooms, and accountability mechanisms for school-wide literacy alignment require strengthening

Differentiation & Instructional Authority:

Teachers report the need for stronger administrative backing to differentiate instruction beyond rigid grade-level structures. While resources exist (RAZ Kids, LLI kits), they are underutilized in some classrooms.

During the evaluation process, resource teachers emphasized the importance of:

- Teaching students at their actual skill level;
- Formalizing guided reading expectations;
- Scheduling monitored literacy blocks;
- Embedding literacy expectations into teacher planning documents

This reflects a school culture that is still transitioning from curriculum coverage to competency-based progression.

Attendance Impact on Junior High:

Attendance instability significantly affects Grades 7-8. Bullying (primarily social), caregiving responsibilities, mental health challenges, and socioeconomic barriers are cited as primary drivers of absenteeism.

Home visits and relationship-building are the primary outreach tools, and while documentation practices are strong at the individual level, high-level analysis of attendance trends is limited.

Instructionally, absenteeism disrupts sequencing and increases the demands of reteaching, limiting sustained academic momentum.

Overall, Grades 7-8 programming reflects a shift toward foundational repair, but system-wide instructional coherence remains under development. A summary of the strengths and structural gaps in programming is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: NNOC – Grades 7-8 Program Strengths and Structural Gaps	
Strengths	Structural Gaps
Strong commitment to literacy reform (UFLI adoption); Small-group targeted instruction; Teacher awareness of curriculum benchmarks; Relationship-centered intervention practices; Demonstrated reading growth among participating students.	Inconsistent guided reading implementation; Limited baseline benchmarking; Attendance instability affecting continuity; Lack of unified literacy monitoring framework; Need for administrative follow-through and accountability.

3.6.1.2. Grades 9-12

Academic Structure & Graduation Pathways:

At the senior level, programming is structured around credit accumulation and eligibility for graduation. The Academic Advisor maintains individualized credit trackers for all students, updated semi-annually.

Transcript reviews and scheduling processes aim to ensure alignment with graduation requirements. However, a major systemic issue was identified. Although 59 students are listed as Grade 12 in PowerSchool, only 16 are actual potential graduates based on credit eligibility.

Many students are over-aged and under-credited, automatically advanced by age rather than academic readiness. Some students reportedly have zero credits despite being classified as being in Grade 12. This misalignment between grade placement and competency significantly affects instructional grouping, teacher planning, and student motivation.

Benchmarking & Data Systems:

Universal credit tracking has been implemented. However, baseline literacy and numeracy benchmarking remain underdeveloped. Some of the identified gaps are:

- No division-wide reading or numeracy baseline assessments;
- Persistent social promotion concerns;
- Limited progress dashboards;
- Incomplete integration of academic analytics within PowerSchool

Without standardized baseline data, differentiation at the secondary level remains reactive.

Attendance & Engagement:

Attendance remains the most significant barrier to academic success. Proposed policy changes include reporting chronic absenteeism to Social Assistance (pending board approval). Current strategies include structured home visits, attendance meetings with trauma-informed documentation, incentive structures (NNOC Bucks, recognition draws), and collaboration with CFS and Student Services.

Concerns have been raised that enforcement-focused policies must be balanced with culturally grounded relationship-building strategies

Trauma-Informed & Socio-Emotional Practices:

Many students face barriers linked to grief, intergenerational trauma, poverty, and mental health challenges, and while awareness is growing, there is:

- No consistent, system-wide trauma-informed framework;
- Limited SEL programming;
- Inconsistent Elder integration;
- No baseline well-being metrics

Book studies and professional learning circles are proposed to address this gap.

Transition & Career Programming:

Strong initiatives include:

- Grad-prep course (LifeWorks 40S);
- Partnership with UCN;
- Inspire bursaries;
- Peer mentoring initiative (“Pathways to Possibilities”)

However, only a portion of Grade 12 students receive individualized advising, whereas:

- Over-aged and mature learners remain underserved;
- No formal hand-off system for post-secondary follow-up;
- Need for vocational expansion and entrepreneurship programming

Overall, Grades 9-12 programming demonstrates strong advising capacity but remains constrained by attendance instability, structural credit misalignment, and incomplete benchmarking systems. A summary of the strengths and structural gaps in programming can be found in Table 6.

Table 6: NNOC – Grades 9-12 Program Strengths and Structural Gaps	
Strengths	Structural Gaps
Individualized credit tracking system; Dedicated Academic Advisor role; Strong post-secondary partnerships; Emerging AI-supported differentiation; Grad-prep programming; Active planning for alternative pathways.	Over-age/under-credit misclassification; Lack of baseline academic benchmarking; Chronic absenteeism; Limited system-wide trauma-informed framework; Incomplete vocational and entrepreneurial pathways; Insufficient inter-agency collaboration.

NNOC's instructional program reflects dedicated staff, emerging reform efforts (literacy restructuring, credit tracking, AI integration), and strong relational commitment to students. However, systemic coherence remains underdeveloped.

NNOC demonstrates strong commitment and innovation; however, strengthening instructional coherence, data integration, and attendance stabilization will be essential to improving sustained academic outcomes across Grades 7-12.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA-NNOC establish a Cohesive Secondary Instructional Framework (Grades 7-12). This framework should clearly articulate expectations for:

- Literacy and numeracy blocks (including foundational skill repair in Grades 7-8);
- Differentiated instruction across multi-level classrooms;
- Consistent classroom routines and behavioural expectations;
- Tier 1–2–3 intervention alignment;
- Assessment and progress monitoring protocols.

It is recommended that NNOC introduce standardized baseline literacy and numeracy assessments at Grades 7 and 9 to establish clear academic starting points. This should include:

- Reading level benchmarking;
- Numeracy diagnostics;
- Regular progress-monitoring cycles;
- Data-review meetings led by the administration;
- Integration of academic data into PowerSchool or a centralized dashboard.

It is recommended that NNOC formalize a Junior High Literacy Recovery Strategy (Grades 7–8) to:

- Standardize guided reading implementation;

- Monitor UFLI program fidelity;
- Embed monitored literacy blocks within timetables;
- Create accountability mechanisms for small-group interventions;
- Provide targeted professional development on science-of-reading practices.

It is recommended that NNOC address over-age and under-credited structural misalignment in Grades 9–12 by:

- Conducting annual transcript audits;
- Separating grade designation from age advancement;
- Expanding alternative and flexible pathway options;
- Formalizing transition points into the Mature Student Program when appropriate.

It is recommended that NNOC integrate the attendance strategy with academic risk monitoring, ensuring that attendance data is embedded within academic intervention systems rather than functioning as a parallel initiative to:

- Establish early-warning attendance thresholds;
- Link attendance flags to academic performance tracking;
- Develop structured re-entry academic plans for returning students;
- Ensure culturally grounded attendance interventions alongside policy-based accountability measures.

It is recommended that NNOC develop a structured trauma-informed and social-emotional learning (SEL) implementation plan that includes:

- Defined SEL programming across grade levels;
- Professional development on trauma-responsive pedagogy;
- Consistent Elder and cultural integration;
- Clear behavioural response protocols;
- Well-being baseline metrics and monitoring.

It is recommended that NNOC evaluate opportunities to expand vocational, applied, and entrepreneurial pathways (Grades 9–12) to increase engagement and reduce disengagement among over-age learners, including:

- Expand vocational and trades exposure;
- Develop entrepreneurship and financial literacy programming;
- Strengthen work-experience and land-based learning integration;
- Explore credit-bearing applied learning modules;
- Formalize post-secondary transition follow-up processes.

Given the overlap between attendance, mental health, child welfare, and academic instability, it is further recommended that NNOC establish a coordinated inter-agency support structure, including:

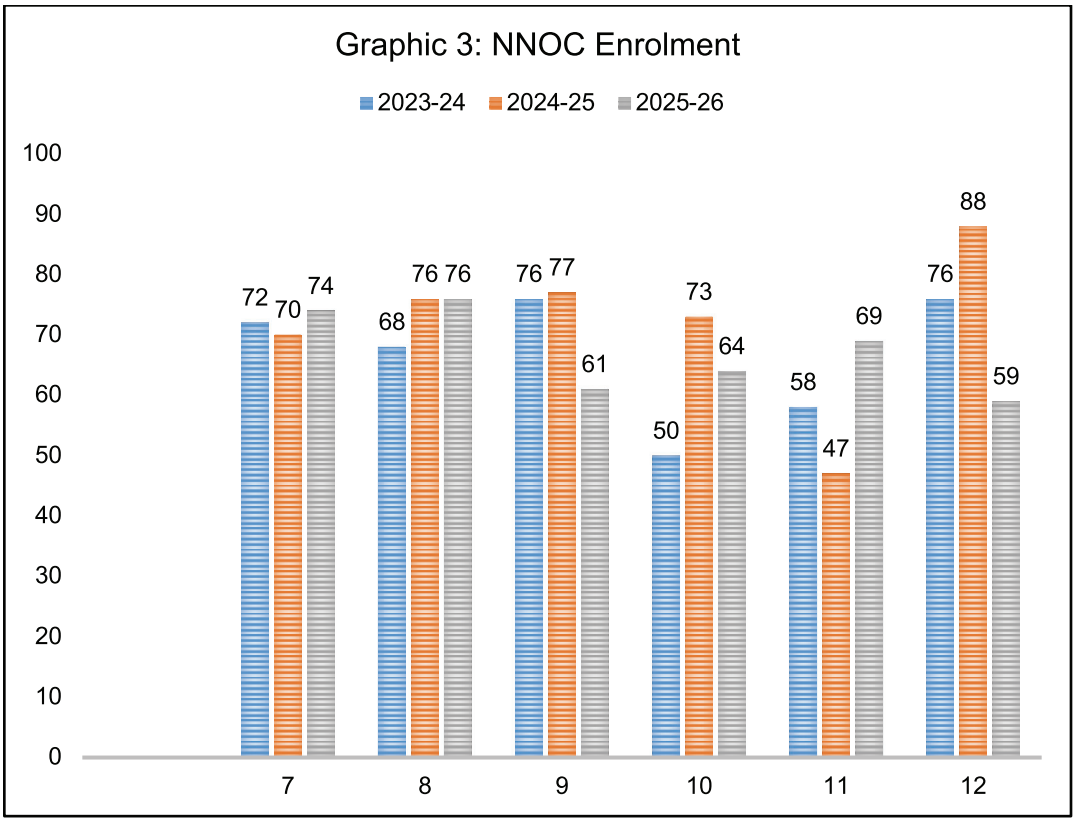
- Formalizes structured inter-agency case management meetings;
- Clarify information-sharing protocols;
- Develop consistent referral pathways;
- Integrate Student Services, Attendance Officer, Academic Advisor, and Resource supports under a coordinated model.

3.6.2. School Demographics, Performance & Achievement

3.6.2.1. Enrolment

Since the opening of the new NNOC building and the formal inclusion of Grades 7-8 within the collegiate, NNOC has maintained stable overall enrolment at approximately 400-430 students in Grades 7-12.

Middle Years enrolment (Grades 7-8) has gradually increased and stabilized (from roughly 140 students in 2023–24 to approximately 150 by 2025-26), confirming that the Grade 7-8 transition is no longer provisional but structurally embedded.



NNOC's enrolment trends demonstrate that the opening of the new facility and the integration of Grades 7-8 have successfully stabilized registration. However, attendance data indicate that enrolment growth has not translated into consistent daily participation, particularly in the transition years and across Senior Years. These patterns point to the need for staffing, programming, and space-use decisions that are driven not only by enrolment counts, but by student engagement, continuity of relationships, and the developmental realities of early secondary learners.

3.6.2.2. Attendance

Student attendance at NNOC remains one of the school's most significant and persistent challenges. While enrolment at NNOC has been relatively stable since the opening of the new facility and the integration of Grades 7-8, attendance data (Table 7) indicate that a substantial proportion of registered students are not attending school consistently, particularly in the middle and senior grades.

Table 7: NNOC Attendance 2019-20 to 2024-25

School year	Enrollment			Attendance Rate	Notes
	Start	Leavers	End		
2019-20				59%	NNOC reported monthly in-person attendance rates ranging from 54% to 65% between September and March, averaging approximately 59% prior to COVID-19 disruptions, with 212 students fully enrolled at the start of the school year. From April to June 2020 (online learning)
2020–21				Unknown	NNOC attendance continued to be significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with extended periods of remote and disrupted in-person learning limiting the reliability of conventional ADA reporting.
2021–22				Unknown	NNOC attendance data were not reported as a single ADA% in the Annual Report, as the school year continued to be affected by pandemic-related disruptions, intermittent attendance, and system transition pressures, including the period leading up to the opening of the new NNOC facility.
2022–23	492			Unknown	NNOC attendance data were reported more consistently than during the pandemic years, reflecting a return to largely in-person instruction following the opening of the new NNOC facility. However, while enrolment had stabilized, attendance remained uneven and below desired levels, indicating that post-pandemic recovery and the Grades 7-8 transition into NNOC continued to affect consistent student participation.
2023–24	145	1	144	52% (7-8)	ADA% Data Source: PowerSchool. A significant proportion of enrolled students were absent on an average school day. Despite stabilized enrolment following the opening of the new NNOC facility, attendance patterns in this year demonstrate
	275	40	236	67% (9-12)	

					that chronic absenteeism remained a persistent barrier to consistent secondary student engagement.
2024–25	158	14	144	25% (7-8)	NNOC attendance declined further, marking the lowest participation levels observed across the review period. Despite stable enrolment and full operation in the new NNOC facility, these figures indicate acute and sustained attendance challenges, particularly in the transition grades.
	354	95	261	52% (9-12)	

A review of attendance and enrolment data from 2019-20 to 2024-25 demonstrates that NNOC's attendance challenges are longstanding, structurally embedded, and compounded by system transitions, rather than the result of short-term fluctuation or declining enrolment.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, NNOC reported monthly in-person attendance rates averaging approximately 59% (2019-20). Subsequent pandemic years (2020-21 and 2021-22) lacked comparable ADA reporting due to extended periods of remote learning and system disruption. By 2022–23, attendance reporting became more consistent following the opening of the new NNOC facility; however, attendance remained uneven despite stabilized enrolment (492 students registered), indicating that post-pandemic recovery and the integration of Grades 7-8 into the secondary setting continued to affect student participation.

More robust PowerSchool data from 2023-24 and 2024-25 confirm a declining trend in ADA% at NNOC, with sharper declines observed at the secondary level than at O.K. School. These data demonstrate that NNOC's attendance challenges are not driven by low enrolment, but by chronic absenteeism and irregular participation among students who remain registered.

Grades 7-8: Transition Years:

Attendance in Grades 7-8 has been consistently fragile since these grades transitioned from O.K. School into NNOC. In 2023-24, ADA was approximately 52%, meaning nearly half of enrolled students were absent on an average school day. Attendance declined sharply in 2024-25 to approximately 25%, the lowest level observed across the review period. During this same year, PowerSchool enrolment-movement data show a marked increase in leavers (from 1 in 2023-24 to 14 in 2024-25), indicating that sustained disengagement increasingly resulted in formal withdrawal rather than temporary absenteeism.

As reported by NNOC Staff, this volatility aligns with the early years of operation in the new NNOC building and is further contextualized by instructional instability, including multiple teacher changes in at least one Grade 7 class during 2024-25.

Student survey findings reinforce this pattern, with younger students more likely to report difficulty understanding schoolwork, challenges with routine, and reduced motivation as reasons for absenteeism. Together, these factors identify Grades 7-8 as a critical transition pressure point, where attendance challenges, if left unaddressed, can translate into mobility challenges and longer-term disengagement.

Grades 9–12: Senior Years:

Attendance challenges intensify in the Senior Years (Grades 9-12). In 2023-24, combined ADA was approximately 67%, already below expectations for consistent secondary engagement. In 2024-25, ADA declined further to approximately 52%, accompanied by a substantial rise in student leavers (from 40 to 95), meaning that more than one-quarter of senior students exited during the year. This convergence of declining attendance and elevated leaver rates heightens concerns about credit accumulation, course completion, and graduation readiness, particularly among Grade 12 students.

Student survey results indicate that absenteeism among older students is increasingly driven by well-being and life-circumstance factors, including stress, anxiety, sadness, family responsibilities, and transportation challenges. Attendance staff observations corroborate these findings, identifying mental health concerns, social pressures, bullying (primarily social), teenage pregnancy, caregiving responsibilities, and academic overwhelm as significant contributors to absenteeism and withdrawal in the Senior Years.

Attendance Practices and Staff Capacity:

Information gathered through meetings with the Attendance Officer, the Principal, and a review of school documentation provides important qualitative insight into how NNOC is responding to attendance challenges in practice.

The Attendance Officer role at NNOC is clearly defined and focused exclusively on this school, with responsibilities including daily attendance follow-up, home visits, parent contact, and detailed documentation. The review confirmed that attendance follow-up is thorough, proactive, and well-documented, supported by strong use of paper-based Student Attendance Contact Forms and Student Attendance Meeting Forms. These tools capture personal, academic, social, and logistical barriers to attendance, as well as individualized action plans. These practices reflect trauma-informed, student-centred approaches and demonstrate high levels of professional diligence and care.

Recent leadership direction indicates additional efforts to formalize the thresholds for attendance monitoring. Teachers are expected to identify students who accumulate 10 or more absences, and PowerSchool tracks attendance by period/block to enable more precise monitoring. Letters of warning and follow-up phone calls are initiated once students reach defined absence thresholds. Teachers are also expected to engage directly with students as part of early-stage intervention, reinforcing shared accountability for attendance and classroom participation.

For non-attenders, policy discussions indicate that students who reach a defined threshold of missed classes without improvement may be unenrolled. At the Grade 7-8 level, attendance tracking occurs on a 3 to 4-week cycle, including letters and home visits. After repeated outreach attempts (e.g., 3 home visits) without engagement or parental response, the intervention intensity may be adjusted. These steps reflect a more structured response model; however, consistency of implementation and documentation protocols will be important to ensure fairness and transparency.

Since January 2026, there has also been an intentional shift toward team coordination as reported by leadership. The Attendance Officer, Guidance, and Social Work staff are now

expected to work collaboratively rather than operating through separate referral pathways. This integrated approach represents a positive move toward coordinated case management and shared responsibility for chronic absenteeism.

Positive school-wide strategies to reinforce attendance include public recognition of attendance milestones (80%, 90%, and 100%), incentives such as certificates, NOC Bucks, and attendance draws, and visible messaging that reinforces expectations and a sense of belonging. The Attendance Officer emphasized that relationship-based outreach (particularly home visits) remains the most effective intervention, given limited phone access, high student mobility, and varying levels of parental capacity. Community receptiveness to home visits was described as mixed (approximately 50/50), reinforcing the need for broader parent and community engagement strategies.

System-level constraints remain evident. While monthly tracking occurs, high-level summary reporting is not yet produced consistently, limiting the ability to analyze patterns over time or by grade. Attendance tracking and structured review processes often begin several weeks into the school year. Incomplete PowerSchool data, mobility patterns, and coordination gaps with teaching staff reduce the efficiency and scalability of interventions. Although PowerSchool is used to tally absences by block, it is not yet being leveraged for systematic dashboard reporting or predictive monitoring.

The Attendance Officer and evaluators also noted concerns regarding social promotion, academic readiness, and the need to normalize extended timelines for learning and completion, particularly for students who disengage when coursework becomes overwhelming.

Evidence from PowerSchool attendance and mobility data, student survey findings, and Attendance Officer insights indicates that NNOC faces a structural challenge in attendance and retention. While the opening of a modern, well-equipped facility and stable enrolment levels demonstrate strong institutional capacity, attendance and persistence outcomes have not yet aligned with these investments. The transition of Grades 7-8 into NNOC emerges as a key inflection point, where early disengagement may set the trajectory for chronic absenteeism, increased mobility, and eventual withdrawal in the Senior Years.

For evaluators, this evidence underscores the need to:

- Treat attendance at NNOC as a core condition for learning, not a peripheral issue;
- Differentiate strategies for Grades 7-8 transition support and Grades 9-12 retention and completion;
- Align attendance interventions with staffing stability, programming relevance, data systems, and relationship-based supports, recognizing that unresolved absenteeism increasingly leads to student mobility and exit.

Reasons of Absenteeism as Reported by Grades 7-12 in 2025.

Across Grades 7-12, the most frequently reported reasons for missing full days of school were difficulty waking up on time and being sick, followed by stress, anxiety, or feelings of sadness. A secondary set of contributing factors included travel with family, not liking school, and caregiving responsibilities for siblings or other family members, reflecting a combination of wellness-related and home-context pressures that interfere with consistent attendance.

When responses are examined by grade group, important differences emerge between Grades 7-8 and Grades 9-12. In the transition years (Grades 7-8), students were more likely to cite reasons related to engagement, readiness for learning, and routine, such as difficulty understanding schoolwork, lack of motivation, or a preference to stay home. These responses align with broader attendance and mobility patterns, indicating that the transition from O.K. School to the secondary setting represents a critical adjustment period, during which early disengagement can begin to take hold.

In contrast, students in Grades 9-12 were more likely to report well-being and life circumstance-related barriers, particularly stress, anxiety, or sadness, as well as family responsibilities and transportation challenges. This shift suggests that as students progress through NNOC, absenteeism becomes increasingly linked to mental health pressures and competing adult-like responsibilities, rather than primarily to motivation or routine alone. These findings mirror the observed escalation of attendance challenges and student leavers in the Senior Years.

Importantly, evaluators observed that a significant number of students (including those in higher grades) had difficulty understanding some survey questions, consistent with longstanding literacy and comprehension challenges noted in previous evaluations. As a result, the survey findings should be interpreted as directional indicators of key themes, rather than precise measures of prevalence by grade.

On a related note, during analysis, it was noted that some responses were incomplete or inconsistent. Despite these limitations, the results consistently indicate that absenteeism at NNOC is shaped by distinct yet interconnected factors across grade levels, underscoring the need for developmentally responsive attendance strategies that address early disengagement in Grades 7-8 and escalating well-being and life-context pressures in Grades 9-12.

NNOC Student Attendance Considerations:

It is important to note that, throughout the evaluation process, there was consistent evidence of the significant efforts NNCEA and NNOC are making to address and improve student attendance. These efforts include systematic monitoring through PowerSchool, dedicated attendance staff, home visits, ongoing follow-up with families, individualized attendance plans, and incentives and relationship-based strategies to encourage regular participation. Despite these sustained and well-documented efforts, attendance remains one of NNOC's most significant and persistent challenges, particularly in the transition years (Grades 7-8) and across the Senior Years (Grades 9-12).

Findings from the student survey, PowerSchool data, and attendance staff observations provide important context for understanding why these efforts have not yet translated into sustained improvements in attendance rates. The evidence indicates that absenteeism at NNOC is not primarily driven by low enrolment, school avoidance, or dissatisfaction with programming, but by a combination of chronic absenteeism, irregular participation, and increasing student mobility.

Student-reported reasons for absence point to difficulty maintaining routines (e.g., waking up on time), illness, mental health and emotional well-being challenges, family responsibilities, transportation barriers, and social pressures, particularly as students progress into the Senior Years. Together, these findings suggest that attendance at NNOC is shaped as much by life circumstances and well-being factors as by school-based practices.
The evaluation further highlights that Grades 7-8 represent a critical transition point. As students

move from O.K. School into the secondary environment, attendance patterns become more fragile, and early disengagement may set the trajectory for later chronic absenteeism, mobility, and withdrawal. In the Senior Years, attendance challenges intensify and increasingly intersect with pressures related to credit accumulation, course completion, and graduation readiness, contributing to higher leaver rates and a heightened risk of students leaving school before completing.

NNOC carries a critical responsibility to support NCN youth through this extended period of adolescent development and to prepare them for graduation, post-secondary education, training, or entry into adult roles within the community. Persistent absenteeism at the secondary level, therefore, represents not only an operational challenge but a longer-term risk to student success, credential attainment, and community capacity. The evaluation findings underscore that attendance challenges at NNOC cannot be addressed through monitoring and follow-up alone, particularly when absenteeism is rooted in well-being, family context, and socioeconomic pressures.

Given the central role that NCN families, caregivers, and the broader community play in shaping attendance patterns during adolescence, the evaluation highlights the need for NNCEA to continue strengthening its macro-level approach to secondary attendance. This includes ensuring that attendance strategies are developmentally responsive, aligned with mental health and student support services, coordinated across schools, and supported by accurate data systems and structured review processes. Importantly, it also requires approaches that move beyond compliance-based responses toward preventive, relationship-centred, and family-informed supports.

Finally, while evaluators acknowledge the commitment, professionalism, and persistence of NNOC staff and attendance personnel, the findings identify a clear gap between the intensity of current efforts and the complexity of the underlying causes of absenteeism. Addressing this gap represents an opportunity to build on existing strengths, strengthen transition supports, reduce student mobility, and improve long-term attendance and retention outcomes at NNOC.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA, in collaboration with NNOC, implement a standardized, division-aligned attendance framework that includes:

- Clearly defined intervention tiers;
- Documented follow-up timelines and accountability structures;
- Home-visit monitoring and impact-tracking system to systematically document, analyze, and measure the effectiveness of attendance-related home visits conducted by the Attendance Officer. While home visits are currently being tracked, the evaluation identified an opportunity to strengthen the use of this information to assess whether interventions are producing measurable improvements in student attendance over time.

The proposed system should take the form of a structured matrix or database that integrates existing attendance thresholds already used by NNOC to flag concerns. Each student record should include baseline attendance data at the time a threshold is triggered, the date and purpose of the home visit, key issues identified during the visit (e.g., morning routines, illness, caregiving responsibilities, transportation), and the agreed-upon follow-up actions with

the family.

Critically, the system should be designed to support longitudinal tracking, enabling NNOC to compare attendance patterns before and after home visits at defined intervals (e.g., 2, 4, and 8 weeks post-intervention). This will enable the school and NNCEA to distinguish between short-term improvements and sustained changes in attendance, and to identify which types of interventions are most effective for different attendance barriers.

In addition, the database should be able to generate standardized summary reports at the classroom, grade, and school levels. These reports should highlight the number of students flagged at each attendance threshold, the number and frequency of home visits conducted, follow-up actions completed and observed changes in attendance outcomes. Such reporting would provide NNCEA and school leadership with an evidence-based tool to assess the impact of attendance interventions, refine strategies, and allocate resources more effectively.

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC formalize a Grades 7–8 Transition Attendance Framework that combines academic, attendance, and well-being supports during students' first two years at NNOC.

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC integrate mental health–informed practices into attendance strategies, particularly for students in Grades 9–12. This should include: coordinated attendance and mental health case reviews; flexible scheduling; reduced course loads; alternative timetabling for high-risk students; trauma-informed attendance conversations that focus on re-engagement rather than compliance; and clear referral pathways between attendance staff, guidance, and mental health supports.

It is recommended that NNCEA require NNOC to routinely analyze attendance and student leaver data together, rather than treating them as separate indicators.

It is recommended that NNCEA support improvements to PowerSchool data quality and access by establishing clear protocols for regular demographic updates, ensuring teachers and support staff can easily access current attendance and contact information, and creating simple dashboards or summaries that highlight attendance risk patterns at the classroom and grade level.

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC further normalize flexible learning pathways, including:

- Credit recovery and modular course completion;
- Extended timelines for graduation without stigma;
- Blended, experiential, or land-based learning options connected to attendance re-engagement.

This would help students remain connected to school even when traditional attendance patterns are difficult to sustain.

3.6.2.3. Student Performance & Achievement

Student performance and achievement at NNOC reflect a complex interplay between student capacity, instructional effort, attendance, and broader social conditions. Evidence from annual reports, school-level data, and evaluation findings indicates that, while there are pockets of success and a strong instructional commitment, overall achievement outcomes remain uneven and fragile, particularly as students progress through the secondary grades.

Annual Reports consistently describe NNOC as a school with dedicated staff, expanding programming, and a strong commitment to student success, particularly following the transition into the new facility and the consolidation of Grades 7-12. Over time, NNOC has increased course offerings, strengthened cultural and land-based programming, and supported student engagement and credit accumulation.

However, performance outcomes must be interpreted within the context of persistent attendance challenges and high student mobility, which significantly constrain instructional continuity and achievement gains. As documented elsewhere in this evaluation, ADA at NNOC has remained well below desired levels. These conditions limit students' consistent exposure to instruction, assessment, and feedback, key prerequisites for academic progress.

Grades 7-8: Foundational Performance and Readiness

In Grades 7-8, student performance is closely linked to readiness for secondary learning. Annual reports and evaluation findings indicate that many students enter NNOC with gaps in foundational literacy, numeracy, and learning routines, reflecting cumulative impacts of inconsistent attendance and disrupted learning in earlier years.

Student survey data and staff observations further indicate that some students in these grades experience difficulty understanding academic material, struggle with organization and motivation, and require additional support to adjust to secondary expectations. When attendance is irregular, these challenges are amplified, increasing the risk that early learning gaps will widen rather than close. As a result, performance in Grades 7-8 is best characterized as highly variable: students who attend consistently demonstrate progress, while others fall behind due to missed instructional time.

Grades 9-12: Achievement, Credit Accumulation, and Completion:

In the Senior Years, student achievement is most visibly reflected through credit accumulation, course completion, and graduation readiness. Annual Reports note that NNOC continues to support students toward graduation through academic programming, cultural education, and individualized support. However, the evaluation evidence indicates that attendance instability increasingly undermines achievement as academic demands intensify.

PowerSchool data and “leaver” patterns show that students with persistent absenteeism often struggle to complete coursework, accumulate credits at the expected pace, and remain engaged through to graduation. This is particularly evident in Grade 12, where declining attendance coincides with elevated withdrawal rates. In these cases, performance challenges are less about academic ability and more about insufficient instructional exposure, academic overwhelm, and competing life responsibilities.

Staff observations and Attendance Officer notes further suggest that some students disengage when course expectations feel unattainable, particularly when attendance gaps make it difficult to keep up. Without flexible pathways or timely intervention, these students may disengage academically before formally exiting the school.

Credit Recovery and Alternative Pathways:

The evaluation found that NNOC does not currently operate a formalized credit recovery program. While a previous Alternative Education (Alt-Ed) structure existed, consisting of two dedicated classes, one key component was discontinued due to concerns regarding effectiveness. In the absence of a structured program, independent credits have been utilized in limited, case-by-case situations; however, these solutions function as one-off interventions rather than as part of a coherent recovery framework.

At present, the Adult Education (Adult Ed) program serves as the primary alternative pathway for students approximately 19 years of age or older, or for those with significantly low credit accumulation. The Adult Ed program is described as effective and supportive; however, it is currently operating at capacity and cannot accommodate additional students.

Co-operative Education is not currently implemented; however, strong leadership support has been expressed for its development. Co-op is viewed as a potential retention strategy for students who do not fully engage with classroom-based instruction and who may benefit from experiential, career-connected learning opportunities.

Dual Credit programming is not presently established at NNOC. While discussions have identified Dual Credits as a desirable future direction, particularly as a bridge between secondary and post-secondary education, no formal structure or partnerships are currently in place.

Summer School programming was also discussed and is not offered. The absence of this alternative program limits opportunities for accelerated credit completion, remediation, or targeted credit recovery, particularly for students at risk of delayed graduation.

Impact of Attendance and Mobility on Achievement:

Across all grades, the evaluation finds that attendance is the single most significant constraint on student performance and achievement at NNOC.

Importantly, evaluators observed that instructional effort and staff commitment remain strong, but their effectiveness is limited by conditions largely outside the classroom. As a result, NNOC's achievement outcomes should be understood not as a reflection of inadequate instruction, but as the product of structural barriers that interrupt learning continuity.

For evaluators, similarly to that in Section 3.6.2.2. (Student Attendance), improving student performance and achievement at NNOC will require:

- Addressing attendance and engagement as prerequisite conditions for achievement;
- Strengthening Grades 7-8 readiness and transition supports to prevent early learning gaps from widening;
- Expanding flexible pathways, credit recovery, and extended timelines in the Senior

Years;
- Aligning academic expectations with mental health, well-being, and life-context supports;
- Ensuring that performance monitoring is interpreted alongside attendance and mobility data to avoid misleading conclusions.

Without parallel improvements in attendance and retention, gains in instructional quality and programming alone are unlikely to produce sustained improvements in student achievement.

NNOC Graduation Rates:

Across Manitoba, high school graduation outcomes for First Nations students (particularly those living on reserve) remain significantly lower than provincial averages, despite gradual improvement over time. Provincial and national data show that while most students in the Manitoba public system graduate within the expected four-year timeframe, First Nations students are more likely to require extended timelines to complete high school.

This broader context is essential for interpreting graduation outcomes at NNOC. Annual Reports indicate that NNOC has consistently supported students towards graduation each year, including during periods of significant disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition into the new school facility.

Prior to the pandemic, the school reported 15 Grade 12 graduates in 2018-19; in subsequent years, graduation reporting shifted toward recognizing graduating students through lists and ceremonies rather than standardized counts, reflecting attendance instability, mobility, and interrupted learning trajectories.

Evidence suggests that graduation at NNOC is closely linked to consistent attendance, sustained engagement, and flexible completion pathways, reinforcing the importance of addressing attendance and retention as foundational conditions for improving long-term secondary achievement.

The evaluation identified significant limitations in the availability and reliability of graduation and credit accumulation data at NNOC. As reflected in Table 8, enrolment and graduate counts for 2022-23 through 2024-25 indicate the following:

Table 8: NNOC Students Enrolled v/s Graduates 2022-23 to 2024-2025

Year	Enrolled	No. Graduates
2022-23	76	14
2023-24	88	27
2024-25	59	20

While these figures demonstrate year-over-year variation in both enrolment and graduation, they do not allow for accurate graduation rate calculations. This is primarily due to inconsistencies in PowerSchool reporting and cohort tracking. Specifically, based on reporting that some students appear in Grade 12 enrolment records based on age or grade designation, but do not possess sufficient accumulated credits to meet graduation eligibility. As a result, grade-level enrolment counts do not consistently reflect students' actual credit standing.

This misalignment limits the school's ability to calculate true cohort-based graduation rates,

monitor credit progression trends, or conduct longitudinal completion analyses. Without reliable alignment between age-based grade placement and credit accumulation data, graduation reporting risks overstating or understating performance indicators.

From a governance and accountability perspective, this gap underscores the need for strengthened data-integrity protocols, clearer grade-versus-credit tracking mechanisms, and the systematic use of PowerSchool as a single source of truth for credit accumulation and graduation eligibility. Accurate data reporting is essential not only for internal planning and intervention but also for external accountability, funding alignment, and strategic decision-making.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC formally position attendance and engagement as prerequisite conditions for academic achievement, ensuring that academic performance monitoring, intervention planning, and reporting explicitly integrate attendance data. (Please refer to recommendations in Section 3.6.2.2.)

It is recommended that NNOC strengthen Grades 7–8 academic readiness and transition support by implementing a structured readiness framework that includes:

- Diagnostic literacy and numeracy screening early in the school year;
- Targeted instructional supports for students with identified learning gaps;
- Explicit teaching of secondary learning routines and expectations;

Consistent adult mentorship or advisory support to reinforce engagement and accountability.

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC develop clearer internal monitoring of intermediate achievement indicators to identify earlier when students are falling off track and intervene more effectively. Monitoring should include:

- Credit accumulation by grade;
- Course completion rates;
- Progress toward graduation requirements;
- Patterns of re-engagement after interruption.

It is recommended that NNOC develop a formal framework for credit recovery and alternative pathways to support students who fall behind on credits but remain within school-age parameters. Addressing this gap may require allocating additional elective teaching capacity to facilitate flexible credit-completion models.

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC evaluate the feasibility of implementing structured Co-op programs, dual-credit programming, and summer school opportunities to improve student engagement, credit accumulation, and graduation outcomes.

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC continue to frame graduation as a process rather than a single on-time outcome, emphasizing persistence, re-entry, and multiple pathways to completion. Performance reporting should acknowledge extended timelines as valid indicators of success, consistent with community context and student realities.

It is recommended that NNCEA strengthen data extraction protocols and optimize PowerSchool usage for graduation and credit tracking to improve monitoring accuracy, forecast completion rates, and align intervention efforts with measurable outcomes.

3.6.3. Special Education & Student Support Services

3.6.3.1. Special Education

Special education and special services at NNOC operate within a context of high academic need, attendance instability, over-age and under-credited learners, and complex socio-emotional factors. Evidence gathered during the evaluation process indicates that NNOC has made meaningful progress in individualized academic planning and student support, but that special education services remain largely informal, reactive, and constrained by systemic gaps in assessment, benchmarking, and coordination.

Currently, a significant proportion of NNOC students present with learning gaps that are not aligned with their grade placement, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This misalignment is compounded by social promotion practices, attendance disruption, and age-based grade advancement in PowerSchool rather than advancement based on credit or competency. As a result, many students (especially in Grades 9-12) are over-aged and under-credited, with some classified as Grade 12 despite having minimal or no accumulated high-school credits.

These conditions significantly complicate the delivery of special education services. Students with learning difficulties are often not formally identified through standardized assessment, yet require intensive academic support, differentiated instruction, and alternative pathways to progress.

The absence of baseline academic benchmarking makes it difficult to determine whether students' challenges stem from learning disabilities, interrupted schooling, trauma impacts, or prolonged absenteeism, or, more commonly, a combination of all four.

Special education at NNOC is delivered through a blended, inclusive, and relationship-based model, rather than through a discrete, formally structured special education program. A key strength identified in the evaluation is the role of the Academic Advisor / Social Worker, who has implemented individualized academic plans and credit trackers for every student in Grades 9-12, updated semi-annually. This directly addresses a major recommendation from the 2017-2018 NNOC evaluation regarding individualized pathways and transition planning.

Although it was reported that this individualized advising model has improved visibility of credit gaps and graduation eligibility, early identification of students at risk of non-completion and alignment between academic planning, attendance intervention, and post-secondary preparation, this work functions as a compensatory mechanism for the absence of formal special education structures, rather than as part of a coordinated special education framework.

Assessment, Documentation, and Benchmarking Gaps:

Across all sources, the most significant limitation identified in special education services is the lack of standardized academic assessment and benchmarking. There is currently no division-wide system for:

- Establishing baseline literacy and numeracy levels;
- Monitoring academic growth over time;
- Distinguishing learning disabilities from gaps caused by absenteeism or interrupted instruction.

Staff consistently reported that teachers are required to manage multi-level classrooms without reliable data, limiting their ability to plan targeted interventions or measure the effectiveness of instructional strategies. This gap also limits NNOC's ability to formally document special education needs, develop robust Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and evaluate outcomes at the system level.

Intersection with Attendance, Wellness, and Student Mobility:

Evaluation evidence reinforces that special education needs at NNOC cannot be separated from attendance and wellness realities. Chronic absenteeism is identified as the single largest barrier to academic success, undermining the effectiveness of any learning support, including special education interventions. Students with learning difficulties are disproportionately affected by irregular attendance, as missed instruction accelerates disengagement and academic frustration.

Meeting with staff further highlights that unresolved learning gaps often translate into behavioural disengagement, emotional distress, and eventual withdrawal, particularly in the Senior Years. In this context, special education serves as part of a broader student support and retention strategy rather than a standalone instructional service.

Over-Age/Under-Credit Learners:

A major emerging issue identified through the evaluation is the growing population of over-age, under-credited students who are not well served by existing programming. While some of these students would traditionally fall within special education or alternative education frameworks, NNOC currently lacks a formalized structure to systematically address their needs.

The proposed development of an Alternative Transition Year or bridging program for students needing Grade 9/10 credit recovery represents a promising response. However, at the time of the evaluation, this initiative remains in development and unfunded, limiting its impact. Please see Section 3.6.2.3 for more information.

Mathematics Intervention Reconfiguration:

In response to identified mathematics learning gaps, NNOC has recently repurposed the former sensory room into an additional classroom dedicated to mathematics instruction. This structural adjustment prioritizes academic recovery, particularly for students who have experienced prolonged absences or disruptions in math learning.

Two resource teachers have been reassigned to deliver differentiated mathematics instruction to students who have been out of school or disengaged from formal math programming.

Instructional emphasis is also shifting toward functional mathematics competencies, including practical applications such as money management, calculator and mobile device use, and real-world problem solving. This represents a deliberate move away from rote memorization toward applied mathematical literacy intended to increase relevance, engagement, and long-term utility for students.

Overall Assessment:

Evidence indicates that special education and special services at NNOC are active but structurally underdeveloped. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to individualized support, inclusive practice, and relationship-based intervention, particularly through academic advising and student services. However, special education remains embedded within informal support systems, rather than supported by consistent assessment tools, formal documentation processes, and clearly defined programming pathways.

Strengthening special education at NNOC will therefore require a system-level response, including improved assessment infrastructure, clearer differentiation between learning disability and interrupted learning, expanded alternative programming, and tighter integration between academic, attendance, and wellness supports. Without these structural foundations, special education services will continue to function primarily as crisis-response and compensatory support, rather than as a proactive, measurable driver of student achievement.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA establish a consistent academic assessment and benchmarking framework at NNOC to support the identification and monitoring of special education needs. Implementing standardized screening and progress-monitoring tools would provide teachers and support staff with reliable data to inform instructional planning, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and targeted interventions, while improving system-level visibility into student learning needs and growth over time.

It is recommended that NNOC formalize special education structures, including clearer documentation, referral pathways, and student support tracking processes. Establishing standardized referral pathways, centralized documentation, and routine review processes would strengthen coordination between classroom instruction, special services, and student supports and ensure that learning needs are addressed systematically rather than reactively.

It is recommended that NNOC develop formal alternative and bridging pathways for over-age and under-credited students whose learning needs are not well served by traditional secondary programming. Creating structured transition years, competency-based programming, credit recovery, and applied or land-based learning pathways would provide these students with realistic, dignified options to rebuild skills, regain confidence, and progress toward completion, while reducing the risk of withdrawal and long-term disengagement.

3.6.3.2. Student Support Services

Student support services at NNOC operate in a context of high and complex student need, shaped by attendance instability, mental health challenges, family responsibilities, community pressures, and student mobility. Evidence gathered during the evaluation process indicates that NNOC has a strong, relationship-based support culture, but that current structures are increasingly strained by the volume and complexity of need.

Student support at NNOC is delivered through a collaborative model that includes guidance, counselling, social work, attendance services, nursing support, administration, and external community partners. The approach is explicitly trauma-informed, student-centred, and relational, grounded in the belief that maintaining connection to school is essential for student wellbeing, engagement, and persistence.

The Guidance Counsellor role plays a central part in this model, providing mental health and emotional support to students while working closely with other school-based and community professionals. This role extends well beyond traditional academic guidance, encompassing counselling, crisis response, family liaison, advocacy, and coordination with external services. Staff consistently described this work as essential to keeping students connected during periods of emotional distress, grief, or instability.

Student needs at NNOC are layered and interconnected, rather than isolated or episodic. Staff described student experiences as shaped by a combination of historical trauma, family instability, mental health challenges, caregiving responsibilities, and social pressures. Student survey findings reinforce this perspective, indicating that absenteeism and disengagement are frequently linked to stress, anxiety, sadness, family obligations, and transportation challenges, particularly in the Senior Years.

These wellness challenges directly intersect with attendance and academic engagement. Students experiencing emotional distress or competing responsibilities often attend irregularly, struggle to keep up academically, and disengage when expectations feel overwhelming. In this context, student support services function not only as intervention mechanisms but also as protective factors that help students remain connected to school.

Assessment and Referral Procedures:

Assessment and referral practices at NNOC rely heavily on informal, relationship-based processes. Teachers and staff typically raise concerns verbally or through direct contact with guidance, attendance, or administration. While this reflects strong collegial relationships and responsiveness, staff identified limitations in the absence of a consistently applied, centralized referral and tracking system.

As a result, referrals may be delayed, inconsistently documented, or difficult to monitor over time, particularly during high-demand periods. The lack of centralized tracking also limits NNOC's ability to analyze trends in student need, prioritize cases, and assess the effectiveness of interventions at a system level. These challenges are compounded by incomplete or outdated student information, high mobility, and limited integration between attendance, academic, and well-being data.

However, recent organizational adjustments indicate a deliberate move toward more

coordinated, team-based student support at NNOC. Since January 2026, the Attendance Officer, Guidance, and Social Work staff have been expected to operate collaboratively rather than through the previously described "separate funnels."

Complementing this shift in coordination, NNOC is implementing a formal Teacher Support Team process. Under this emerging model, teachers submit referrals for students who are at risk of attendance, behavioural, or academic issues. The team, consisting of Administration, the Attendance Officer, Academic Advisor, Student Services personnel (including Social Work and Nursing), and external agencies (where appropriate), reviews cases and assigns structured support plans.

While the process remains in the early stages of implementation and has been described as "messy," with some confusion among teachers regarding referral procedures, it represents an important structural step toward proactive, multidisciplinary intervention. Continued refinement of referral clarity, documentation protocols, and follow-up monitoring will be essential to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of this team-based approach.

Collaboration with External Agencies:

Collaboration with external agencies, particularly Child and Family Services (CFS), was identified as a persistent challenge. Staff noted ongoing barriers related to communication, confidentiality, responsiveness, and information sharing, especially for children in care. While advocacy efforts have led to some improvements, coordination often remains dependent on individual relationships rather than formalized processes.

At the same time, partnerships with other community-based and regional service providers (e.g., Jordan's Principle supports, MKO services, health providers) were described as generally positive, though time-intensive to manage. Staff emphasized a growing desire to shift from crisis-driven responses toward earlier, preventive engagement, particularly with external agencies.

Occupational Therapy (OT) and Sensory Room:

Recent developments within Student Services at NNOC reflect a targeted effort to strengthen specialized supports for students requiring sensory regulation and occupational therapy interventions.

Occupational Therapy (OT) services, previously identified as underutilized, are now being allocated more strategically through a structured time allocation across schools. This adjustment is intended to improve access, maximize the efficiency of service delivery, and ensure that students at NNOC receive more consistent therapeutic support.

In addition, the sensory room has been relocated back to its original location within the Student Services area. This move re-centers sensory supports within the broader student support framework and enables improved coordination among OT, resource staff, Educational Assistants (EAs), and administration.

Importantly, structured EA training is currently underway to ensure proper setup, supervision, and effective utilization of the sensory room. The OT is working directly with EAs to provide hands-on training and practical guidance, thereby strengthening staff capacity and promoting

consistent implementation of sensory strategies.

These developments indicate progress in addressing previously identified service delivery gaps. Continued monitoring of utilization rates, scheduling protocols, and student outcome data will be important to ensure that OT services and sensory interventions are systematically integrated into Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and broader intervention frameworks.

Preventive Supports and Wellness-Focused Programming:

Despite capacity constraints, NNOC has implemented a range of practical, relationship-based wellness supports that contribute positively to student wellbeing. These include access to food through a school-based food bank and grocery support, safe and quiet spaces for self-regulation, and symbolic supports that help students feel cared for and emotionally safe.

In addition, hands-on, culturally and community-connected initiatives, such as beekeeping, greenhouse, and gardening projects, were consistently identified as meaningful protective factors. These initiatives foster responsibility, pride, connection to place, and a sense of belonging, and have proven particularly effective in supporting student engagement among those at risk of disengagement.

Staff emphasized, however, that limited capacity has constrained the delivery of consistent, school-wide preventive programming. While there is strong interest in classroom-based wellness programming (e.g., trauma, coping skills, self-esteem, substance use), such initiatives are often optional or sporadic due to competing demands and staffing limitations.

Student support and wellness staff described a strong sense of mutual care and teamwork, often functioning as a close-knit unit that emotionally supports one another. While this culture provides resilience, the evaluation also identifies a risk of burnout, as staff are required to absorb high levels of trauma exposure and crisis response without sufficient structural relief or staffing depth.

Evidence indicates that student support services, wellness, guidance counselling, and referral practices at NNOC represent a critical strength in terms of philosophy, relationships, and commitment, but are operating under significant capacity and structural constraints. Supports are effective at responding to immediate needs and maintaining student connections, but are largely reactive, limiting the school's ability to implement consistent preventive programming or to systematically monitor outcomes.

For the evaluation, this integrated support system should be understood as a foundational condition for attendance, engagement, and achievement, rather than as a separate or ancillary service. Strengthening student support at NNOC will require enhanced staffing capacity, clearer referral and tracking processes, stronger inter-agency coordination, and expanded preventive wellness programming, alongside continued emphasis on relationship-based, trauma-informed practice.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA, in collaboration with NNOC, establish a centralized student support case management system that integrates attendance, wellness, special services, academic advising, and nutrition support. Also, a centralized system with standardized intake, clear triage criteria, documented action plans, and follow-up tracking would improve coordination across roles, support earlier intervention, and enable NNOC and NNCEA to monitor patterns of need and the effectiveness of interventions over time.

It is recommended that NNOC shift from predominantly reactive student support toward structured preventive programming, particularly in Grades 7-8 and the early Senior Years. Embedding scheduled, grade-based wellness, transition, and engagement programming within the school timetable would reduce reliance on crisis intervention, strengthen student readiness, and support more consistent attendance and engagement before challenges escalate.

It is also recommended that NNOC strengthen student support capacity and clarify role expectations to ensure the sustainability of services. Guidance counselling, social work, attendance, and student services staff are currently absorbing high levels of complex need and frequently operating beyond their intended mandates, increasing the risk of burnout and limiting the delivery of preventive programming. Reviewing workload distribution, enhancing mental health and youth support capacity, formalizing collaboration and case-review time, and ensuring protected time for documentation and planning would support staff wellbeing and improve the overall effectiveness and consistency of student support services.

3.6.3.3. Career Planning & Transition Programs

Career planning and transition programming at NNOC have strengthened significantly since the 2017-2018 evaluation, particularly through the expansion of individualized academic advising, credit tracking, and post-secondary preparation. The current model is largely centralized through the Academic Advisor/Social Worker role, which provides targeted support to senior students while attempting to respond to a highly complex learner profile marked by attendance challenges, trauma, and widespread over-age/under-credit status.

Guidance counselling and student services staff play a critical role in one-to-one transition conversations, supporting applications, referrals, and coordination with external programs when students are ready to pursue employment, training, or further education. These supports are relationship-based, responsive, and particularly effective for students who attend regularly and maintain consistent contact with school staff.

Program Structure and Scope:

NNOC's transition programming is anchored in individualized graduation and career planning, with a strong emphasis on Grades 11-12. Core components include:

- Individual academic plans and semi-annual credit tracking for all high school students
- Graduation eligibility reviews and transcript monitoring
- One-to-one post-secondary advising, with a strategic focus on local and regional pathways (e.g., UCN-Thompson) to improve retention and reduce student dislocation
- Delivery of a Grad Prep/LifeWorks 40S course, covering budgeting, applications, employment readiness, and independent living skills
- Active support for bursaries and funding access (e.g., Inspire and other programs)

These elements directly address the earlier evaluation's call for clear graduation pathways and stronger post-secondary readiness.

Impact and Effectiveness:

The program is demonstrating high impact for students who are actively engaged. Of the 59 students listed as Grade 12 in PowerSchool, only 16 are currently credit-eligible to graduate with the required credits. Among this group, nearly all have received individualized advising, with an anticipated graduation rate of approximately 80% (13 of 16 students) for the current year. This highlights a key strength of the program: intensive, personalized advising is effective when students are reachable and regularly attend school.

Structural Gaps and Systemic Challenges:

Despite progress, the evaluation identified several persistent gaps that limit the overall effectiveness and equity of career and transition supports:

- Misalignment Between Grade Placement and Credits: A significant proportion of students are placed in Grade 12 based on age rather than on earned credits. Many are missing large portions of core Grade 9-10 coursework, and some have no or only minimal credits. This creates false expectations for students and families and masks the scale of credit recovery needs.

- Limited Reach and Capacity: Although the advising role nominally supports Grades 9-12, effective transition planning currently reaches only a small subset of senior students. Over-age and under-credited learners (who represent the majority of the "Grade 12" cohort) remain largely underserved due to capacity constraints.

- Absence of Formal Alternative Transition Pathways: There is no formally resourced alternative transition or bridging program for students who are not yet ready for graduation but are beyond typical grade-level placement. A proposed Grade 9/10 reintegration or "transition year" model is under development but not yet implemented.

- Weak Post-Secondary Handoff and Tracking: While informal connections exist with post-secondary advisors and alumni, there is no structured system to track graduates into their first year of post-secondary education or employment, which limits NNOC's ability to assess long-term outcomes.

- Limited Career Exposure and Employer Partnerships: Career planning remains largely academic and post-secondary focused. Structured partnerships with employers, trades programs, and vocational pathways (e.g., hydro, health, skilled trades) are still emerging rather than fully embedded.

It was noted that NNOC is in the early stages of developing a credit-recovery and re-entry pathway for over-age and under-credited learners, signalling a shift toward more realistic and flexible transition options. At the same time, collaboration with post-secondary institutions and recruiters continues to grow, strengthening students' exposure to further education and training opportunities.

Planning is also underway to introduce peer mentorship and alumni engagement through initiatives such as Pathways to Possibilities, which aim to increase motivation and visibility of diverse post-school pathways. In addition, integrating entrepreneurship concepts (including NNOC Bucks and emerging student-led enterprise ideas) broadens career awareness beyond traditional academic routes and supports the development of practical, work-related skills.

Overall, NNOC has made meaningful progress in career planning and transition programming since the last evaluation, particularly in individualized advising, graduation tracking, and post-secondary preparation. However, the impact of these efforts is constrained by systemic issues related to attendance, over-age/under-credit learners, and limited program capacity.

To fully meet the intent of earlier evaluation recommendations, the transition program now requires formalization, expanded staffing or supports, alternative pathways, and stronger post-school tracking mechanisms. Strengthening these areas would enable NNOC to move from a reactive, case-by-case model to a coherent, inclusive transition system that serves all learners, not just those already close to graduation.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNOC develop and implement a coherent school-wide Career Planning and Transition Framework beginning in Grades 7–8 and continuing through the Senior Years. This framework should define age-appropriate career awareness, transition milestones, and student outcomes at each grade level, ensuring that all students (not just those already engaged or credit-eligible) receive consistent exposure to career pathways, postsecondary options, and life skills development. Early and structured career planning would help build relevance, motivation, and engagement before students fall significantly behind in attendance or credits.

It is recommended that NNOC formalize and resource alternative transition pathways for over-age and under-credited students, including structured credit recovery, re-entry programs, and competency-based or work-integrated learning opportunities. These pathways should align academic expectations with realistic timelines and emphasize re-engagement, skill development, and employability alongside credit accumulation. Establishing clear alternatives to on-time graduation would improve retention, reduce disengagement, and provide students with credible, attainable transition options.

It is recommended that NNOC strengthen transition coordination by implementing a shared tracking system for post-school outcomes (post-secondary enrollment, training, employment, and re-entry) and formalizing partnerships with post-secondary institutions, employers, and community agencies. Dedicated coordination (potentially through expanded advising capacity or a community liaison function) would support smoother handoffs beyond graduation, improve follow-up with graduates, and provide NNOC with evidence to assess the long-term effectiveness of its transition programming.

3.6.3.4. Nutrition Programs

Nutrition programming at NNOC plays a critical supportive role in student wellbeing, attendance, and engagement. Evidence across Annual Reports, student services documentation, and staff consultations consistently indicates that food insecurity remains a significant and ongoing reality for many NNOC students. Access to nutrition supports is closely linked to students' ability to attend school, concentrate in class, and remain regulated throughout the day.

NNOC currently provides multiple layers of nutrition support during regular school hours, including:

- Breakfast Program
- Lunch Program
- Snack Access During Breaks, including fruit, chips, chewy bars, juice, biscuits, and water
- In-School Food Pantry, accessible through self-referral or teacher referral

The Food Pantry functions as an essential stabilization mechanism for students experiencing acute food insecurity. Students may access food discreetly during the school day, reducing barriers to attendance and supporting immediate well-being needs.

These supports operate through a combination of structured programming (breakfast and lunch) and responsive access models (snacks and pantry). Student services and guidance counselling staff rely on food access as a key engagement tool when students present with signs of hunger, fatigue, stress, or financial strain within their families.

In addition to in-school supports, nutrition programming extends beyond regular instructional hours with a before-school breakfast program and an after-school nutrition support integrated within the after-school program. While these supports are not described as fully formalized programs with separate funding structures, they function as essential extensions of the school's nutrition safety net.

Nutrition support at NNOC also extends into weekends through weekend snack bags, offered once every two weeks. Food is packed by student and teacher volunteers during Friday lunch hours. The distribution is coordinated by the Family & Natural Supports Office (FNSO) on weekends as needs arise.

This initiative reflects strong community coordination and volunteer engagement. The Food Pantry remains accessible only during school hours; however, the weekend snack program helps bridge gaps for students facing food insecurity on weekends.

The program evolved from small-scale food purchases at the community store. As demand increased, the Red Cross provided emergency support and subsequently referred the school to a grant opportunity through The Northern Manitoba Food, Culture, and Community Collaborative (NFMCCC). Additional grant support from the Chief and Council strengthened the ability to provide weekend food assistance.

The evaluation evidence strongly suggests that nutrition support at NNOC is not ancillary but foundational to attendance and student wellness outcomes. Staff consistently report that

hunger, irregular access to food at home, and family instability contribute to fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and absenteeism.

It was also noted that nutrition programming at NNOC has evolved organically in response to growing demand. What began as small-scale food purchasing expanded through emergency assistance (Red Cross), external grant referrals, partnerships with Harvest Manitoba, and financial contributions from Chief and Council.

Despite its growth and observed impact, NNOC's nutrition programs appear to be largely informal and capacity-constrained. The evaluation found limited evidence of:

- A clearly articulated nutrition program framework or policy;
- Consistent data tracking on student access or demand;
- Stable, long-term funding aligned with the scale of student need.

As a result, nutrition supports rely heavily on staff initiative, ad hoc coordination, and available resources, which can create sustainability challenges. Demand for food support fluctuates and is often highest during periods of increased attendance instability, community stress, or seasonal hardship, placing additional strain on already stretched student services staff.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNOC formalize the structure and sustainability of the school nutrition program, recognizing it as an essential component of the student support system. This should include:

- Strengthening program documentation and data tracking;
- Stabilizing program coordination and operational procedures;

Exploring strategies to secure more stable funding and community partnerships.

3.6.4. School Climate & Perception

School climate at NNOC can be characterized as supportive, relationship-centred, and culturally grounded, but operating under significant strain due to the cumulative impacts of attendance challenges, wellness needs, and system transitions.

Information reviewed during the evaluation process, such as Annual Reports, student surveys, attendance data, and staff consultations, indicates that NNOC is widely perceived as a caring and supportive school, where students are known personally, and staff work intentionally to maintain connection, safety, and belonging.

School climate is also influenced by broader social and structural pressures that extend beyond the classroom. Irregular attendance, high student stress, and competing family responsibilities undermine the consistency of peer groups, classroom routines, and instructional continuity. These factors contribute to a climate that is relationally strong but operationally fragile, requiring staff to continually balance academic expectations with responsiveness to student circumstances.

Student feedback and staff observations suggest that feelings of safety and belonging are closely tied to relationships with adults, access to support services, and participation in culturally relevant and hands-on activities. Where students feel connected (to teachers, guidance staff, attendance supports, or school-based projects), their engagement and sense of belonging are stronger. Conversely, students who struggle with attendance or emotional well-being are more likely to experience disconnection from the school community, particularly as they move into the Senior Years.

Understanding this context is essential for interpreting student engagement, behaviour, attendance, and achievement outcomes across the school. Strengthening school climate at NNOC, therefore, depends not only on classroom practices but on coordinated efforts to stabilize attendance, support student well-being, and reinforce consistent routines and expectations across grades.

3.6.4.1. Teachers & Staff

Across the period reviewed, from post-pandemic recovery through recent Annual Reports and the 2025 NNOC Teacher Survey, the climate at NNOC is characterized by strong relational commitment operating under sustained structural pressure.

While the opening of the new NNOC facility and the expansion of programming represent important milestones, teachers consistently describe working in an environment marked by chronic attendance instability, uneven student readiness, and escalating social-emotional needs. These conditions form the backdrop against which instructional efforts, student engagement, and staff morale must be understood.

The 2025 Teacher Survey reinforces this picture. A large majority of respondents identified attendance-related challenges and social-emotional needs as the most significant factors affecting classroom climate and instructional effectiveness. Teachers reported that inconsistent attendance disrupts continuity, requires repeated reteaching, and makes it difficult to maintain momentum or apply instructional strategies with fidelity. Family-related pressures, mental health concerns, and caregiving responsibilities were also cited as common barriers to student

participation, aligning closely with findings from student surveys and attendance data.

Teachers further identified practical frictions that compound workload and strain. These include students functioning well below grade level in literacy and numeracy, limited access to timely assessment data or clear guidance on accommodations, and the challenge of managing multi-level classrooms when attendance is irregular. Several respondents noted that while supports exist, they are not always delivered consistently or with clarity, making it difficult to plan instruction or sustain classroom routines.

At the same time, the relational core of NNOC is notably strong. Teachers consistently described colleagues as committed, flexible, and willing to support one another in challenging circumstances. Collaboration, informal problem-solving, and shared responsibility for student well-being were frequently cited as strengths. Many respondents expressed pride in NNOC's emphasis on cultural grounding, land-based learning, and hands-on programming, noting that these elements contribute positively to student belonging and staff morale, particularly when academic engagement is fragile.

Leadership support was generally viewed positively. Teachers tended to distinguish between challenges they attribute to systemic and community conditions and their perceptions of school leadership, which they described as accessible and supportive within existing constraints. This distinction mirrors patterns observed in earlier evaluations, in which staff recognize effort and intent even when outcomes are limited by factors beyond the school's immediate control.

Staffing sustainability nonetheless emerged as a continuing concern. Survey comments and interviews referenced burnout risk, driven by the cumulative effects of attendance-driven instructional disruption, high emotional labour, and the need to continuously adapt expectations for students who are academically and emotionally behind their nominal grade placement. Teachers emphasized that these pressures are not viewed as failures of students or staff, but as indicators that secondary-level frameworks for attendance, learning support, and progression require clearer structure, stronger alignment, and more consistent follow-through.

Overall, NNOC's teacher climate is best understood as high commitment under high complexity. The school benefits from strong relationships, cultural coherence, and a staff culture grounded in care for students and one another. However, chronic absenteeism, uneven readiness for secondary learning, and limited system capacity to address these issues at scale continue to place strain on morale and mute the impact of instructional and programmatic efforts. As with O.K. School, sustaining a positive teacher climate at NNOC will depend on reinforcing schoolwide structures that support attendance, learning continuity, and staff wellbeing alongside the relational strengths already in place.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC prioritize greater consistency in implementing core schoolwide frameworks that most directly affect teachers' day-to-day experience, particularly in attendance follow-up, learning supports, and instructional planning for multi-level classrooms. Establishing clearer expectations, routines, and timelines for attendance responses, academic supports, and information sharing (supported by timely access to data and guidance) would reduce uncertainty, increase confidence in schoolwide efforts, and help teachers feel better supported in their instructional role.

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC make a deliberate investment in teacher well-being and collaborative capacity to mitigate the risk of burnout and sustain morale. This includes protecting time for collaborative planning and problem-solving, recognizing the emotional labour associated with teaching in a high-needs secondary context, and ensuring access to instructional and wellness supports that reduce individual burden. Strengthening structures that support peer collaboration, professional learning, and workload balance would reinforce the strong relational culture already present at NNOC and signal the institution's commitment to staff sustainability, thereby improving teachers' overall perception of the school climate.

3.6.4.2. Students

Student perceptions at NNOC reflect a school environment grounded in care, relationships, and cultural connection, alongside significant challenges related to attendance instability, emotional well-being, and consistency of daily experience. Evidence from the 2025 Student Survey (Grades 7–12), evaluators' observations, and attendance data suggests that students generally view NNOC as a safe and supportive place, but one where their ability to engage consistently is shaped by factors both inside and outside the school.

Across grade levels, students most frequently identified relationships with trusted adults, including teachers, guidance staff, attendance staff, and support workers, as central to their sense of belonging. Many students reported feeling supported at school and that staff care about their well-being. This relational strength aligns closely with teacher perceptions and reinforces the evaluation's finding that NNOC's climate is relationship-centred, even under strain.

At the same time, student responses highlight important differences between Grades 7-8 and Grades 9-12. Younger students were more likely to report challenges with routine, motivation, and understanding schoolwork, reflecting adjustment difficulties associated with the transition to the secondary environment. Older students, by contrast, more frequently identified stress, anxiety, sadness, family responsibilities, and transportation challenges as factors affecting their attendance and engagement. These responses indicate that as students progress through NNOC, school climate is increasingly experienced through the lens of well-being and life circumstances rather than solely through the classroom environment.

Evaluators also observed that a significant number of students, including at higher grade levels, had difficulty understanding some survey questions, suggesting that survey results should be interpreted with caution and viewed as indicative rather than definitive. This observation itself reflects an important climate consideration: for some students, academic language, survey formats, and abstract questions may not fully align with their literacy levels or learning experiences, potentially limiting their ability to express perceptions in formal tools.

Overall, student perception data portray NNOC as a school where students generally feel cared for and supported when present, but where consistent engagement is fragile and uneven. School climate at NNOC is therefore best understood as emotionally supportive but operationally inconsistent, shaped by strong adult–student relationships alongside attendance instability, wellbeing needs, and transitional pressures.

Strengthening student climate perceptions will depend less on improving feelings of safety or belonging (which are already relatively strong) and more on stabilizing attendance, supporting student wellbeing, and reinforcing predictable routines and expectations across grades.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC strengthen predictable daily routines and transition supports, particularly for students in Grades 7–8 and those re-engaging after periods of absence. Establishing clearer, more consistent routines across classrooms, combined with structured transition supports for students entering NNOC or returning after absences, would enhance students' perception of school climate by making the school day more predictable, accessible, and

supportive.

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC expand accessible, student-centred wellness supports and opportunities for student voice, particularly for older students who report stress, anxiety, and family responsibilities as major barriers to engagement. While students generally feel cared for by adults at NNOC, survey findings suggest that many experience emotional load that limits their ability to participate consistently. Providing regular, age-appropriate opportunities for students to express concerns, influence programming, and access wellness supports in non-stigmatizing ways would strengthen students' sense of agency and belonging and reinforce NNOC as a responsive and supportive learning environment.

3.6.4.3. Parents & Caregivers

Parents' and Caregivers' perceptions of school climate, programming, and student support at NNOC are informed through multiple sources of evidence collected during the evaluation process. These include attendance and enrolment data, student services documentation, staff and teacher interviews, student survey findings, observations of family engagement patterns, and the NNOC Parents and Caregivers 2025 conducted for the purpose of this evaluation.

Taken together, these sources provide a contextualized understanding of how families experience the school and the factors shaping their engagement.

Across survey responses and other evidence, parent and caregiver perceptions of NNOC appear uneven and variable, rather than uniformly negative or disengaged. Among completed survey responses and written comments, many parents and caregivers identified strengths related to caring staff, respectful treatment of students, cultural programming, and the school's efforts to support student well-being. Several caregivers expressed appreciation for teachers who take time to understand students' circumstances and for opportunities to see culture, language, and Elders visible within the school environment. These perceptions are consistent with staff and student accounts that describe NNOC as a supportive, relationship-based learning environment when meaningful connections are established.

Attendance and student services staff consistently report that some families are responsive and cooperative when contacted, particularly through home visits. This observation is reinforced by parent comments emphasizing the value of direct, personal communication, and by the evaluators' observations that families are more likely to engage when contact is relational rather than administrative. Together, these findings suggest that when communication is grounded in trust and familiarity, many caregivers are willing to engage with the school and support student attendance and participation.

At the same time, both survey responses and staff interviews highlight ongoing challenges in sustaining regular communication with families. Parents and caregivers raised concerns about inconsistent information sharing, uncertainty about available supports, and limited awareness of academic expectations and future planning options. Staff similarly cited barriers such as limited or inconsistent phone access, changing contact information, competing caregiving responsibilities, socioeconomic stressors, and caregiver fatigue, particularly in single-parent households. Survey items related to communication, engagement, and future readiness showed greater variability and higher levels of uncertainty, suggesting that some caregivers feel less informed or less able to engage consistently, rather than dissatisfied with the school itself.

Attendance and enrolment data provide additional insight into how caregiver capacity shapes perceptions and engagement. Chronic absenteeism and student mobility, particularly in the Senior Years, suggest that many families struggle to support consistent school participation as academic, emotional, and life pressures increase for adolescents. Importantly, staff observations and parent comments indicate that student withdrawals or interruptions are rarely framed by families as objections to NNOC's climate or staff. Instead, they are more often linked to mental health concerns, caregiving responsibilities, housing instability, or a perceived mismatch between students' needs and available pathways at specific points in time.

A critical limitation in interpreting the parent and caregiver survey data concerns survey completion and response quality. Evaluators observed that a significant number of surveys were

either not fully completed or filled out with a straight-line response pattern across multiple items, suggesting that some respondents may not have read individual questions carefully. This response pattern considerably affects the reliability of aggregate perception results and limits the extent to which quantitative findings can be interpreted as reflective of considered opinions. As a result, survey data must be understood as indicative rather than representative, and should be interpreted alongside qualitative comments, staff observations, and administrative data rather than in isolation.

This pattern reinforces a broader finding of the evaluation in which parent and caregiver perceptions of NNOC are shaped less by dissatisfaction with school climate and more by capacity and context. Teacher survey results support this interpretation. While teachers frequently perceive parental support as limited or inconsistent, they do not characterize families as oppositional or disengaged by choice. Rather, they describe caregivers as navigating significant constraints that limit follow-through, attendance support, and ongoing communication. Student survey findings similarly point to family responsibilities and home-based pressures as significant influences on engagement.

A continuing gap identified in the evaluation is the limited availability of ongoing, structured mechanisms to capture parent and caregiver voices at the secondary level. While the 2025 survey represents an important indicator, its impact is constrained by response quality issues and the absence of a sustained feedback process. Without regular surveys, focus groups, or facilitated forums, NNOC and NNCEA have limited ability to track changes in caregiver perceptions over time, distinguish between communication barriers and perception-based concerns, or proactively respond to emerging needs.

For the purposes of this evaluation, parent and caregiver perceptions at NNOC should therefore be understood primarily through a contextual and capacity-based lens, rather than as a direct measure of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with school climate or staff commitment. Strengthening family engagement will require flexible, relationship-centred approaches that acknowledge caregivers' realities, alongside more intentional and better-supported efforts to capture parents' voices in ways that are accessible, meaningful, and conducive to thoughtful participation.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC build on the demonstrated effectiveness of home visits and personal contact by expanding relationship-based family engagement beyond attendance or crisis-driven interactions. While home visits are currently effective for addressing immediate concerns, families would benefit from earlier, proactive outreach that focuses on building trust, clarifying expectations, and supporting caregivers before challenges escalate. Shifting from reactive to preventive engagement would improve caregivers' perception of the school as a partner, rather than primarily as a point of intervention.

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC introduce formal, accessible mechanisms to systematically collect and analyze parent and caregiver feedback. The absence of a structured parent voice currently limits NNOC's ability to understand family perceptions, identify effective engagement approaches, and distinguish between strategies that work and those that do not. Implementing periodic surveys, focus groups, and facilitated listening sessions (designed to be culturally appropriate, flexible, and accessible) should be paired with intentional data

tracking and analysis to examine patterns in participation, responsiveness, and outcomes over time. This deeper evidence base would allow NNOC to tailor family engagement strategies more effectively, focus resources on approaches with demonstrated impact, and move beyond one-size-fits-all outreach. Such an approach would strengthen mutual understanding, improve engagement effectiveness, and signal to families that their perspectives are not only valued but also actively used to inform practice.

3.6.5. Extra-Curricular & Related Student Programs

3.6.5.1. Extra-Curricular and Before/After Programs

NNOC offers extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities through structured after-school clubs and seasonal experiential programs that emphasize wellness, cultural engagement, applied learning, and relationship-building. While programming continues to rely significantly on staff initiative and grant-based funding, these initiatives contribute meaningfully to student engagement and school connectedness.

NNOC currently operates structured after-school clubs Monday through Thursday (subject to school closures and administrative scheduling adjustments). Programs run one to two times per week and include:

- Special Projects Club
- Woodworking Club
- Beading Club
- Art Club
- Chess Club
- Self-Care Club
- Math Club
- Basketball Club (split between boys and girls teams)
- A music/podcast studio also operates after school through Spirit Horse; however, this initiative is externally managed.

The purposes of these clubs include:

- Encouraging student wellness
- Building cultural knowledge
- Supplementing classroom instruction
- Promoting fitness and teamwork
- Providing safe, supervised environments for students with turbulent home lives

Participation is strongest among Grade 7 and 8 students, with interest decreasing in upper grades. Clubs tend to attract high-achieving students, students facing home instability, and students whose peer groups are engaged.

However, participation has declined significantly since the implementation of a mandatory permission slip requirement in January 2026, with reported reductions exceeding 50%. While introduced for compliance purposes, this requirement appears to disproportionately affect students who may lack consistent parental/guardian support.

Sustainability remains a concern, as programming relies heavily on voluntary staff facilitation, fluctuating grant support, and available scheduling capacity.

Seasonal Extra-Curricular Program: Greenhouse, Gardening, and Beekeeping:

In addition to after-school clubs, NNOC operates a seasonal Greenhouse/Gardening and Beekeeping Program, which functions as a land-based extra-curricular enrichment initiative

aligned with food sovereignty, wellness, and experiential learning.

The program operates primarily during the spring, summer and fall, and while aspects of greenhouse work may connect to Science and Agriculture courses during the school day, the program functions more broadly as an applied, experiential enrichment opportunity. Participation is voluntary, with students engaging based on interest.

During the summer months, selected students are employed through summer jobs programming to:

- Monitor bee hives
- Maintain gardens
- Log data and report to supervising teachers
- Participate in consultations as needed

Supervision is provided by the Summer Jobs Coordinator, extending the program beyond the traditional school year.

Participation in this program is open to all grade levels, though primary engagement occurs among secondary students. For Grades 9-12, participation may also support credit acquisition through Agriculture or Science courses; however, the program's broader positioning remains that of seasonal enrichment and applied learning rather than a core instructional program.

The program operates through grant funding and relies heavily on volunteer staff. Oversight includes a committee composed of a Provincial Bee Inspector, four staff members and three community members. The committee meets bi-weekly to review activities and support program direction.

While this structure demonstrates strong community integration and external expertise, sustainability remains dependent on continued grant funding, volunteer staff capacity, and seasonal staffing availability.

Overall, evaluators observed that NNOC's extracurricular programming reflects a strong relational and experiential orientation. Both after-school clubs and the seasonal greenhouse initiative provide protective engagement spaces, support identity-building and pride offer alternatives to purely academic programming and strengthen student-adult relationships.

Participation patterns mirror broader attendance challenges. Students already connected to school are most likely to engage, while those experiencing chronic absenteeism or significant instability remain underrepresented.

At present, extra-curricular and seasonal enrichment programs function as valuable supplementary engagement tools. Without deeper integration into attendance intervention frameworks or targeted outreach strategies, their impact on systemic attendance improvement remains limited.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNOC formalize an extra-curricular programming framework that integrates after-school clubs and seasonal land-based initiatives into broader attendance and wellness strategies. This framework should:

- Identify target student groups (e.g., chronically absent, disengaged, or at-risk students)
- Align programming with attendance monitoring and re-engagement plans
- Clarify referral pathways from student services and administration
- Track participation data and attendance outcomes

It is recommended that NNOC review participation requirements to ensure compliance measures do not unintentionally exclude vulnerable students. This review could consider:

- Alternative consent processes (e.g., annual blanket consent forms)
- Flexible accommodations for students without consistent parental/guardian access
- Alignment of access procedures across after-school and seasonal programming

It is recommended that NNOC strengthen the long-term sustainability of after-school clubs and seasonal programming, recognizing that these initiatives currently rely heavily on staff goodwill, volunteer time, and grant-based funding. This could include:

- Explore stable funding allocations aligned with programming scale and demand
- Formalize facilitator roles and workload expectations
- Develop succession planning for key program leaders
- Assess seasonal staffing and grant renewal cycles

3.6.5.2. Student Assemblies

Student assemblies at NNOC are used periodically to reinforce school values, celebrate student accomplishments, and strengthen collective identity, particularly through cultural, attendance-related, and recognition-based events.

Purpose and Role of Assemblies:

- Assemblies at NNOC are primarily oriented toward:
- Celebrating student achievement and effort, including attendance recognition;
- Reinforcing cultural identity, through ceremonies, prayer, and culturally grounded activities;
- Rebuilding collective tone following periods of disruption or stress.

Teacher survey comments and staff notes suggest that assemblies are viewed positively as moments that reset the school climate, promote belonging, and acknowledge students who are making efforts under challenging circumstances. Recognition-based assemblies (e.g., attendance acknowledgements or student celebrations) were identified as contributing to morale and relational climate, even when broader attendance challenges persist.

However, there is limited evidence that assemblies at NNOC occur on a fixed or predictable schedule. Instead, they appear to be event-driven and responsive, often aligned with cultural events, seasonal milestones, or specific initiatives. This flexibility allows assemblies to be meaningful and context-sensitive, but also means their impact is episodic rather than sustained.

As a result, assemblies function more as symbolic and relational touchpoints than as part of a systematic strategy for behaviour, attendance improvement, or instructional alignment.

Overall, student assemblies at NNOC are best understood as a positive but supplementary component of school climate, rather than a core driver of attendance, behaviour, or achievement outcomes. They are valued for their ability to foster connection, recognize effort, and reinforce cultural identity, particularly in a high-needs secondary context.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNOC establish a structured, predictable assembly schedule (e.g., monthly or bi-monthly) aligned with clearly defined objectives for attendance, behavioural expectations, cultural identity, and student recognition. By moving assemblies from primarily event-driven occasions to a strategically planned climate-building tool, NNOC can enhance their impact while preserving its relational and cultural strengths.

3.6.5.3. Jr. Chief & Council

The Junior Chief & Council is a student leadership and voice initiative that provides secondary students with opportunities to participate in decision-making, represent their peers, and support school and community activities. Evidence from staff correspondence and evaluation notes indicates that the NNOC Jr. C&C primarily serves students in Grades 7-12, with a stronger presence and more consistent engagement among older students.

At NNOC, the Jr. C&C operates in a flexible, responsive manner rather than as a highly formalized council with fixed schedules or mandated deliverables. Meetings occur as needed, often in response to upcoming events, initiatives, or opportunities for student involvement, rather than on a rigid calendar. This approach allows the council to adapt to student availability and attendance realities, but also limits consistency and continuity over time.

NNOC Jr. C&C members are described as hands-on and proactive, frequently assisting with:

- School and community events;
- Cultural and ceremonial activities;
- Student-led initiatives and representations.

This active, service-oriented role aligns well with NNOC's emphasis on leadership through contribution and responsibility, rather than symbolic participation alone.

Participation in Jr. C&C provides a positive leadership pathway for students who are engaged and regularly attending. Staff observations indicate that students involved in the council often demonstrate increased confidence, responsibility, and connection to the school community. The council also provides a meaningful avenue for student voice, enabling participants to raise concerns, share perspectives, and contribute ideas about school life.

However, as with other optional leadership and extra-curricular opportunities at NNOC, participation tends to be limited to a subset of students, typically those with more stable attendance and fewer competing responsibilities. As a result, the voices of students with the highest attendance or those with engagement challenges may be underrepresented.

The Jr. C&C contributes positively to NNOC's school climate, reinforcing a sense of belonging, cultural pride, and shared responsibility. Its involvement in events and activities supports relational connections between students and staff and helps model positive engagement for peers.

The Jr. C&C has, at times, engaged beyond the school setting. Members have attended NNCEA Board meetings and delivered presentations outlining their activities and aspirations. In previous years, Jr. C&C participation in discussions with Chief & Council contributed to broader youth-identified priorities, demonstrating the program's potential to amplify student voice and influence decision-making when opportunities arise.

Limitations and Areas for Growth:

The evaluation found limited evidence of:

- A written framework or terms of reference outlining roles, expectations, or outcomes;
- Systematic documentation of meetings, decisions, or student feedback;
- Intentional alignment between Jr. C&C activities and curricular or school improvement priorities.

These gaps do not reflect a lack of commitment, but rather the broader operational pressures at NNOC that prioritize flexibility over formal structure.

Overall, the Jr. C&C at NNOC represents a meaningful but under-structured leadership initiative. It provides valuable opportunities for student voice, leadership development, and community involvement, particularly for engaged students in the Senior Years. However, its impact is constrained by attendance instability, limited formalization, and the absence of systematic documentation and evaluation.

Comments & Recommendations:

The NNOC Jr. C&C is an excellent, positive and culturally aligned leadership initiative that provides meaningful opportunities for student involvement and responsibility. The program reflects a strong commitment to fostering student voice and leadership at the elementary level. Therefore, it is recommended to continue supporting this initiative.

It is recommended that NNOC strengthen the Jr. C&C through a light-touch structure and documentation that supports consistency and continuity without diminishing student ownership. Developing a concise written framework, clarifying student roles, and introducing simple continuity practices (such as annual membership confirmation and brief activity summaries) would help stabilize the program year over year. These measures would ensure that the program does not rely solely on individual staff involvement and would allow leadership experiences to be sustained as students transition through grades.

It is recommended that NNOC clarify the intended outcomes and alignment between Jr. C&C activities, curriculum expectations, and NNOC improvement priorities. Defining a small set of age-appropriate leadership and engagement outcomes, alongside minimal reporting (e.g., an annual summary of activities and student reflections), would strengthen evaluative clarity and visibility. This approach would allow the school to articulate the program's contribution to student voice, leadership development, and school culture, while preserving the flexibility that supports meaningful student participation.

It is recommended that the Jr. C&C at both O.K. School and NNOC meet annually with the NNCEA Board as part of their mandate. While this practice has occurred in the past, it is recommended that it be formally established and explicitly included in the program's scope. These meetings should provide an opportunity for student representatives to present a report reflecting the perspectives, priorities, and concerns of the students they represent, thereby strengthening student voice, leadership development, and accountability within the education system.

3.6.6. School Leadership, Management & Staff

3.6.6.1. Principal

The Principal occupies the central leadership position within NNOC and is responsible for ensuring that instructional, cultural, operational, and safety expectations are implemented in alignment with NNCEA policy, divisional priorities, and provincial standards. The role requires simultaneous functioning as instructional leader, student-support coordinator, operational manager, and liaison between school practice and system governance.

As a secondary school serving students with complex academic, social, and attendance needs, NNOC presents a high-demand leadership environment. The Principal oversees instructional programming across subject areas and alternative pathways while coordinating student services, attendance interventions, behavioural oversight, land-based programming, and community partnerships. Ensuring instructional continuity in a context marked by chronic absenteeism and socioeconomic pressures requires structured systems and coordinated follow-through.

Instructional Leadership and Academic Direction:

The Principal identifies literacy and numeracy improvement as emerging priorities, alongside greater consistency in assessment and classroom practice. While staff demonstrate commitment, the evaluation identified variability in instructional approaches and expectations across classrooms. Attendance instability continues to disrupt continuity and skill development.

Although tools such as reading levels, IXL metrics, and classroom assessments are available, they are not yet embedded within a cohesive instructional framework. The absence of a clearly articulated model limits systematic monitoring of teaching quality and longitudinal tracking of student growth.

Data optimization has therefore become a leadership priority. Planned improvements include strengthening consistent use of the PowerSchool gradebook, implementing an updated graduation and credit tracker, automating conduct documentation and correspondence, and enhancing parent and student portal functionality.

Strengthening walkthrough processes, aligning assessments, and structuring data reviews would support a more coordinated academic vision.

Attendance and Student Engagement:

Attendance remains NNOC's most significant structural challenge and the Principal's primary concern. Chronic absenteeism affects credit accumulation, literacy development, behaviour, and graduation outcomes.

Recent refinements include formal absence thresholds, warning letters, teacher-student follow-up conversations, and eligibility meetings for extracurricular participation. While layered strategies are in place, a fully standardized and division-aligned attendance intervention model has not yet been institutionalized.

The Principal recognizes that attendance challenges are closely tied to food insecurity,

employment obligations, caregiving responsibilities, and broader community pressures. Without stronger predictive data integration, attendance efforts remain largely reactive.

Student Services and Programming Compliance:

A defining strength of the Principal's leadership is a relational approach grounded in cultural respect and inclusion. NNOC promotes Cree identity, land-based learning, and support-oriented practices. Staff consistently describe leadership as patient, flexible, and committed to student wellbeing.

However, programming compliance has emerged as a major focus. Clarification from Manitoba's Inclusion Department has reinforced distinctions between student modifications and modified course expectations, including the requirement that students complete 30 credits for graduation. The Principal has proposed dedicated professional development to strengthen teacher understanding of modified outcomes and tracking expectations.

Coordination structures are also evolving. Attendance, guidance, and social work are now expected to operate collaboratively. A formal Teacher Support Team process has been introduced, enabling multidisciplinary review of attendance, behaviour, and academic risk indicators. While still in its early stages, this shift represents a move toward integrated case management.

Overall Assessment:

The Principal of NNOC operates within a high-needs secondary context marked by chronic absenteeism, instructional variability, and complex student support demands. Leadership is culturally grounded, relationally strong, and increasingly focused on system refinement.

However, effectiveness is constrained by structural limitations, including:

- Absence of a cohesive instructional framework;
- Incomplete standardization of attendance interventions;
- Fragmented data systems and limited trend analysis;
- Evolving but not yet fully embedded team-based processes;
- Reactive operational demands that limit strategic focus.

These constraints reflect systemic pressures rather than individual shortcomings.

Strengthening instructional coherence, institutionalizing data dashboards, formalizing administrative portfolios, and embedding integrated intervention systems will be essential to translating relational leadership strengths into measurable improvements in attendance, credit accumulation, and graduation outcomes.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that the NNCEA and the Principal collaborate to develop and implement a clearly articulated instructional framework for NNOC that establishes consistent expectations for literacy, numeracy, assessment practices, and classroom instruction across grades and subject areas. This framework should

include:

- Structured classroom walkthrough protocols;
- Clear assessment and planning expectations;
- Consistent use of achievement data (reading levels, credit tracking, IXL, etc.);
- Professional learning aligned to identified instructional gaps.

It is recommended that NNCEA and the Principal implement a standardized, division-aligned attendance framework, as outlined in Section 3.6.2.2, recognizing that chronic absenteeism remains the most significant barrier to student achievement at NNOC.

It is recommended that NNCEA and the Principal strengthen structural supports that reduce reactive operational demands. To protect instructional leadership capacity, internal systems should be strengthened to reduce operational and administrative strain on the Principal. This includes:

- Clarifying referral and documentation responsibilities across student services and administration;
- Strengthening front-office and communication systems;
- Stabilizing staffing supports and reducing workload volatility;
- Formalizing sustainability plans for extra-curricular and enrichment programming.

By reducing reactive operational pressures, the Principal will be better positioned to focus on long-term instructional improvement, student engagement, and strategic planning.

3.6.6.2. Vice-Principals

NNOC operates under a distributed leadership structure comprising a Principal, supported by two Vice-Principals. For the purposes of this evaluation, completed survey responses were received from both Vice-Principals; therefore, this section reflects confirmed structural information and perceptual data from both roles.

NNOC's Vice-Principals operate under a shared-responsibility structure, with responsibilities distributed based on operational need, expertise, and daily coordination rather than strict grade-level division, whereas both Vice-Principals:

- Oversee student discipline and behavioural follow-up;
- Conduct classroom visits;
- Review and comment on report cards;
- Participate in PLC meetings and medication oversight;
- Engage in daily leadership meetings before the start of the school day to debrief and assign responsibilities.

This daily coordination model reflects a collaborative leadership approach designed to maintain responsiveness in a secondary school context characterized by attendance instability, complex behavioural needs, and multi-grade instructional demands.

Instructional Leadership:

Vice-Principal responsibilities are currently shared rather than portfolio-based. Leadership discussions have identified the benefit of aligning Vice-Principal roles to defined priorities (e.g., attendance oversight, behaviour systems, credit tracking) to enhance accountability and clarity.

One Vice-Principal provides leadership for the Literacy Committee, which meets monthly and includes approximately eleven active staff members. The committee aligns its work with NNCEA goals and organizes monthly literacy-focused initiatives. This structure represents a formal instructional leadership mechanism within the school.

Survey responses indicate that common assessment practices are in place to monitor literacy and numeracy, and intervention blocks are scheduled. However, responses also reflect variability in the degree to which these systems are consistently data-driven or monitored for impact.

At the high school level (Grades 9-12), individualized credit checks for Grade 12 students and diploma preparation processes are perceived as strong. However, concerns were noted regarding the availability and utilization of credit recovery or alternative pathway programming.

While instructional systems are perceived as structurally present, strengthening the depth of instructional leadership, particularly in data monitoring, early-warning indicators, intervention impact tracking, and vertical alignment, remains an area for continued development.

Behaviour Management and School Climate:

Both Vice-Principals manage discipline collaboratively, contributing to shared accountability across grade levels. The distributed model allows for flexibility in addressing student needs and ensures that behavioural matters are not concentrated within a single administrative role.

However, as with many secondary settings, behavioural and attendance-related concerns consume a significant portion of administrative time. This limits sustained instructional leadership focus and reinforces the need for structured behavioural documentation systems and early-warning processes.

Survey responses indicate that students are generally perceived as safe within classrooms and school spaces. However, attendance levels are not consistently at benchmarks (90%+), and early-warning systems are not universally viewed as fully effective.

Attendance and Engagement:

Attendance was identified as one of the most significant barriers to student success. Both Vice-Principals acknowledged that attendance challenges are systemic and extend beyond school-level control.

One Vice-Principal emphasized the need for coordinated intervention involving Chief & Council, Family Community Wellness, and Social Assistance programs, reflecting recognition that attendance stabilization requires community-wide alignment.

While an attendance plan exists and outreach efforts are ongoing, achieving sustained attendance benchmarks remains difficult.

Culture and Language Integration:

Vice-Principals expressed concern regarding the current implementation of Cree language programming.

While land-based learning and cultural activities occur regularly and are viewed as strengths, both Vice-Principals identified the need for:

- Greater Elder presence within the school;
- Stronger resource support for Cree language programming;
- Clearer implementation of immersion policies;
- More consistent integration of language into daily programming.

These concerns align with broader findings within the Nîhitho Language & Cultural Programs section of this report.

Staffing and Capacity:

Survey responses and open-ended comments identified several staffing pressures:

- Need for an additional counsellor to support student mental health;

- Need for additional teaching capacity to meet enrolment demands;
- Need for increased professional development, particularly for new staff;
- Desire for a stronger HR presence at the school level to reduce administrative burden on the Principal.

Despite these pressures, both Vice-Principals expressed overall satisfaction with NNCEA's level of support.

Operational Leadership:

In addition to instructional and behavioural leadership, Vice-Principals support operational functions that reflect a highly operational leadership model typical of secondary schools in smaller or remote systems, including:

- Special events coordination;
- School communications (including social media oversight);
- Financial oversight for school-based funds;
- Coordination of cultural and extracurricular initiatives;
- Participation in recruitment fairs;
- Home visits and family engagement;
- Oversight of environmental initiatives (e.g., recycling program, bee and garden programming).

Overall. NNOC's Vice-Principals operate within a collaborative and adaptive distributed leadership structure. Daily coordination meetings, shared discipline responsibilities, and defined portfolio areas provide structural clarity while allowing flexibility.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNOC establish clearly defined Vice-Principal leadership portfolios aligned with key school priorities, including attendance monitoring, behaviour systems, instructional improvement, credit tracking, and graduation readiness. While the current shared-responsibility structure supports flexibility and collaboration, assigning defined leadership areas would strengthen accountability, improve system monitoring, and allow each Vice-Principal to lead targeted school improvement initiatives while maintaining coordinated daily leadership.

It is recommended that NNOC establish structured time within the Vice-Principals' weekly schedule dedicated specifically to instructional leadership activities, including classroom observations, coaching conversations with teachers, and follow-up on instructional strategies discussed during PLC meetings. Protecting time for instructional leadership would help ensure that administrative responsibilities related to discipline and operations do not limit opportunities to support teaching and learning improvement across the school.

3.6.6.3. Teachers

Across the period reviewed, evidence from staff and leadership consultations, as well as key stakeholders' surveys, indicates that the teaching staff at NNOC demonstrate a high level of professional commitment, adaptability, and care for students, while working within a context of sustained operational and instructional complexity. Teachers at NNOC are consistently described as relationship-focused and student-centred, often extending themselves beyond formal instructional roles to support student wellbeing, attendance, cultural identity, and engagement.

NNOC teachers operate within a secondary context shaped by chronic attendance instability, significant variability in academic readiness, and the presence of over-aged, under-credited learners. Annual reports and survey feedback consistently note that many students enter courses with substantial literacy and numeracy gaps, requiring teachers to differentiate across wide skill ranges within the same classroom. These conditions disrupt instructional continuity and require frequent reteaching, modified pacing, and adaptive assessment practices.

As a result, instructional planning is often reactive. Teachers must regularly adjust lessons to account for fluctuating daily attendance and incomplete prior learning. Credit accumulation pressures further complicate instructional sequencing, particularly for senior students attempting to recover missed credits while simultaneously addressing foundational skill gaps.

Despite these challenges, teachers report sustained efforts to maintain positive, structured classroom environments. Many emphasize the effectiveness of hands-on, applied, and culturally grounded instructional approaches. These approaches are viewed as essential engagement strategies in a context where traditional lecture-based instruction is less effective for many learners.

Instructional Alignment and Academic Focus:

Although it has been reported an emerging focus on strengthening literacy and numeracy consistency across classrooms, evaluation evidence indicates that instructional implementation varies across subject areas. Teachers report uneven clarity regarding assessment expectations, intervention structures, and instructional frameworks. While tools such as IXL, reading level assessments, and course-based tracking exist, their integration into a unified schoolwide instructional model remains limited.

This variability does not reflect lack of effort, but rather the absence of a cohesive secondary instructional framework to ensure alignment across departments. Teachers demonstrate strong professional autonomy and responsiveness, yet the lack of structured instructional coherence limits the school's ability to measure and sustain academic growth system-wide.

Collaboration and Professional Culture:

The professional culture among NNOC teachers is characterized by collegial trust, informal collaboration, and shared responsibility for student success. Teachers consistently describe supportive peer relationships and a willingness to problem-solve together. In a high-needs environment, this collegial culture serves as a stabilizing force, mitigating some of the pressures associated with workload and student complexity.

Teachers also report generally positive perceptions of school leadership. Administrators are described as accessible, relational, and supportive, particularly in crisis situations. Teachers distinguish between leadership commitment and broader systemic constraints, recognizing that many challenges (especially attendance instability and community-level pressures) extend beyond school-level control.

Student Support Integration:

NNOC teachers frequently collaborate with student services, guidance, and enrichment programming staff; however, teachers also report challenges related to clarity of referral processes, timeliness of information regarding accommodations and student plans, consistency in documentation systems, as well as integration of attendance and academic tracking data. These coordination gaps increase workload demands and can limit instructional momentum.

Teacher Wellbeing:

Teacher Wellbeing emerged as a significant theme in survey responses. Staff report high emotional labour associated with:

- Supporting students facing food insecurity, trauma, and instability;
- Managing fluctuating attendance and credit recovery;
- Balancing instructional responsibilities with counselling-like support roles;
- Participating in extra-curricular and seasonal programming beyond school hours.

The cumulative effect of reactive attendance follow-up, behaviour management, and differentiated instruction contributes to burnout risk. Teachers consistently express commitment to students but also identify limits to individual effort within strained secondary-level systems.

Importantly, teachers do not attribute challenges to student deficits. Instead, they frame pressures as structural, reflecting strained attendance systems, inconsistent instructional alignment, and limited system-level supports for progression and re-engagement.

Overall, NNOC teachers are doing significant relational and instructional work within structures that require further stabilization and coherence. Strengthening schoolwide instructional alignment, attendance systems, data integration, and support coordination will be essential to converting teacher commitment into sustained academic growth and credit completion outcomes.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNOC implement a cohesive secondary instructional framework, as outlined in the recommendations of Section 3.6.1.2.

It is recommended that NNOC strengthen integration between instruction, attendance, and student services. Given the interconnection between attendance instability and instructional disruption, NNCEA should formalize coordination protocols linking classroom teachers, student services, and administration. This should include:

- Clear referral and follow-up pathways;
- Shared documentation systems accessible to relevant staff;
- Timely communication regarding accommodations and student support plans;
- Integrated tracking of attendance, credit accumulation, and intervention outcomes.

It is recommended that NNCEA prioritize workforce sustainability measures at NNOC to mitigate burnout risk and protect instructional quality. This may include:

- Reviewing workload distribution related to enrichment and after-school programming;
- Formalizing compensation or time recognition for extended responsibilities;
- Providing targeted professional learning on managing over-aged and under-credited learners;
- Ensuring reliable staffing for EA and student support to reduce classroom strain.

3.6.6.4. Educational Assistants

Educational Assistants (EAs) at NNOC play a critical support role in classrooms and across student support services, particularly in a context marked by attendance instability, wide variability in academic readiness, and complex social-emotional needs.

Supervision and coordination of Educational Assistants at NNOC are led by a designated staff lead, who facilitates regular EA meetings, provides training, and oversees performance expectations. An EA handbook is in place; however, the evaluation identified the absence of a formalized work-plan template outlining clear role assignments, measurable expectations, and accountability indicators specific to classroom placement.

Recent efforts indicate strengthening of supervisory oversight and communication structures. Improvements include the installation of a centralized information board and provision of computer access to ensure EAs can review email communications and remain informed of updates.

EA Surveys:

As reported in the surveys, EAs at NNOC most frequently provide:

- In-class instructional support, particularly for students functioning below grade level;
- Behavioural and emotional regulation support for students experiencing stress, trauma, or dysregulation;
- Individualized assistance for students with learning challenges, attendance-related gaps, and social-emotional needs;
- Supervision and monitoring during transitions and less structured periods.
- Many EAs report working across multiple grade levels (with strong representation in Grades 9-12).
- EA's work spans both academic and behavioural domains, though the surveys indicate that behavioural and social-emotional support often consumes a significant portion of their time.

EA Perceptions of Student Success and Challenges. Survey responses highlight that EAs perceive student success as closely tied to:

- Attendance consistency;
- Positive relationships with adults;
- Access to hands-on and culturally grounded learning;
- Emotional stability and mental health supports

EAs also identified major barriers to student success as including:

- Chronic absenteeism;
- Family or home challenges;
- Mental health concerns;
- Limited academic readiness;
- Lack of motivation among some students

These perceptions align closely with survey findings from teachers and the Principal, reinforcing the systemic nature of attendance and wellness pressures at NNOC.

Professional Development and Training Needs:

EAs consistently express a desire for additional professional learning in:

- Trauma-informed practices;
- Behaviour management strategies;
- Understanding and implementing IEPs;
- Supporting diverse learning needs;
- De-escalation techniques;
- Cultural learning and Indigenous integration

While some EAs report receiving training in behaviour management and inclusion strategies, several indicate that training opportunities are limited or inconsistent. Confidence levels in supporting academic needs vary, with stronger confidence reported in supporting social-emotional needs than in academic differentiation.

This suggests a need for more structured, ongoing EA-specific professional development aligned with classroom instructional priorities and formal student plans.

Perceived School Strengths:

Importantly, EAs identify several strengths at NNOC, including:

- Cultural learning opportunities;
- Supportive relationships among staff;
- Caring school climate;
- Integration of Indigenous language and land-based learning

These perceptions align with broader evaluation findings highlighting NNOC's relational and cultural strengths.

Linkage to Student Plans and Documentation:

Consistent with earlier findings, the evaluation found limited evidence of systematic linkage between EA deployment and formal IEP or structured learning plan documentation. EAs frequently rely on informal communication with teachers rather than structured, documented guidance. While this allows flexibility, it reduces clarity, continuity, and accountability.

In a secondary context with over-aged and under-credited learners whose needs may not fit neatly into traditional special education categories, clearer documentation and defined support roles are particularly important.

Instructional and Deployment Considerations:

Teachers consistently identify EA support as an important factor in maintaining classroom stability and engagement, particularly in multi-level classrooms. Survey comments from EAs

reinforce that when roles are clearly defined and teachers provide structured guidance, support is more effective. However, EAs also describe situations where expectations are unclear, there is limited involvement in instructional planning discussions, a need for clearer communication regarding student accommodations, and well is an occasional lack of structured direction regarding daily priorities.

This reinforces the earlier finding that EA deployment is often reactive rather than systematically planned. Behavioural incidents and emotional crises frequently redirect EA time away from instructional assistance.

Workforce Stability and Attendance:

Teacher feedback and leadership notes reference inconsistent EA availability. While the EA surveys do not directly quantify absenteeism, several responses acknowledge staffing strain, high workload intensity, and the ongoing challenge of consistently meeting student needs. In a context where classroom stability depends heavily on the reliable presence of adults, any inconsistency in coverage significantly amplifies instructional and behavioural pressures.

Recent reporting also indicates that leadership has taken steps to reinforce attendance and performance standards, including initiating formal action in cases of prolonged, unexcused absence. This signals a strengthening of accountability expectations within the EA workforce.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC implement the recommendations outlined in Section 3.6.3.

It is recommended that NNCEA implement a clearly documented EA deployment model aligning EA assignments with student needs, formal learning plans, and classroom instructional priorities. This framework should include:

- Defined criteria for EA allocation based on documented student supports (IEPs, accommodations, behavioural plans);
- Clarified daily role expectations, distinguishing instructional support from behavioural response duties;
- Scheduled review cycles to assess the effectiveness of deployment across classrooms;
- Clear reporting and communication pathways between EAs, teachers, student services, and administration.

It is recommended that NNCEA continue strengthening EA professional development and instructional integration. Given that EA survey responses identified the need for additional training, NNCEA should provide structured, ongoing professional development aligned with NNOC's instructional and student support priorities. This should include:

- Trauma-informed practice and de-escalation training;
- Behaviour management strategies specific to secondary learners;
- Training on interpreting and implementing IEPs and accommodations;

- Academic support strategies in literacy and numeracy;
- Cultural and land-based learning integration.

It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC review workforce sustainability measures related to EA coverage and attendance to protect classroom stability and instructional continuity. This may include:

- Monitoring EA absenteeism trends and identifying root causes;
- Developing substitute coverage protocols to minimize classroom disruption;
- Reviewing workload expectations to reduce burnout risk;
- Recognizing extended responsibilities in high-needs settings.

3.6.6.5. Office Staff

The NNOC Office Staff occupy a central operational role within the school, functioning as the primary point of contact for students, families, community members, and staff.

NNOC Office Staff are responsible for a broad range of daily operational duties, including:

- Student attendance tracking and daily record management;
- Managing incoming and outgoing communication with families;
- Visitor sign-in and access control procedures;
- Coordinating messages between classrooms and administration;
- Supporting documentation processes related to behavioural incidents and referrals;
- Assisting with scheduling and general school logistics.

In practice, the office serves as the school's operational hub. It is the point at which attendance concerns, student behavioural issues, parent inquiries, and administrative directives intersect. Given NNOC's attendance profile and its high-needs student population, the office frequently manages time-sensitive matters that require rapid communication and coordination.

Behaviour incidents are documented through PowerSchool entries, paper reports, and suspension spreadsheets. However, systematic trend analysis is not yet routine. Cross-analysis of behaviour, attendance, and credit data would strengthen proactive intervention.

Attendance remains the most significant structural challenge at NNOC. Office Staff play a foundational role in tracking absences, logging attendance data, and initiating communication processes. However, evaluation findings indicate that documentation systems and follow-up processes lack full standardization.

Teachers and administrators report that communication processes are generally functional but require greater clarity and consistency.

The functioning of the NNOC office has direct implications for the Principal's instructional leadership capacity. When attendance tracking, referral documentation, and communication processes are not streamlined, administrative leaders must intervene more frequently in operational matters.

Conversely, when office systems are structured and predictable, leadership capacity can shift toward instructional alignment, staff development, and long-term planning. Strengthening office operations, therefore, represents not merely an administrative refinement but a strategic investment in instructional improvement.

Available data suggest that Office Staff are committed and responsive within the constraints of workload and system pressures. However, the complexity of NNOC's secondary environment requires structured systems rather than reliance on individual initiative.

In a high-needs context, office personnel must navigate sensitive family situations. Clarifying expectations, strengthening documentation systems, and reinforcing professional communication standards would enhance both efficiency and stakeholder confidence.

Overall, NNOC Office Staff provide essential operational stability within a complex secondary

school environment. Strengthening office systems will enhance administrative efficiency, support attendance improvement efforts, and protect instructional leadership capacity. In a school where attendance and student support complexity drive much of the operational strain, front-office effectiveness is foundational to broader school improvement goals.

The evaluation identifies opportunities to strengthen:

- Referral tracking and follow-up systems;
- Documentation consistency related to student incidents;
- Clear delineation of office versus administrative responsibilities;
- Proactive communication practices with families.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA support NNOC in formalizing and streamlining front-office systems related to attendance tracking, behavioural referrals, and communication documentation. This should include:

- Clearly defined attendance follow-up timelines and responsibility assignments;
- Standardized referral tracking tools accessible to administration and student services;
- Consistent documentation protocols for incident reporting and parent communication;
- Regular review of attendance data to identify trends and trigger early intervention.

It is recommended that NNCEA work with NNOC leadership to clarify role expectations and communication pathways between office staff, administration, teachers, and student services. This may include:

- Clear delineation of office versus administrative responsibilities;
- Defined procedures for handling parent concerns and incident follow-up;
- Reinforced visitor access and safety compliance protocols;
- Professional communication standards that promote respectful, welcoming interactions with students, families, and community members.

3.7. Mature Student Program (MSP)

The Mature Student Program (MSP) at NNCEA serves as a critical re-engagement and completion pathway for learners who were unable to complete high school through the traditional K-12 system due to attendance disruptions, life circumstances, or systemic barriers.

The program serves both high school-aged youth (under 21) and adult community members (21+), reflecting its dual role as both a recovery pathway and a community-based adult learning opportunity.

Evidence from site visits, program discussions, annual reporting, and evaluation meetings indicates that the MSP is functioning effectively within its defined mandate and plays an essential role in supporting graduation outcomes across the system.

3.7.1. Program Structure and Academic Focus

The Mature Student Program operates similarly to an Adult Learning Centre model, with a deliberate focus on core graduation requirements rather than a broad secondary timetable. The program requires students to complete eight high school courses within the academic year:

- ELA 30
- ELA 40
- Math 30
- Math 40
- Four elective credits: Native Studies, Volunteer Credit, Cultural Course, and Life Work Skills

This focused structure supports learners in accumulating the specific credits required for graduation, prioritizing completion and credential attainment over breadth of programming. The streamlined design reflects the program's mandate: remove barriers, stabilize attendance, and facilitate graduation.

3.7.2. Attendance Model and Financial Incentive Structure

One of the most notable features of the MSP is its structured attendance incentive model. Students are compensated for regular attendance and can earn minimum wage while attending the 10-month program and completing graduation requirements.

This model has demonstrably stabilized participation and engagement. Compared to the traditional high school program, MSP attendance rates are significantly stronger, suggesting that the financial incentive functions as both an engagement strategy and a practical support mechanism.

However, evaluation discussions emphasize that attendance success is strongly driven by the incentive structure. The program's effectiveness in stabilizing participation is therefore closely linked to available funding. Without sustained financial support, attendance outcomes may not be replicable.

3.7.3. Graduation Outcomes

Graduation data over the past four years reflect substantial growth:

Table 9: MSP Students Enrolled v/s Graduates 2022-23 to 2024-2025		
Year	**Enrolled**	**No. Graduates**
2023	7	6
2024	65	29
2025	73	46

While the 2024 completion rate declined relative to 2023 due to the sharp enrolment expansion, 2025 shows a notable recovery and improvement in completion efficiency. The increase from approximately 45% to 63% suggests program stabilization and improved capacity to support a larger cohort.

This upward trend represents a significant success for the system. The scale of recent graduating classes demonstrates that when structural barriers are reduced and flexible pathways are provided, learners can complete their education.

The MSP is clearly investing in the community by providing accessible learning opportunities for both youth and adult learners. These outcomes serve as a counterbalance to deficit-based narratives about achievement and illustrate the importance of multiple pathways within NNCEA's education continuum.

3.7.4. Data Systems and Tracking Considerations

At present, the Mature Student Program data is not consistently tracked within PowerSchool. Attendance, credit accumulation, progression, and attrition data are managed separately from the main K-12 student information system.

The absence of integrated PowerSchool tracking limits NNCEA's ability to:

- Conduct longitudinal analysis across K–12 and MSP pathways;
- Compare attendance stabilization outcomes systematically;
- Track credit recovery patterns in relation to earlier schooling;
- Analyze retention and attrition trends using standardized reporting tools;
- Incorporate MSP performance into system-wide dashboards and strategic planning metrics.

Given the scale of recent growth in graduation and the program's expanding role, integrating MSP data into PowerSchool would significantly strengthen governance oversight, accountability, and system-level analysis.

3.7.5. Program Limitations and Emerging Concerns

Despite strong graduation outcomes, the evaluation also identifies important structural considerations:

High Attrition Rate: While graduation numbers are increasing, more than 50% of enrolled students reportedly do not complete the program. This suggests that while the MSP is effective for those who remain engaged, retention remains a significant challenge.

Narrow Course Scope: The program's curriculum is tightly focused on graduation requirements. While effective for credit completion, it offers limited vocational, entrepreneurial, or diversified life-skills programming beyond required electives.

Dependence on Incentive Funding: Attendance stabilization is strongly tied to the wage-based participation model. Sustained funding is therefore essential.

Limited Formal Program Evaluation: There is currently no structured, recurring internal evaluation process for the MSP or its instructional practices.

Overall Assessment:

The Mature Student Program at NNCEA is a clear system strength. It demonstrates that flexible, responsive pathways can significantly increase graduation outcomes when structural barriers are addressed. As observed by evaluators, the program has multiple strengths, and other limitations, which have been summarized in Table 10.

Table 10: MSP Strengths and Limitations Summary

Strengths	Limitations
Strong and growing graduation outcomes; High enrolment interest and community demand; Financial incentive model stabilizes attendance; Clear, graduation-focused mandate; Dedicated instructors and structured pathway; Community investment through adult education access.	Lack of PowerSchool integration for tracking and metrics purposes; High attrition rate (50%+ non-completion); Narrow range of course offerings; Dependence on sustained funding; Limited vocational and practical skills diversification; Minimal formal (periodic) evaluation processes for instructors and program; Limited broader life-skills and employability integration.

Strengthening retention analysis, integrating MSP data into PowerSchool, diversifying programming, and formalizing evaluation processes would enhance the transparency, sustainability, and long-term impact of the program.

Furthermore, the MSP should be understood as an essential and effective component of the education continuum, providing a viable pathway for learners who require flexibility, re-engagement, and focused credit completion.

The evaluation does not identify the MSP as an area requiring corrective action; rather, it highlights the program as a system strength whose effectiveness could be further enhanced through expanded programming and stronger alignment with upstream attendance, assessment, and transition supports.

For the purposes of this evaluation, the MSP demonstrates that NNCEA's system can support completion when pathways are flexible and responsive. Strengthening earlier intervention, attendance stabilization, and skill development in K-12 programming would likely increase the number of learners who can succeed without relying on recovery pathways later in their educational journey.

Comments & Recommendations:

It is recommended that NNCEA develop and publicly communicate a clear enrollment process and eligibility criteria for the Mature Student Program. This should include defined admission requirements, application procedures, program expectations, and contact information for prospective students seeking guidance. This information should be made readily accessible through the NNCEA website and other community communication channels to ensure that community members clearly understand how to apply, the required qualifications, and the supports available through the program. Improving the transparency and accessibility of enrollment information will help reduce barriers for adult learners seeking to return to education and strengthen participation in the Mature Student Program.

It is recommended that NNCEA integrate the Mature Student Program into PowerSchool to ensure consistent tracking of attendance, credit accumulation, retention, attrition, and graduation outcomes.

It is recommended that NNCEA conduct a structured internal program evaluation, focusing on retention patterns, student support needs, and overall program effectiveness. Given that more than 50% of enrolled students reportedly do not complete the program, NNCEA should implement a structured internal evaluation of the MSP to examine retention patterns and identify additional supports needed. This evaluation should:

- Analyze reasons for student withdrawal;
- Assess alignment between student readiness and program expectations;
- Evaluate instructional practices for growth and improvement;
- Identify targeted retention strategies for high-risk learners.

It is recommended that NNCEA assess opportunities to expand programming to include Practical Life Skills and employment-oriented credits to better align the program with adult learner needs and employment pathways. To enhance the MSP's long-term community impact, NNCEA should develop an in-house applied learning credit focused on practical life skills and employability. This may include:

- Home economics (meal preparation and budgeting);
- Financial literacy and personal budgeting;
- Parenting skills;
- Basic automotive and home maintenance skills;
- Practical community-based learning experiences.

3.8. Post Secondary Program

NNCEA's Post-Secondary Program is designed to expand access to higher education for NCN members by providing sponsorship funding, student advising, and ongoing academic and wellness monitoring within a defined governance structure.

At the time of the evaluation, the NNCEA Post-Secondary Program was supporting approximately 140 students across multiple institutions and locations, representing a substantial increase from the 76 students it sponsored in 2024-25. This growth reflects a deliberate modification to the NNCEA funding formula that reduced per-student funding allocations to extend sponsorship to more learners within existing budget constraints.

This policy adjustment demonstrates an intentional effort to broaden access to post-secondary education and increase the number of beneficiaries across the NCN membership. However, while the expanded reach represents a significant increase in access, it also raises governance considerations regarding the adequacy of per-student financial support, potential implications for retention and completion rates, and the long-term sustainability of the revised funding model.

As part of the evaluation, a Post-Secondary Student Survey was distributed by email to 69 student email addresses provided by the program. A total of eight completed surveys were returned. While this represents a limited response rate relative to the total number of students supported, the survey findings are used in the evaluation as supplementary qualitative evidence, interpreted alongside extensive meeting notes, counsellor interviews, program documentation, and administrative data.

3.8.1. Program Administration and Governance

The Post-Secondary Program operates under a formal governance framework established in the NNCEA Post-Secondary Education Policy Manual (2018). A Post-Secondary Committee reviews and ranks applications annually, with representation from Chief & Council's Education Portfolio, the NNCEA Board, Director of Education (Chair), Trust Office, Finance, HRDA, ATEC, NNOC leadership, and the Post-Secondary Counsellor. This multi-stakeholder structure supports transparency, shared accountability, and fairness in funding decisions in a context of finite resources and high demand.

Administrative Roles and Coordination:

Responsibilities are distributed across two Post-Secondary Coordinators and a Thunder Bay-based consultant, forming a complementary support model. Coordinators oversee application processing, sponsorship administration, financial compliance, institutional liaison, and academic monitoring, serving as the primary point of accountability for governance and reporting. The consultant provides intensive transition and persistence support, particularly for recent NNOC graduates, including assistance with registration, housing, executive-function skill development, and regular progress summaries.

The policy framework provides clarity on eligibility, funding categories, performance expectations, and appeals. However, evaluation evidence indicates that implementation and reporting remain fragmented, with multiple parallel tracking systems (Excel, Dadavan, shared drives, paper files). While individual student oversight is strong, aggregate reporting to governance bodies on persistence, completion patterns, or pathways remains limited,

constraining long-term planning and forecasting.

3.8.2. Program Accessibility

Program accessibility is administratively clear but uneven in practice. While eligibility criteria and application processes are well defined, actual access depends heavily on students' academic readiness, executive-function capacity, and life circumstances.

Feedback received from staff members indicates that many students require step-by-step assistance with tasks that post-secondary institutions assume students can manage independently (online portals, document uploads, registration, housing). Without sustained guidance, many technically eligible students would struggle to access post-secondary education at all.

Student survey responses reinforce this finding. While respondents overwhelmingly reported satisfaction with the clarity and respectfulness of NNCEA processes, several noted that initial entry into post-secondary systems was confusing, particularly during first applications, and that access improved once consistent relationships with counsellors were established.

Accessibility challenges are significantly amplified for students relocating off-reserve, particularly to Winnipeg. Housing availability, isolation, transportation, and disrupted routines after home visits frequently undermine access even after sponsorship approval. Survey data confirm that housing instability and financial stress are the most frequently reported barriers, followed by mental-health stress and time-management pressures.

Students in block-scheduled, cohort-based, or regionally delivered programs appear to face fewer access barriers, underscoring the importance of program fit and location.

3.8.3. Financial Support and Management

Financial support is governed by the Post-Secondary Education Policy Manual (2018), which establishes eligibility, allowable expenses, and continuation conditions. The Post-Secondary Committee model supports transparency and shared accountability.

In practice, financial management is closely tied to student monitoring. Monthly allowances and sponsorship continuation are often contingent on progress reporting and engagement, functioning as both a support and accountability mechanism. Staff intervene proactively when deadlines are missed or engagement declines.

Student survey data strongly corroborate this model. Respondents consistently reported clarity regarding covered expenses, timely communication, and satisfaction with financial management. Most students indicated they were able to manage the financial resources provided, although several suggested that rising living costs may require greater flexibility or supplemental supports, particularly for urban learners.

3.8.4. Academic Support and Student Success

Evidence confirms that the program delivers high-touch academic and wellness supports through Winnipeg- and Thompson-based coordinators, complemented by the consultant. Supports include:

- Registration, housing, and digital navigation
- Assignment review and academic conventions
- Wellness check-ins and crisis response
- Executive-function coaching and deadline management
- Conditional funding linked to engagement

Student survey responses strongly validate this approach. Respondents consistently reported knowing who to contact, receiving timely responses, and being satisfied with the level of support provided. Several explicitly credited counsellors by name for sustained guidance and advocacy, indicating that relational continuity is a core success factor

While meaningful operational indicators are tracked, systems remain fragmented, and at-risk identification is often informal rather than analytic. Outcome tracking remains stronger on inputs than on persistence-to-completion or post-graduation pathways.

As observed in Table 11, between 2019 and 2024, NNCEA's Post-Secondary Program sponsored a substantial number of learners each year, with annual sponsorship peaking in 2021 and stabilizing at lower levels thereafter. Over this period, the program produced a steady flow of post-secondary graduates, with annual completions generally ranging from the low to mid-teens between 2020 and 2023. In 2024, however, the program recorded a notable increase in graduates, with more than double the number of completions reported in any of the preceding years.

This pattern suggests that, while persistence and completion remain challenging for many learners, the program can support successful outcomes at scale when conditions align. The 2024 results represent a significant positive signal and may reflect a combination of cohort maturation, enhanced student monitoring and support, and improved transition or persistence strategies. At the same time, the variability across years highlights the need for continued attention to student readiness, sustained advising, and structured transition supports to improve completion outcomes consistently over time.

It is important to note that the graduate counts reported in NNCEA Annual Reports and post-secondary program documentation do not represent cohort-based graduation rates. Annual sponsorship totals include students at different stages of their post-secondary journeys (e.g., first year, continuing, returning, or near completion), while graduate counts reflect students completing programs in that specific year, regardless of when they began. As a result, ratios of graduates to sponsored students in the same year should be interpreted as indicative trends rather than true completion rates.

In addition, the data are not consistently disaggregated by program type, institution, or time-to-completion, and post-graduation outcomes (such as employment or further training) are not systematically tracked. Strengthening cohort-based tracking, persistence measures, and program-specific outcomes would enhance NNCEA's ability to assess long-term post-secondary

success and guide strategic planning.

Table 11: NNCEA Post-Secondary – Sponsored Students and Graduates 2019-2024						
Year	Sponsored Students			Graduates		
	Off reserve	On reserve	Total	Off reserve	On reserve	Total
2019	53	25	78	7	0	7
2020	70	28	98	11	5	16
2021	85	51	136	12	6	18
2022	64	32	96	14	1	15
2023	60	23	83	9	4	13
2024	55	21	76	22	11	33

3.8.5. Barriers Affecting Student Success

Across sources, barriers are consistent and mirror NNOC-level challenges, intensified by post-secondary independence:

- Academic readiness gaps
- Executive-function and follow-through challenges
- Housing instability and isolation (especially Winnipeg)
- Mental-health stress and transition fatigue
- Reluctance to disclose disabilities and access accommodations

Student survey data confirm that housing instability, financial stress, and mental-health challenges are the most frequent stressors, while experiences of racism and transportation issues appear less frequent but present for some students.

3.8.6. Program Strengths

The NNCEA Post-Secondary Program demonstrates several significant strengths:

- Clear governance and policy foundation, supporting transparency and consistency
- High-touch, relational student support, validated by student survey satisfaction
- Conditional accountability mechanisms that prompt early intervention
- Evidence of continuous improvement since 2018
- Program-fit pathway identification, with stronger outcomes in structured, cohort-based programs

Student survey responses consistently affirm respect, responsiveness, clarity, and satisfaction with NNCEA supports, reinforcing that the program's effectiveness lies not in a single feature, but in the combined impact of governance clarity, sustained relationships, and adaptive support.

Comments & Recommendations:

The NNCEA Post-Secondary Program functions as a responsive, student-centred system that compensates for structural inequities in post-secondary access through relational intensity and flexible support. While governance and frontline practice are strong, the evaluation identifies opportunities to strengthen system-level analytics, cohort tracking, and outcome reporting to better align operational success with long-term strategic planning. Therefore:

It is recommended that NNCEA transition from annual point-in-time counts to a cohort-based tracking model for post-secondary students. This would allow the program to monitor persistence from year to year, time-to-completion, and program-specific graduation outcomes.

It is recommended that NNCEA formalize a secondary-to-post-secondary transition framework, aligned with NNOC's career planning and guidance programming. A formal transition framework, potentially including summer bridging, first-year readiness modules, or conditional entry supports, would improve accessibility, reduce early attrition, and align post-secondary success efforts with earlier intervention strategies at NNOC.

It is recommended that NNCEA develop a targeted support strategy for students relocating off-reserve, especially those studying in Winnipeg. Formalizing housing guidance, check-in schedules, crisis protocols, and partnerships with urban Indigenous organizations would help stabilize students during the highest-risk transition period and improve retention and completion outcomes.

It is recommended that NNCEA complement existing sponsorship supports with structured financial literacy guidance and a more systematic approach to identifying external funding opportunities. Developing a centralized scholarship and bursary database, combined with basic budgeting and financial management support for sponsored students, would reduce administrative strain, increase student confidence, and improve the sustainability of the Post-Secondary Program within existing funding constraints.

It is recommended that NNCEA review and update post-secondary staff roles, responsibilities, and data tools to reflect the expanded scope of student support now required. Consolidating tracking systems into a shared digital platform and clarifying accountability across counselling, monitoring, and reporting functions would improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and strengthen governance oversight.

It is recommended that NNCEA gradually expand post-secondary outcome reporting to include program type, credential earned, persistence beyond the first year, and post-graduation pathways (employment, further training, or education). While graduation remains a critical milestone, broader outcome measures would provide a more complete picture of student success and inform long-term workforce and community development planning.

4. NNCEA Previous Evaluation

4.1. Implementation Status Analysis 2017-18)

The 2017-18 NNCEA School Evaluation provided a comprehensive set of recommendations to strengthen governance, instructional practices, student supports, and community engagement across the education system. A review of annual reports, administrative documentation, and school practices between 2018 and 2025 indicates that NNCEA made meaningful progress implementing many of these recommendations, particularly in strengthening operational capacity and expanding programming.

Significant advancements were observed in infrastructure, technology, and administrative systems. NNCEA modernized its data and information systems, transitioned to new student information platforms, expanded fibre-optic connectivity, and established an improved records management infrastructure. The creation of an HR Unit and the adoption of modern HR systems strengthened staffing oversight, while improvements in housing, labour relations, and recruitment partnerships helped stabilize the workforce. Financial governance also improved, with NNCEA assuming greater control over education funds and strengthening internal reporting practices.

Programmatically, NNCEA expanded a wide range of student support services and culturally grounded programming. Resource staffing increased, counselling services expanded, and partnerships with external agencies helped provide clinical supports, including occupational therapy, speech-language services, and mental health resources. The establishment of a Language and Culture Unit, the development of land-based learning opportunities, and the expansion of cultural programming represent significant steps toward strengthening Nîhitho language and cultural education within the school system.

Despite these improvements, the analysis indicates that many recommendations were only partially implemented, and several systemic challenges identified in the previous evaluation remain unresolved. In particular, areas such as student attendance, literacy and numeracy achievement, social passing, policy renewal, and data-driven planning continue to require sustained attention. Several recommendations calling for formal system-wide strategies, including a comprehensive attendance plan, a coordinated communications strategy, structured inter-agency collaboration mechanisms, and formalized policy socialization, were not fully implemented during the review period.

A key observation emerging from the analysis is that NNCEA has developed numerous programs, services, and initiatives across different units, including student services, language and culture programming, counselling, community engagement activities, and partnerships with external agencies. However, these initiatives often operate in parallel rather than within a clearly articulated system-wide framework that aligns goals, responsibilities, data monitoring, and accountability mechanisms. As a result, the organization has made considerable investments in services and infrastructure, yet the overall education system would benefit from a more integrated strategic approach that connects programs, policies, and supports into a cohesive model focused on student success.

Overall, the implementation review suggests that NNCEA has made notable progress since the 2017-2018 evaluation, particularly in strengthening operational capacity, expanding student

supports, and investing in cultural and community-based programming.

Table 11. Implementation Status – School Evaluation 2017-18	
Status	Approximate Level
Implemented	20-25%
Partially Implemented	60-65%
Not Implemented	10-15%

However, the findings also indicate that the next phase of system development should focus on integration, coordination, and strategic alignment, ensuring that existing programs and services work together within a unified framework designed to improve student outcomes and strengthen community confidence in the education system.

Based on these findings, the evaluation confirms that in order for NNCEA to advance to the next stage of system development, a comprehensive strategy will be required to strengthen and connect the various components of the education authority. While NNCEA has developed and expanded many valuable programs, services, and operational systems over the past several years, the absence of a clearly integrated framework limits the overall effectiveness and sustainability of these efforts. Moving forward, a coordinated strategy that aligns governance, school operations, student services, language and culture programming, data systems, and community engagement will be essential to ensure that the education system operates as a cohesive whole and that existing investments translate into measurable improvements in student outcomes and community confidence.

5. NNCEA Evaluation 2025-26 - System Priorities and Strategic Recommendations

5.1. Priorities for System Strengthening

The NNCEA Evaluation 2025-26 generated a comprehensive set of findings and recommendations across governance, administration, services, and school programming. Based on the analysis conducted and the full set of recommendations presented in this report, a number of system-level priorities have been identified as most critical for strengthening the overall performance and sustainability of the NNCEA education system.

The priorities outlined below represent a synthesis of the key strategic recommendations emerging from the evaluation. When implemented in a coordinated manner, these priorities have the potential to significantly strengthen governance structures, instructional quality, student support systems, and long-term educational outcomes for the children and youth of NCN. These priorities are intended to guide NNCEA's future planning efforts, particularly the development and implementation of a comprehensive 5-Year Strategic Plan that will align system improvements across all areas of the education authority.

Table 13: NNCEA Identified Priorities for System Strengthening 2025-26	
1	**Develop and Implement a 5-Year NNCEA Strategic Plan** NNCEA should prioritize the development of a comprehensive 5-Year Strategic Plan that aligns governance, administration, schools, and community partnerships under a shared vision for educational improvement. The Strategic Plan should establish clear priorities, measurable outcomes, and implementation timelines across all NNCEA programs and services.
2	**Formalize the NCN–NNCEA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** NNCEA and NCN should collaboratively develop and adopt a formal Memorandum of Understanding clarifying roles, responsibilities, and expectations related to education governance, financial flows, interagency coordination, and community priorities.
3	**Modernize NNCEA Governance and Policy Framework** NNCEA should conduct a comprehensive review and modernization of its policy framework to ensure alignment with current operational realities, evolving educational standards, and community expectations. The revised policies should be consolidated into an updated policy manual and supported through staff training and communication.
4	**Establish Division-Aligned Attendance and Engagement Frameworks** Chronic absenteeism was identified as one of the most significant barriers to student success. NNCEA should implement a division-wide attendance and engagement framework across O.K. School and NNOC that integrates early intervention, home visits, student supports, and attendance monitoring systems.

5	**Implement Cohesive School-Wide Instructional Frameworks** Both O.K. School and NNOC should implement cohesive instructional frameworks that align literacy, numeracy, assessment practices, and classroom expectations across grade levels. This will strengthen instructional consistency and support improved student achievement.
6	**Strengthen Nîhitho Language and Culture Programming** NNCEA should elevate Nîhitho language and cultural education as a core pillar of the education system by implementing a formal language and culture framework aligned with curriculum development, land-based learning, Elder participation, and language assessment tools.
7	**Strengthen Inter-Agency Coordination and Student Supports** NNCEA and NCN should establish a formal inter-agency coordination structure that aligns education services with health, child and family services, public health, and youth programs. Improved coordination will strengthen wraparound supports for children and families.
8	**Improve Student Data Systems and Record-Keeping** NNCEA should modernize its student information and record-keeping systems, including improved utilization of PowerSchool, standardized data procedures, and consistent monitoring of attendance, student achievement, and graduation pathways.
9	**Stabilize and Strengthen the Educational Workforce** NNCEA should implement workforce sustainability measures that strengthen teacher, Educational Assistant, and administrative capacity, including clearer role definitions, targeted professional development, and improved workforce planning.
10	**Strengthen Student Support Systems and Alternative Learning Pathways** NNCEA should expand student support and intervention systems, including credit recovery, flexible learning pathways, and coordinated student services that address academic, social, and emotional needs.
11	**Strengthen Land-Based Learning and Cultural Programming** NNCEA should formalize the planning and long-term development of land-based education programming, ensuring alignment with language revitalization, cultural teaching, and experiential learning opportunities for students across all grade levels.
12	**Improve Transition Pathways to Post-Secondary and Employment** NNCEA should strengthen secondary-to-post-secondary transition planning, including improved career planning at NNOC, tracking of post-secondary outcomes, and targeted supports for students pursuing education or training outside the community.

5.2. Recommendations

As outlined throughout this report, the NNCEA Evaluation has been organized into thematic areas identified in the evaluation scope of work. This structure ensures that the evaluation findings and recommendations remain aligned with the priorities and accountability expectations established at the outset of the engagement.

Recommendations have been developed within each thematic area to address identified strengths, gaps, and system-level improvement opportunities. In addition, Table 14 provides a consolidated summary of the main recommendations emerging from this evaluation, including a concise description of each recommendation and the suggested responsible parties based on the current organizational structure.

The table is intended to provide readers with a high-level overview of the recommended actions across governance, administration, services, and school programming. It is important to note that some recommendations appear in more than one section of the table. This duplication is intentional, as many readers may consult only the sections most relevant to their role or area of responsibility. Repeating key recommendations within the relevant sections helps ensure that critical system-level priorities remain visible and actionable regardless of which section is being reviewed.

While Table 14 summarizes the recommendations and identifies key implementation considerations, the full rationale, context, and detailed operational guidance supporting each recommendation are presented in the corresponding sections of the report. In many cases, the recommendations are interconnected and are expected to be implemented in coordination through broader planning processes, particularly the development of NNCEA's future 5-Year Strategic Plan, which will serve as a central mechanism for aligning priorities and monitoring progress across the education system.

The identification of responsible leads is intended to support clarity of accountability and facilitate implementation planning. This structured approach strengthens governance oversight and increases the likelihood that the recommendations translate into sustained, system-wide improvement rather than remaining aspirational.

In reviewing the recommendations summarized in Table 14, it is important to recognize that they operate at different levels of the education system. Some recommendations are strategic in nature, requiring direction from the NNCEA Board of Trustees and the Director of Education to guide long-term system development, such as the creation of a 5-Year Strategic Plan, policy modernization, and strengthened inter-agency coordination. Other recommendations are operational or program-specific, focusing on improvements within individual schools, administrative processes, or service areas. Together, these recommendations form an integrated framework for strengthening governance, instructional quality, student support systems, and community engagement across NNCEA. Their successful implementation will depend on coordinated planning, clear leadership, and sustained commitment across all levels of the organization.

Table 14. Strategic Recommendations, NNCEA Evaluation 2025-26			
Report Section	**Recommendations Summary**	**Implementation Requirements**	**Responsible**
NNCEA – Governance			
Board of Trustees			
3.1.1.	It is recommended that the Board of Trustees support the development and adoption of a comprehensive NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan, led by the Director of Education.	Approve Strategic Planning Process Define Strategic Planning Scope	Board of Trustees; Director of Education
	It is recommended that the Board of Trustees lead the development and formal adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NNCEA and NCN.	Draft NCN-NNCEA MOU Conduct Negotiation and Approval Process	
	It is recommended that Board members attend community education meetings, when possible, in order to listen, collaborate, and strengthen understanding of community perspectives.		
Policies			
3.1.2.	It is recommended that NNCEA conduct a comprehensive review and modernization of the 2011 policy framework to ensure alignment with current operational realities, emerging challenges, and strategic priorities.	Review and Revise Policy Manual	Board of Trustees; Director of Education; HR Unit
	It is recommended that a summarized policy handbook be developed, following approval of the revised policies, to improve accessibility and understanding for staff, students, parents, and community members.		
	It is recommended that targeted training be provided to all NNCEA staff to establish clear protocols for policy awareness, communication, and consistent enforcement.		
	It is recommended that policy communication, awareness, and enforcement be embedded within the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan to ensure alignment, consistency, and long-term sustainability.		

Director of Education			
3.2.1.	It is recommended that NNCEA prioritize the development of a comprehensive, institution-wide 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Prepare 5-Year Strategic Planning Scope to be presented to the Board of Trustees for discussion.	Director of Education
	It is recommended that NNCEA and NCN work collaboratively to address core educational challenges through a community-integrated approach embedded within the Strategic Plan. To support this alignment, NNCEA and NCN should jointly develop and formalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).	Prepare MOU draft and scope to be presented to the Board of Trustees.	
	It is recommended that NNCEA ensure the effective onboarding and operationalization of the Assistant Director of Education position, with a clear mandate to strengthen system leadership, support continuity of operations, and drive the coordinated implementation of the recommendations outlined in this evaluation.	Prepare Work Plan	
Project Manager			
3.2.1.1.	It is recommended that a formal annual work plan be developed for the Project Manager.	Revision of Job Description and Development of Work Plan for the Project Manager	Director of Education
	It is further recommended that the NNCEA: • Develops and implements KPIs and benchmarks for the B.Ed. program. • Develops simple participation-tracking tools for after-school programs and micro sessions. • Establish shared calendars, program timelines, and annual session calendars with school assistants and admin teams. • Improve interdepartmental collaboration (attendance, guidance, wellness, cultural programming). • Provide the Project Coordinatorwith targeted PD in: time and workload management; program design and evaluation; communication and influence with adult learners; and project coordination and planning tools. • Introduce an expense-management platform (e.g., Float) to reduce reconciliation time and administrative load. • Reduce non-essential duties (e.g., errands, supply pickup) to preserve capacity for core responsibilities.		

NNCEA – Administration			
Human Resources			
3.3.1.	It is recommended that Human Resources modernization be integrated into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan should include a dedicated Human Resources component that aligns workforce planning, policy modernization, professional development, and organizational capacity-building with NNCEA's system-wide priorities.	Develop HR Optimization Plan for review. Integrate the approved Optimization Plan into the 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Director of Education; HR Unit
Finance			
3.3.2.	It is recommended that the NCN-NNCEA Memorandum of Understanding (Section 3.2.1) explicitly formalize financial governance roles, responsibilities, and funding flows.	Prepare MOU draft and scope to be presented to the Board of Trustees.	Director of Education
	It is recommended that the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan include a dedicated Finance component to establish a system-wide approach to school-level budget transparency and accountability.	Develop Finance Optimization Plan for review. Integrate the approved Optimization Plan into the 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Director of Education; Finance Unit
	It is recommended that Finance Unit capacity be strengthened through targeted professional development.		
Report Keeping Procedures			
3.3.3.	It is recommended that NNCEA prioritize the development of a modern, integrated record-keeping system and implementation plan that leverages existing tools (PowerSchool, Humi) and introduces formal structures for data management, accountability, and standardized procedures.	Prepare Record-Keeping Procedures to be included in the 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Director of Education
Inter-Agency Supports and Integration			
3.3.4.	It is recommended that the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan, supported by the NCN-NNCEA Memorandum of Understanding, include a formal system-mapping process to document all inter-agency programs and services operating within NCN.	Prepare scope for Board review and discussion. Integrate the approved scope into the MOU and 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Director of Education; Board of Trustees

NNCEA – Services			
Nîhitho Language & Cultural Programs			
3.4.1.	It is recommended that the soon-to-be-approved "Nîhitho Language & Culture SMART Goals" be formally integrated into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan, positioning language revitalization as a core educational priority rather than a standalone initiative. It is recommended that NNCEA support the development of short Cree language learning videos featuring commonly used words, phrases, and expressions, as well as demonstrations of language connected to land-based skills and cultural activities. It is further recommended that: • The Nîhitho Language Curriculum (currently under development) incorporate year-long and monthly plans, explicit learning outcomes, vocabulary progression, oral language benchmarks, assessment tools, and grade-level proficiency expectations from Nursery through Grade 12. In the interim, the provincial Cree curriculum should be implemented alongside locally developed resources. • A formal Language and Culture Framework be established for the entire school system outlining the relationship between classroom instruction, land-based learning, the Elders Program, and community cultural initiatives. • Instructional quality and consistency across classrooms be strengthened by requiring teachers to develop detailed lesson plans, maintain student work displays, demonstrate ongoing review and repetition of previously taught vocabulary, and apply structured strategies that reinforce the acquisition of the Nîhitho language. • The Elders in Schools Program be rebuilt and strengthened through clear expectations, scheduling protocols, and defined integration mechanisms, ensuring Elders are meaningfully involved in daily instruction, storytelling, thematic units, seasonal learning, and cultural teachings. Elders should receive orientation and weekly plans aligned with curriculum goals, and roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined and communicated to both Elders and school staff. • Communication and coordination with Elders be strengthened through an advance-notice system for school visits, respectful sharing of evaluation timelines, and regular meetings led jointly by school and cultural leadership. • A dedicated Cree language classroom be assigned to increase staffing stability, particularly for Grades 4–6, ensuring continuity of instruction. Substitute teachers should receive prepared teaching guides, vocabulary lists, and activity plans aligned with the curriculum.	Develop a comprehensive implementation plan based on: • Nîhitho Language & Culture SMART Goals; • Nîhitho Language Curriculum (currently under development); • Relevant recommendations identified in this report Integrate the approved implementation plan into the 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Board of Trustees; Director of Education; Language Unit;

	• A formal assessment and reporting system for Nîhitho language learning be developed, including rubrics, vocabulary checklists, oral proficiency tasks, and student portfolios containing artifacts such as recordings, writing samples, artwork, land-based reflections, and seasonal projects. • The Nîhitho Language and Culture Steering Committee be reinstated with defined Terms of Reference and representation from Elders, teachers, cultural staff, school administration, and community partners to guide curriculum development, oversee program implementation, and ensure accountability. • A long-term sustainability plan be developed to address staffing succession, Elder recruitment, training pathways, program funding, material development, and the preservation of locally developed resources (e.g., dictionaries and culture booklets).		
Land-Based Programming			
3.4.2.	It is recommended that a formalized planning framework for Land-Based Programming be developed to clearly articulate the program's vision, goals, staffing structure, and seasonal schedule.	Develop Land-Based Programming Framework and Implementation Plan based on the recommendations identified in this report. Integrate the Framework and Implementation Plan into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Director of Education; Land-Based Manager
	It is recommended that the role of Elders, knowledge keepers, and the Cree language within the program be strengthened.		
	It is recommended that equitable access for all students be ensured. A leadership-endorsed access policy, supported by a transparent rotation schedule, would help guarantee that all students participate in land-based learning without repeated or missed opportunities.		
	It is recommended that a credential map be developed outlining expected certifications for each grade band, from introductory safety skills in the middle years to advanced certifications.		
	It is recommended that a written phasing plan be developed, including milestones for maintenance, staffing, safety expectations, and asset management.		
	It is recommended that land-based learning be aligned with NNCEA's broader language and culture objectives.		
Information Communications Technology			
3.4.3.	It is recommended that NNCEA strengthen the system-wide utilization of PowerSchool. PowerSchool is a powerful tool but is currently underutilized. NNCEA should establish clear, non-negotiable expectations across all programs and schools regarding gradebook use, attendance entry, data entry standards, and reporting timelines.	Develop ICT Strategic Plan based on recommendations identified in this report. Integrate the ICT	Director of Education; ICT Manager
	It is recommended that NNCEA launch a targeted Student Data Cleanup Initiative to create		

	a time-bound, authority-wide plan to correct and complete all student information in PowerSchool, including MET numbers, contacts, addresses, custody information, and emergency contacts.	Strategic Plan into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan.	
	It is recommended that NNCEA develop a multi-year ICT Strategic Plan to provide clarity, consistency, and predictable technology investments across the education system.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA assess staff training needs to ensure effective use of existing school software and technology. Professional development should be prioritized to standardize procedures and ensure full utilization of technology tools.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA continue strengthening cybersecurity measures, including regular security audits and risk assessments. Formal incident-response procedures should be introduced, and backup and recovery systems should be tested annually.		
	It is recommended that coordination between ICT and school-based leadership be strengthened. As technology becomes more integrated across school operations, the ICT unit should work closely with school administrators to support implementation, troubleshooting, and strategic planning.		
Maintenance			
3.4.4.	It is recommended that NNCEA formally delegate greater operational authority to the Maintenance Supervisor to reduce the need for day-to-day involvement by the Director of Education.	Develop a multi-year facilities and maintenance planning framework aligned with NNCEA's strategic plan and budget. Integrate the approved plan into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Director of Education; Maintenance Coordinator
	It is also recommended that NNCEA: • Introduce a standardized work-order and tracking system for all maintenance requests across NNCEA facilities. • Establish a comprehensive preventive maintenance schedule covering all schools, teacherages, administrative buildings, and program facilities. • Conduct a formal assessment of maintenance staffing levels relative to the current and projected infrastructure footprint. • Implement annual performance evaluations for maintenance staff to clarify expectations, identify training needs, and support professional growth. • Develop and implement a formal multi-departmental strategy to address the ongoing presence of stray dogs on school grounds. • Enhance security operations by introducing a system-wide incident tracking and reporting framework. • Standardize and document fire safety and emergency response practices across all NNCEA facilities. • Ensure that maintenance, safety, and security issues (particularly recurring or		

	unresolved concerns) are consistently documented in NNCEA Annual Reports.		
Transportation			
3.4.5.	It is recommended that NNCEA prioritize the acquisition of an additional school bus to serve as a spare unit, given that all seven buses are currently in daily use. This will reduce vulnerability to service disruptions caused by mechanical breakdowns, scheduled maintenance, or unexpected emergencies. In addition, it is recommended that NNCEA develop a comprehensive transportation plan that includes: • Establish a formal fleet lifecycle and replacement plan. • Develop an ongoing local driver recruitment and training strategy. • Conduct a comprehensive route timing and efficiency review. • Establish monthly driver meetings and structured support mechanisms. • Strengthen bus incident reporting and communication protocols. • Assess and address radio connectivity gaps across service routes.	Develop a multi-year transportation planning framework aligned with NNCEA's strategic plan, recommendations, and budget. Integrate the approved plan into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Director of Education; Transportation Coordinator
Otayitiskiwin Kiskinwamahtowekamik Elementary School			
School Program, Curriculum & Pedagogical Methods			
3.5.1.	It is recommended that O.K. School develop and implement a cohesive school-wide instructional framework. The framework should align literacy, numeracy, differentiation, behaviour expectations, and assessment practices across all classrooms. It should also establish clear expectations and transition benchmarks for Grade 6 students to ensure they are adequately prepared for the transition to Grade 7. It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen its academic benchmarking and progress monitoring systems. It is recommended that O.K. School formalize differentiation and multi-grade curriculum planning supports. It is recommended that O.K. School integrate attendance strategies with instructional planning so that attendance stabilization efforts are more explicitly connected to instructional improvement. It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen school-wide behaviour and SEL alignment to support instructional flow and classroom consistency. It is recommended that O.K. School develop a Library enhancement plan to maximize the library's instructional potential.	Develop a cohesive school-wide instructional framework based on the recommendations identified in this report and integrate it into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Principal; Vice-Principals

Student Demographics, Performance & Achievement			
3.5.2.2.	It is recommended that strategic attention shift from enrolment growth toward early-years participation, attendance consistency, and stronger alignment among enrolment, attendance, and achievement, ensuring that registered students are consistently present and benefiting from instructional programs. It is recommended that NNCEA, in collaboration with O.K. School, implement a centralized home-visit monitoring and impact-tracking system to systematically document, analyze, and measure the effectiveness of attendance-related home visits conducted by the Attendance Officer. In addition, it is also recommended that: • Publish a two-page O.K. School Attendance Playbook (approved and included in the Handbook). The playbook should define a simple school-wide process for identifying, contacting, and supporting absent students, including roles (Attendance Officer, teachers, Principal, Counselling/Resource), timelines, communication scripts, a menu of family supports (transportation, food access, counselling referrals, after-school supports), and case escalation procedures. • Hold a 15–30 minute monthly case review involving the Attendance Officer, Principal, and Counselling/Resource staff. • Maintain compassionate and practical outreach practices grounded in trauma-informed approaches, pairing contact with concrete supports and using positive teacher communication (“glows and grows”) to strengthen the school–home relationship. • Reinforce the visibility and value of attendance by continuing weekly Student of the Week recognition (including O.K. Bucks) and the monthly perfect-attendance assembly. • Use PowerSchool as the single source of truth for attendance data, establishing minimum data standards and maintaining a one-page monthly dashboard (ADA%, chronic absenteeism counts, grade-level trends, improvement cohorts) to guide supports and supervision.	Develop a centralized home-visit monitoring and impact-tracking system to document, analyze, and measure the effectiveness of attendance-related home visits.	Principal Attendance Officer
3.5.2.3.	It is recommended that O.K. School re-establish a clear academic baseline by reintroducing standardized assessments (e.g., Canadian Test of Basic Skills) to establish cohort benchmarks, identify system-level strengths and gaps, and track progress over time, as recommended in the 2017–18 evaluation.	Develop a Standardized Assessment Plan to establish accurate academic baselines.	Principal; Vice-Principals;

	It is also recommended that O.K. School: • Establish a clear assessment-to-instruction cycle by publishing a one-page assessment calendar. • Develop a Reading Progress Dashboard to monitor student progress. • Strengthen IEP/IPP handoff and classroom implementation. • Implement coached professional development cycles. • Protect instructional time through consistent numeracy and SEL routines.	Based on the assessment results and the recommendations identified in this report, develop an implementation plan to strengthen instructional supports and monitoring.	Resource Department
Special Education & Student Support Services			
3.5.3.1.	It is recommended that O.K. School develop and implement a clearly articulated student support framework that defines: • Roles and responsibilities of teachers, counsellors, resource staff, Educational Assistants (EAs), and administration. • Referral thresholds and required pre-referral classroom interventions. • Expectations for collaboration, documentation, and follow-up.	Develop a cohesive school-wide student support framework based on the recommendations identified in this report and integrate it into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Principal; Vice-Principals; Resource Department; Counsellors
	It is recommended that O.K. School gradually shift counselling and student services from a predominantly crisis-response model toward a more preventive and developmental approach, including: • Regular classroom-based SEL programming. • Proactive skill-building for emotional regulation and behaviour. • Ongoing staff coaching and consultation.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School implement standardized school-wide processes, including: • Clear documentation of classroom interventions prior to referral. • Consistent use and sharing of IEPs/SSPs with classroom teachers. • Centralized tracking of referrals, interventions, and follow-up.		
	It is recommended that attendance be treated as a foundational condition for learning, including: • Establishing clear attendance benchmarks (e.g., chronic absenteeism thresholds). • Systematically tracking attendance trends and intervention outcomes. • Pairing attendance data with academic and behavioural reporting to families. • Framing attendance as a shared responsibility between the school, families, and community leadership.		

	It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen classroom implementation as the primary leverage point for improvement by prioritizing consistent classroom practices, including: • Clarifying expectations for behaviour management and SEL reinforcement. • Providing targeted professional development and instructional coaching. • Reinforcing teacher ownership of classroom-level interventions prior to escalation.		
3.5.3.3.	It is recommended that NNCEA, Chief and Council, and funding partners explicitly reaffirm their commitment to maintaining and supporting the nutrition program at O.K. School.		
	It is recommended that the nutrition program be formally integrated into the broader student support and attendance framework.		
	It is recommended that documentation and communication of the program's impact be strengthened. While the benefits of the nutrition program are widely recognized, simple documentation practices should be developed to capture its impact (e.g., attendance stability, reduced behaviour incidents linked to hunger, and student and staff feedback).		
	It is recommended that NNCEA explore culturally relevant and community-connected enhancements to the nutrition program where feasible. Where capacity and resources permit, the evaluation encourages NNCEA to further align the nutrition program with NCN values and community strengths, which may include incorporating traditional foods, community harvesting initiatives, school gardens, or partnerships with local programs that reinforce cultural identity while supporting food security.		
School Climate & Perception			
3.5.4.1.	It is recommended that O.K. School Administration work toward making the school day more predictable through the development of a "one school-wide playbook." This may include adopting a single behaviour and SEL framework coached to fidelity; establishing clear hallway and bus duty maps; implementing calm-start routines and end-of-day "stick" activities; holding a 20-minute monthly data huddle (Attendance Officer–Administration–Counselling/Resource); and issuing a weekly operations memo outlining duties, supervision priorities, key students, and upcoming events.	Development of a Cohesive School-Wide Instructional Framework based on the recommendations identified in this report and integration into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan. Development of a School Communication Strategy as part of the School Framework.	Principal; Vice-Principals
	It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen accountability structures through clear and consistent follow-through. To reinforce professional expectations and protect staff morale, O.K. School should formalize accountability protocols related to staff attendance, duty compliance, and professional conduct. Staff feedback indicates that inconsistent enforcement contributes to perceptions of inequity and burnout among reliable employees.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School establish more structured and predictable internal communication mechanisms to address reported communication gaps and strengthen		

	coherence among Administration, Resource staff, and classroom teachers.		
3.5.4.2.	It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen consistency in supervision and adult presence by establishing clear and enforceable expectations for active supervision during recess, lunch, and transitions, including limits on staff cell phone use while on duty. Consistent adult visibility should be treated as a core school climate strategy.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School clarify and reinforce classroom behaviour expectations by developing shared minimum expectations for classroom management and behaviour response across grades, reducing variability in student experience and reliance on administration for minor issues.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School explicitly teach bystander behaviour and reporting procedures by integrating age-appropriate guidance into classroom instruction and counselling programming, so students clearly understand how to respond when they witness bullying, beyond simply identifying trusted adults.		
	It is also recommended that climate-related operational practices be formalized and documented, ensuring that movement systems, staggered schedules, supervision roles, counselling processes, and restorative practices are clearly documented, communicated, and reviewed annually to support sustainability.	Framework to include standardized procedures and protocols for student services.	Principal; Vice-Principals; Counsellors;
	It is recommended that O.K. School continue to protect and sustain counselling and mental-health capacity. Given the strong link between student wellbeing and school climate, counselling, SEL, and crisis-response capacity should be maintained as essential services rather than discretionary supports.		
3.5.4.3.	It is recommended that O.K. School prioritize addressing parent-identified safety concerns, particularly related to dogs on the playground and bullying prevention and response. This includes establishing and communicating clear expectations regarding playground safety, supervision, and access, while reinforcing consistent and transparent processes for identifying, responding to, and following up on bullying incidents.	Engagement Strategy (as part of School Framework)	Director of Education; Principal
	It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen communication with parents and caregivers regarding academic expectations, attendance, and available student supports. This should include clearly explaining the relationship between daily attendance, instructional time, and learning continuity, including in cases of justified absences such as medical appointments.		

Extra-Curricular and Before/After School Programs			
3.5.5.1.	It is recommended that O.K. School formalize extra-curricular and extended-day programming by establishing a clear framework that defines the purpose, scope, and expected outcomes of extra-curricular and before/after-school programs.	School Framework to identify goals and expectations of these programs. Budget review and identification of funding requirements.	Director of Education; Principal; Others to be assigned.
	It is recommended that O.K. School improve documentation and visibility of programs by maintaining a simple annual inventory of program offerings, participation levels, staffing, and duration to support planning, continuity, and reporting.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School stabilize program delivery, reducing reliance on short-term or ad hoc arrangements by aligning staffing and funding to support consistent program delivery throughout the school year.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School continue offering school-based programs that minimize barriers related to transportation, supervision, and cost, particularly for students with limited access to community activities.		
	It is recommended that basic outcome monitoring be introduced by tracking simple indicators (e.g., participation, student engagement, and program continuity) to better understand program impact and inform future decision-making.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School explore partnerships with community organizations, cultural leaders, or recreation providers to broaden program offerings while reducing operational strain on school staff.		
3.5.5.2.	It is recommended that O.K. School continue facilitating student assemblies as a mechanism to strengthen student engagement, reinforce a sense of school community, and support a positive school climate.		
	It is recommended that minimal documentation practices be implemented (e.g., brief records of assembly themes, attendance focus, or recognition criteria) to support continuity over time and allow leadership to periodically reflect on whether assemblies are reinforcing desired behaviours and engagement.		
3.5.5.3.	It is recommended that O.K. School continue supporting the Jr. C&C initiative, as it represents a positive and culturally aligned leadership initiative that provides meaningful opportunities for student involvement and responsibility while fostering student voice at the elementary level.		
	It is recommended that the Jr. C&C be strengthened through a light-touch structure and documentation that supports consistency and continuity without diminishing student ownership. This may include developing a concise written framework, clarifying student roles, and introducing simple continuity practices such as annual confirmations and brief activity summaries.		

	It is recommended that the intended outcomes and alignment between Jr. C&C activities, curriculum expectations, and O.K. School improvement priorities be clarified. Defining a small set of age-appropriate leadership and engagement outcomes, alongside minimal reporting (e.g., an annual summary of activities and student reflections), would strengthen evaluative clarity and visibility.		
	It is recommended that the Jr. C&C at both O.K. School and NNOC meet annually with the NNCEA Board as a formal component of their mandate. While this practice has occurred previously, it should be formally established and explicitly included in the program's scope.		
School Leadership, Management & Staff			
3.5.6.1.	It is recommended that O.K. School implement a school-wide instructional framework to reduce variability across classrooms. The framework should establish clear expectations for lesson planning, assessment practices, pedagogy, and classroom routines across all grade levels.	Development of a Cohesive School-Wide Instructional Framework based on the recommendations identified in this report and integration into the 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Principal
	It is recommended that O.K. School establish a coordinated school-wide behaviour and social-emotional learning (SEL) system, adopting a unified behavioural framework (e.g., PAX, Second Step, or a blended NNCEA model) with consistent expectations, training, and monitoring.		
	It is also recommended that O.K. School strengthen data management structures for counselling by implementing systematic processes to track counselling caseloads, behavioural incidents, interventions, student progress, and attendance patterns.		Counsellors Attendance Officer
	It is recommended that NNCEA and O.K. School address staffing instability by strengthening Educational Assistant attendance monitoring and workforce supports.		Director of Education, Principal, HR Unit
	It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen parent and guardian engagement across attendance follow-up, behavioural interventions, communication, and homework support.		Principal Attendance Officer
	It is recommended that O.K. School collaborate with NNCEA leadership, community partners, and NCN departments to address the issue of stray dogs entering school grounds and buildings.		Director of Education, Principal
3.5.6.2.	It is recommended that NNCEA formally document and operationalize the distributed leadership structure at O.K. School, clearly defining: • Grade-band oversight (Grades 1-3 and Grades 4-6), • Literacy and numeracy leadership portfolios, • Discipline authority and escalation procedures,		Director of Education; Principal

	• EA assignment responsibilities.		
	It is recommended that measurable literacy and numeracy improvement targets be established for each division, with structured monitoring of early literacy interventions and Jump Math implementation. This will ensure that Vice-Principal roles extend beyond coordination and oversight toward demonstrable instructional impact.		Principal, Vice Principals Resource Department
3.5.6.3.	It is recommended that O.K. School establish a single school-wide Behaviour and SEL framework and ensure it is implemented with fidelity.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School establish a clear IEP/IPP handoff process and classroom-ready support model to ensure that classroom teachers receive timely and practical information to support student learning.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA and O.K. School Administration define four to six instructional non-negotiables and align professional development, classroom walkthroughs, and coaching accordingly. This may include publishing a short list of classroom expectations (e.g., clear learning targets, checks for understanding every 8–10 minutes, structured small-group routines, exit checks) and using weekly walkthroughs to provide focused feedback.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen EA reliability and role clarity to protect instructional time, including implementing a simple EA coordination structure such as a morning assignment huddle, a visible assignment board, and a small backup coverage pool.		Principal; Vice Principals; HR Unit
	It is recommended that O.K. School Administration establish clear PowerSchool data standards and publish a monthly Teaching and Learning Dashboard to support instructional monitoring and decision-making.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School reinforce daily culture and safety practices by embedding visible Cree language and cultural presence in daily routines (e.g., greetings, announcements, “Word or Teaching of the Week,” refreshed bilingual signage) to strengthen belonging and support positive behaviour outside formal language classes.		
3.5.6.4.	It is recommended that NNCEA establish a documented Educational Assistant allocation framework, as identified in Section 3.5.3, to clarify deployment and ensure alignment with student learning needs.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA strengthen accountability, supervision, and instructional integration of Educational Assistants through structured monitoring of EA performance and role implementation.		

	It is also recommended that O.K. School: • Provide targeted training aligned with early literacy interventions and numeracy programming • Standardize behaviour documentation and communication protocols • Clarify reporting lines between EAs, classroom teachers, administration, and Resource • Implement structured logbooks to support continuity and communication • Reinforce expectations regarding attendance and continuity of student support		
	It is recommended that NNCEA address reported concerns regarding high Educational Assistant (EA) absenteeism by: • Monitor attendance data and identify root causes • Develop strategies to improve workforce stability (e.g., substitute coverage planning, attendance recognition strategies, workload review) • Establish clear expectations regarding attendance and reliability		
3.5.6.5.	It is recommended that O.K. School formalize and streamline front-office procedures to ensure consistency, efficiency, and accountability. This should include: • Developing clear student management protocols at the reception level • Standardizing behaviour referral and documentation systems • Establishing consistent communication procedures regarding incidents • Reinforcing visitor sign-in and identification badge compliance • Clarifying attendance tracking and same-day follow-up processes		Principal
	It is recommended that O.K. School strengthen professional communication standards and customer-service practices within the school office, recognizing the office's role as the primary point of contact for students, families, staff, and community members.		
	It is recommended that O.K. School implement measures to improve front-office workflow efficiency, including: • Install a dedicated phone line for the Attendance Officer to reduce call volume through the main office and improve overall task flow. • Train and maintain a small pool of substitute secretaries to provide coverage during peak periods (e.g., report cards, parent meetings) and absences, ensuring continuity of operations. • Create an alternative supervised cooling-down or waiting area for students requiring temporary support. Where relocation is not possible, ensure an EA is assigned to student supervision to prevent disruption within the office workspace.		

	• Formally acknowledge the critical role of Office Staff and reinforce professional boundaries to ensure the office remains an operational hub rather than a repository for staff frustrations.		
Nisichawayasihk Neyo Ohtinwak Collegiate (NNOC)			
School Program, Curriculum & Pedagogical Methods			
3.6.1.	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC establish a cohesive secondary instructional framework (Grades 7–12). The framework should clearly articulate expectations for: • Literacy and numeracy blocks (including foundational skill repair in Grades 7-8); • Differentiated instruction across multi-level classrooms; • Consistent classroom routines and behavioural expectations; • Tier 1–2–3 intervention alignment; • Assessment and progress monitoring protocols.	Development of a Cohesive School-Wide Instructional Framework based on the recommendations identified in this report and integration into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Principal; Vice Principals
	It is recommended that NNOC introduce standardized baseline literacy and numeracy assessments at Grades 7 and 9 to establish clear academic starting points. This should include: • Reading level benchmarking; • Numeracy diagnostics; • Regular progress-monitoring cycles; • Data-review meetings led by administration; • Integration of academic data into PowerSchool or a centralized dashboard.		
	It is recommended that NNOC formalize a Junior High Literacy Recovery Strategy (Grades 7–8) to: • Standardize guided reading implementation; • Monitor UFLI program fidelity; • Embed monitored literacy blocks within timetables; • Create accountability mechanisms for small-group interventions; • Provide targeted professional development on science-of-reading practices.		
	It is recommended that NNOC address over-age and under-credited structural misalignment in Grades 9–12 by: • Conducting annual transcript audits; • Separating grade designation from age advancement; • Expanding alternative and flexible pathway options; • Formalizing transition points into the Mature Student Program when appropriate.		

	It is recommended that NNOC integrate the attendance strategy with academic risk monitoring, ensuring that attendance data is embedded within academic intervention systems rather than functioning as a parallel initiative.		
	It is recommended that NNOC develop a structured trauma-informed and social-emotional learning (SEL) implementation plan.		
	It is recommended that NNOC evaluate opportunities to expand vocational, applied, and entrepreneurial pathways (Grades 9–12) to increase engagement and reduce disengagement among over-age learners.		
	Given the overlap between attendance, mental health, child welfare, and academic instability, it is further recommended that NNOC establish a coordinated inter-agency support structure, including: • Formalizes structured inter-agency case management meetings; • Clarify information-sharing protocols; • Develop consistent referral pathways; • Integrate Student Services, Attendance Officer, Academic Advisor, and Resource supports under a coordinated model.		
School Demographics, Performance & Achievement			
3.6.2.2.	It is recommended that NNCEA, in collaboration with NNOC, implement a standardized, division-aligned attendance framework that includes • Clearly defined intervention tiers; • Documented follow-up timelines and accountability structures; • Home visit monitoring and impact tracking system to systematically document, analyze, and measure the effectiveness of attendance-related home visits conducted by the Attendance Officer.	Development of a centralized home visit monitoring and impact tracking system to systematically document, analyze, and measure the effectiveness of attendance-related home visits conducted by the Attendance Officer.	Principal; Vice Principals; Attendance Officer
	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC formalize a Grades 7–8 Transition Attendance Framework that combines academic, attendance, and well-being supports during students' first two years at NNOC.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC integrate mental health–informed practices into attendance strategies, particularly for students in Grades 9–12.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA require NNOC to routinely analyze attendance and student leaver data together, rather than treating them as separate indicators.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA support improvements to PowerSchool data quality and access by establishing clear protocols for regular demographic updates.		

	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC further normalize flexible learning pathways, including: • Credit recovery and modular course completion; • Extended timelines for graduation without stigma; • Blended, experiential, or land-based learning options connected to attendance re-engagement.		
3.6.2.3.	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC formally position attendance and engagement as prerequisite conditions for academic achievement, ensuring that academic performance monitoring, intervention planning, and reporting explicitly integrate attendance data. (Please refer to recommendations in Section 3.6.2.2.)		
	It is recommended that NNOC strengthen Grades 7–8 academic readiness and transition supports by implementing a structured readiness framework that includes: • Diagnostic literacy and numeracy screening early in the school year; • Targeted instructional supports for students with identified learning gaps; • Explicit teaching of secondary learning routines and expectations; • Consistent adult mentorship or advisory support to reinforce engagement and accountability.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC develop clearer internal monitoring of intermediate achievement indicators to identify earlier when students are falling off track and intervene more effectively. Monitoring should include: • Credit accumulation by grade; • Course completion rates; • Progress toward graduation requirements; • Patterns of re-engagement after interruption.		
	It is recommended that NNOC develop a formal credit recovery and alternative pathways framework to support students who fall behind in credits but remain within school-age parameters. Addressing this gap may require allocating additional elective teaching capacity to facilitate flexible credit-completion models.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC evaluate the feasibility of implementing structured Co-op programs, dual credit programming, and summer school opportunities to support improved student engagement, credit accumulation, and graduation outcomes.	Development of a Cohesive School-Wide Instructional Framework aligned with the recommendations identified in this report.	
	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC continue to frame graduation as a process rather than a single on-time outcome, emphasizing persistence, re-entry, and multiple pathways to completion. Performance reporting should acknowledge extended timelines as valid indicators of success, consistent with community context and student realities.		

	It is recommended that NNCEA strengthen data extraction protocols and optimize PowerSchool usage for graduation and credit tracking to improve monitoring accuracy, forecast completion rates, and align intervention efforts with measurable outcomes.		
Special Education & Student Support Services			
3.6.3.1.	It is recommended that NNCEA establish a consistent academic assessment and benchmarking framework at NNOC to support the identification and monitoring of special education needs.	Development of a Standardized Assessment Plan to obtain accurate baseline data. The framework should include standardized procedures and protocols for student services.	Principal; Vice Principals; Resources; Student Services; Attendance Officer
	It is recommended that NNOC formalize special education structures, including clearer documentation, referral pathways, and student support tracking processes.		
	It is recommended that NNOC develop formal alternative and bridging pathways for over-age and under-credited students whose learning needs are not well served by traditional secondary programming.		
3.6.3.2.	It is recommended that NNCEA, in collaboration with NNOC, establish a centralized student support case-management system integrating attendance, wellness, special services, academic advising, and nutrition supports.		
	It is recommended that NNOC shift from predominantly reactive student support toward structured preventive programming, particularly in Grades 7-8 and the early Senior Years.		
	It is also recommended that NNOC strengthen student support capacity and clarify role expectations to ensure the sustainability of services.		
3.6.3.3.	It is recommended that NNOC develop and implement a coherent school-wide Career Planning and Transition Framework beginning in Grades 7–8 and continuing through the Senior Years.		
	It is recommended that NNOC formalize and resource alternative transition pathways for over-age and under-credited students, including structured credit recovery, re-entry programs, and competency-based or work-integrated learning opportunities.		
	It is recommended that NNOC strengthen transition coordination by implementing a shared tracking system for post-school outcomes (post-secondary enrollment, training, employment, and re-entry) and formalizing partnerships with post-secondary institutions, employers, and community agencies.		
3.6.3.4.	It is recommended that NNOC formalize the structure and sustainability of the school nutrition program, recognizing it as an essential component of the student support system. This should include: • Strengthening program documentation and data tracking; • Stabilizing program coordination and operational procedures;		

	• Exploring strategies to secure more stable funding and community partnerships.		
School Climate & Perception			
3.6.4.1.	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC prioritize greater consistency in the implementation of core school-wide frameworks that most directly affect teachers' day-to-day experience, particularly regarding attendance follow-up, learning supports, and instructional planning for multi-level classrooms.	Development of a Cohesive School-Wide Instructional Framework based on the recommendations identified in this report and integration into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan. Development of a Communication Strategy as part of the School Framework.	Principal; Vice Principals;
	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC make an intentional investment in teacher wellbeing and collaborative capacity to address burnout risk and sustain morale. This should include protecting time for collaborative planning and problem-solving, recognizing the emotional labour associated with teaching in a high-needs secondary context, and ensuring access to instructional and wellness supports that reduce individual burden.		
3.6.4.2.	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC strengthen predictable daily routines and transition supports, particularly for students in Grades 7–8 and those re-engaging after periods of absence.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC expand accessible, student-centred wellness supports and opportunities for student voice, particularly for older students who report stress, anxiety, and family responsibilities as major barriers to engagement.		
3.6.4.3.	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC build on the demonstrated effectiveness of home visits and personal contact by expanding relationship-based family engagement beyond attendance or crisis-driven interactions.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC introduce formal and accessible mechanisms to systematically gather and analyze parent and caregiver feedback.		
Extra-Curricular & Related Student Programs			
3.6.5.1.	It is recommended that NNOC formalize an extra-curricular programming framework that integrates after-school clubs and seasonal land-based initiatives into broader attendance and wellness strategies.	School Framework to identify goals and expectations of these programs. Budget review and identification of funding requirements.	Director of Education; Principal; Others to be assigned.
	It is recommended that NNOC review participation requirements to ensure that compliance measures do not unintentionally exclude vulnerable students.		
	It is recommended that NNOC strengthen the long-term sustainability of after-school clubs and seasonal programming, recognizing that these initiatives currently rely heavily on staff goodwill, volunteer time, and grant-based funding.		
3.6.5.2.	It is recommended that NNOC establish a structured and predictable assembly schedule (e.g., monthly or bi-monthly) aligned with clearly defined objectives related to attendance,		

	behaviour expectations, cultural identity, and student recognition.		
3.6.5.3.	It is recommended that NNOC continue supporting the Jr. C&C initiative, as it represents a positive and culturally aligned leadership initiative that provides meaningful opportunities for student involvement and responsibility while fostering student voice and leadership.		
	It is recommended that NNOC strengthen the Jr. C&C through a light-touch structure and documentation that supports consistency and continuity without diminishing student ownership.		
	It is recommended that NNOC clarify the intended outcomes and alignment between Jr. C&C activities, curriculum expectations, and NNOC improvement priorities.		
	It is recommended that the Jr. C&C at both O.K. School and NNOC meet annually with the NNCEA Board as a formal component of their mandate. While this practice has occurred previously, it should be formally established and explicitly included within the program's scope.		
School Leadership, Management & Staff			
3.6.6.1.	It is recommended that NNCEA and the Principal work together to develop and implement a clearly articulated instructional framework for NNOC that defines consistent expectations for literacy, numeracy, assessment practices, and classroom instruction across grades and subject areas.	Development of a Cohesive School-Wide Instructional Framework based on the recommendations identified in this report and integration into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Director of Education; Principal; Vice Principals;
	It is recommended that NNCEA and the Principal implement a standardized, division-aligned attendance framework, as outlined in Section 3.6.2.2, recognizing that chronic absenteeism remains the most significant barrier to student achievement at NNOC.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA and the Principal strengthen structural supports that reduce reactive operational demands. To protect instructional leadership capacity, internal systems should be strengthened to reduce operational and administrative strain on the Principal.		
3.6.6.2.	It is recommended that NNOC establish clearly defined Vice-Principal leadership portfolios aligned with key school priorities, including attendance monitoring, behaviour systems, instructional improvement, credit tracking, and graduation readiness.	Definition of leadership portfolios and development of a Vice-Principal work plan.	Principal; Vice Principals
	It is recommended that NNOC establish structured time within the Vice-Principals' weekly schedule dedicated specifically to instructional leadership activities, including classroom observations, coaching conversations with teachers, and follow-up on instructional strategies discussed during Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings.		

3.6.6.3.	It is recommended that NNOC implement a cohesive secondary instructional framework, as outlined in the recommendations of Section 3.6.1.2.	Development of a Cohesive School-Wide Instructional Framework based on the recommendations identified in this report and integration into the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan.	Director of Education; Principal; Vice Principals
	It is recommended that NNOC strengthen integration between instruction, attendance, and student services. Given the interconnection between attendance instability and instructional disruption, coordination protocols should be formalized linking classroom teachers, student services, and administration.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA prioritize workforce sustainability measures at NNOC to mitigate burnout risk and protect instructional quality.		
3.6.6.4.	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC implement the recommendations outlined in Section 3.6.3.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA implement a clearly documented EA deployment model aligning EA assignments with student needs, formal learning plans, and classroom instructional priorities.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA continue strengthening EA professional development and instructional integration.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA and NNOC review workforce sustainability measures related to EA coverage and attendance to protect classroom stability and instructional continuity.		
3.6.6.5.	It is recommended that NNCEA support NNOC in formalizing and streamlining front-office systems related to attendance tracking, behavioural referrals, and communication documentation.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA work with NNOC leadership to clarify role expectations and communication pathways between office staff, administration, teachers, and student services.		
Mature Student Program			
3.7.	It is recommended that NNCEA develop and publicly communicate a clear enrolment process and eligibility criteria for the Mature Student Program. This should include defined admission requirements, application procedures, program expectations, and contact information for prospective students seeking guidance.	Development of an Internal One-Year Improvement Plan.	Director of Education
	It is recommended that NNCEA integrate the Mature Student Program into PowerSchool to ensure consistent tracking of attendance, credit accumulation, retention, attrition, and graduation outcomes.		

	It is recommended that NNCEA conduct a structured internal program evaluation, focusing on retention patterns, student support needs, and overall program effectiveness.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA assess opportunities to expand programming to include Practical Life Skills and employment-oriented credits to better align the program with adult learner needs and employment pathways.		
Post Secondary Program			
3.8.	It is recommended that NNCEA transition from annual point-in-time counts to a cohort-based tracking model for post-secondary students. This would allow the program to monitor persistence from year to year, time-to-completion, and program-specific graduation outcomes.	Development of an Internal One-Year Improvement Plan.	Director of Education
	It is recommended that NNCEA formalize a secondary-to-post-secondary transition framework, aligned with NNOC's career planning and guidance programming.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA develop a targeted support strategy for students relocating off-reserve, particularly those studying in Winnipeg.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA complement existing sponsorship supports with structured financial literacy guidance and a more systematic approach to identifying external funding opportunities.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA review and update post-secondary staff roles, responsibilities, and data management tools to reflect the expanded scope of student support now required.		
	It is recommended that NNCEA expand post-secondary outcome reporting to include program type, credential earned, persistence beyond the first year, and post-graduation pathways (e.g., employment, further training, or continued education).		

6. Practical Implementation Guide

The recommendations outlined in this report provide a comprehensive roadmap to strengthen governance, instructional quality, student supports, and system coordination across NNCEA programs and schools.

To support effective implementation, this guide provides a practical framework for prioritizing, sequencing, and monitoring the recommended actions. The goal is to ensure that the recommendations translate into concrete improvements in teaching, student engagement, attendance, and long-term educational outcomes.

Implementation should be approached as a multi-year process, beginning with foundational system changes that enable subsequent improvements in instructional practice and student supports.

Considering the scope and complexity of the recommendations, and the significant range of responsibilities currently held by the Director of Education, it is recommended that the implementation activities outlined in this Practical Implementation Guide be closely coordinated, monitored, and advanced by the Assistant Director position once established. This role will be critical to ensuring consistent reporting, system-wide coordination, oversight of implementation progress, and sustained momentum across NNCEA priorities.

Successful implementation will also depend on strong interdepartmental coordination across NNCEA. As many of the recommendations require collaboration between academic, student services, operations, and administrative functions, it is essential that the individual responsible for implementation follow-up be supported through active engagement, clear communication, and formal endorsement from NNCEA leadership. This collective commitment will help ensure alignment across departments and enable the recommendations to be implemented effectively and sustainably.

6.1. Implementation Phases

To ensure feasibility and sustainability, implementation should be organized in three phases.

Table 15: Implementation Phases

Phase I **Foundational Systems** (Year 1)	Strategic Governance	• Develop the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan • Formalize NNCEA-NCN Memorandum of Understanding • Establish clear governance and reporting structures
	Policy and Organizational Foundations	• Review and modernize the NNCEA Policy Framework • Strengthen Human Resources planning • Clarify roles and responsibilities across NNCEA departments
	Data and Monitoring Systems	• Strengthen PowerSchool data management • Introduce attendance monitoring framework • Implement cohort tracking for post-secondary

		students
	Organizational Infrastructure	Develop frameworks for: • Instructional systems • Student support case management • Record-keeping and data systems
Phase II **Instructional and Student Support Systems** (Years 1–2)	Instructional Systems	• Implement school-wide instructional frameworks • Introduce baseline literacy and numeracy assessments • Establish instructional non-negotiables • Strengthen PLC collaboration and instructional coaching
	Attendance and Engagement	• Implement division-aligned attendance framework • Integrate attendance monitoring with academic supports • Expand home visit monitoring and follow-up systems • Community Engagement Strategy
	Student Support Services	• Implement centralized case management systems • Strengthen counselling and mental-health programming • Develop career planning and transition frameworks
Phase III **Program Expansion and Sustainability** (Years 2–3)	Student Pathways	Expand: • credit recovery pathways • vocational and applied learning programs • dual credit and co-op opportunities
	Alternative Pathways	Strengthen: • Mature Student Program • flexible graduation pathways • re-entry programming
	Student Engagement	Expand: • extra-curricular programs • land-based learning initiatives • student leadership programs
	Post-Secondary Success	Strengthen: • transition planning • cohort monitoring • student relocation supports

6.2. Implementation Leadership & Key Positions

Successful implementation will require shared leadership across the education system.

<table>
<tr><th>NNCEA Board</th><th>Director of Education</th><th>School Administration</th><th>NNCEA Units & Departments</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Strategic oversight

Monitoring implementation progress

Ensuring alignment with community priorities</td><td>Direction Strategic Planning Process

Aligning departmental priorities

Reporting progress to the Board</td><td rowspan="3">Implementing school-level instructional and attendance frameworks

Supporting teachers and student services teams

Monitoring student progress

Planning, Coordination and Implementation</td><td rowspan="3">Operational implementation within their areas

Providing technical support to schools

Ensuring consistent system-wide practices</td></tr>
<tr><td>Assistant Director</td></tr>
<tr><td>Coordinating system-wide implementation</td></tr>
</table>

6.3. Monitoring & Accountability

To ensure the recommendations lead to measurable improvement, NNCEA should establish a structured monitoring framework. Key elements should include:

Annual Implementation Review:

NNCEA should conduct an annual review of recommendation progress, including:

- status of implementation
- challenges encountered
- adjustments required

Key Performance Indicators:

Monitoring should track progress in areas such as:

- student attendance rates (overall)
- student attendance rates (after intervention / home visits, others)
- literacy and numeracy improvement (based on baseline and intervention)
- credit accumulation
- graduation rates
- post-secondary persistence
- number of parents/caregivers engaged

Reporting:

Implementation progress should be reported through:

- NNCEA Annual Reports
- Board Updates
- Community Information Sessions

6.4. Community Engagement

Successful implementation will require ongoing communication with families and community members. Therefore, NNCEA should ensure:

- transparent communication about reforms
- opportunities for community feedback
- ongoing collaboration with Elders and community leadership

6.5. Key Implementation Principles

The following principles should guide implementation:

Indigenous-Led Education	**Sustainability**	**Collaboration**	**Continuous Improvement**
All implementation efforts should respect and strengthen Nîhitho language, culture, and community priorities.	Changes should prioritize long-term sustainability rather than short-term initiatives.	Successful implementation requires coordination across schools, NNCEA departments, and community partners.	Implementation should be viewed as an ongoing process of learning, adjustment, and improvement.

6.6. Implementation Timelines

Table 16: Implementation Timelines

Phase	Focus	Activity	2026							2027	2028	2029
			Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec			
1	Foundations and System Alignment	Develop and approve the NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan										
		Formalize the NNCEA–NCN Memorandum of Understanding										
		Modernize the NNCEA Policy Framework										
		Establish Board monitoring and reporting mechanisms										
		Data and Monitoring Systems: • Strengthen PowerSchool data management standards • Implement attendance monitoring framework • Introduce cohort tracking for post-secondary students • Develop centralized student support case-management system										
		Organizational Systems • Clarify roles and responsibilities across NNCEA departments • Develop Human Resources modernization plan • Strengthen financial governance and reporting structures • Implement records management procedures										
		School Operational Foundations • Develop schoolwide instructional framework structures • Introduce baseline literacy and numeracy assessments • Develop attendance follow-up and home-visit monitoring system										
		Program Governance. Formalize: • Land-Based Programming Framework										

		• Extra-Curricular Programming Framework • Student leadership initiatives • Mature Student Program enrolment procedures											
2	**Instructional and Student Support Implementation**	Instructional Improvement • Implement cohesive instructional frameworks at OK School and NNOC • Introduce instructional non-negotiables • Strengthen PLC collaboration and instructional coaching • Implement schoolwide behaviour and SEL frameworks											
		Literacy and Numeracy Development • Implement Junior High Literacy Recovery Strategy • Monitor UFLI and literacy block fidelity • Strengthen numeracy instruction and benchmarking											
		Attendance and Engagement • Implement division-aligned attendance framework • Integrate attendance monitoring with academic supports • Expand home visit engagement systems											
		Student Support Systems • Implement centralized student support case management • Strengthen counselling and mental-health programming • Develop career planning and transition framework											
		Workforce Capacity • Clarify Vice-Principal instructional leadership portfolios • Implement EA deployment framework • Strengthen EA training and instructional integration											
3	**Program Expansion and Sustainability**	Student Pathways and Program Expansion. Expand: • Credit recovery programs • Alternative and flexible pathways • Vocational and applied learning opportunities • Dual credit and co-op programming											
		Student Engagement and School Climate. Expand: • Extra-curricular programming • Land-based learning opportunities											

		• Student leadership initiatives • Cultural programming										
		Graduation and Post-Secondary Success. Strengthen: • secondary-to-post-secondary transition planning • post-secondary cohort monitoring • student relocation supports • financial literacy supports										
		Program Evaluation and Sustainability. Conduct: • Mature Student Program evaluation • student support services evaluation • instructional framework impact review • Expand post-secondary outcome reporting										
Continuous Monitoring		Across all phases, NNCEA can monitor progress through: • Annual Implementation Reviews • Progress toward recommendations • Adjustments to timelines • Resource allocation needs • Key Performance Indicators • Student attendance rates • Literacy and numeracy improvement • Credit accumulation • Graduation rates • Post-secondary persistence Reporting: • NNCEA Annual Reports • Board progress updates • Community information sessions										

7. Conclusions

The 2025-26 NNCEA Evaluation provides a comprehensive assessment of the current state of the NNCEA education system, reflecting both meaningful progress and persistent systemic challenges.

The evaluation confirms that NNCEA has made important advancements since the previous review. These include strengthened cultural programming, improved staff retention, enhanced administrative and financial capacity, and continued commitment from leadership, staff, and the Board of Trustees. These developments provide a strong foundation for continued growth and reflect the dedication of NNCEA to supporting the success and well-being of its students and community.

At the same time, the evaluation highlights that key challenges remain unresolved and continue to affect student outcomes. Chronic absenteeism, uneven instructional practices, gaps in foundational literacy and numeracy, and limited system-wide coordination represent significant barriers to sustained improvement. In addition, fragmentation across programs and departments reduces the system's ability to function cohesively and to consistently monitor progress, evaluate impact, and respond effectively to emerging needs.

A central conclusion of this evaluation is that NNCEA is no longer at a stage where incremental, program-specific improvements alone will be sufficient. While many initiatives across the system are individually strong and responsive, the next phase of development requires a deliberate transition toward a fully integrated, coherent, and accountable education system.

This transition will require strengthening alignment across governance, instructional practices, student supports, and administrative systems. It will also require establishing clear structures for coordination, data-informed decision-making, and consistent implementation across all NNCEA programs, including early years, K-12, Mature Student, and Post-Secondary education.

The Priorities for System Strengthening identified in this report provide a clear and actionable framework to guide this transition. These priorities emphasize instructional coherence, attendance improvement, integrated student supports, strengthened data systems, governance alignment, and enhanced program accessibility and transitions. Collectively, they establish the foundation for a more consistent, effective, and culturally grounded education system.

The development and implementation of a comprehensive NNCEA 5-Year Strategic Plan will be essential to operationalize these priorities. The Strategic Plan must serve as the central mechanism to align all programs, define measurable outcomes, assign responsibilities, and guide implementation over time. Complementing this work, a formalized MOU between NNCEA and NCN, will be critical to strengthening interagency collaboration and reinforcing shared responsibility for student success.

The evaluation further underscores that implementation is the most critical phase moving forward. The impact of this evaluation will depend not only on the strength of its recommendations, but on the ability of NNCEA to translate these recommendations into coordinated, sustained action. This requires a disciplined, multi-year approach supported by clear planning, defined roles and responsibilities, consistent monitoring, and regular reporting.

Equally important is the need for strong interdepartmental coordination and organizational alignment. The success of system-wide improvement will depend on the ability of NNCEA programs and schools to work collaboratively within a shared framework, supported by leadership, clear communication, and a collective commitment to common goals.

Finally, this evaluation reaffirms the importance of grounding all system improvements in the values, language, and cultural identity of NCN. Cultural relevance, land-based learning, and community engagement are not supplementary components, but foundational elements of student success and system effectiveness.

In conclusion, NNCEA is well positioned to move into its next phase of development. With a clear strategic direction, strengthened coordination, and sustained commitment to implementation, NNCEA has the opportunity to build a cohesive, culturally grounded, and high-performing education system that supports the success of all learners and reflects the aspirations of the community.

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AUTHOR OF THIS REPORT:
KOKOPELLI
BOX 49
TOOTINAOWAZIIBEENG TREATY RESERVE 292
TOOTINAOWAZIIBEENG, MB