



Special Directed Call

Addressing the Achievement Gap in Early Literacy

The McDowell Foundation is inviting PreK-12 teachers and other educators to apply to a Special Directed Call for research that will focus on Addressing the Achievement Gap in Early Literacy with a focus on northern communities.

Background

For the past three years, educational instruction in Saskatchewan has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. School closures, online classes, sick days, and other restrictions have impacted all areas of student learning and, as a result, an achievement gap has emerged, particularly in early years literacy.

Provincial benchmarks collected from school divisions with Grade 3 students show reading levels in early years to be down across the province. Provincially, 69 percent of children in Grade 3 were reading at expected levels in 2021-22, well below the 73-75 percent rate reported pre-pandemic (2014 to 2019). The achievement gap is especially apparent in northern communities where teacher shortages and other factors have exacerbated the challenges experienced by all schools and, after four years of steady improvement, only 15 percent of students tested at benchmark reading levels in 2021-22.

Thanks to a generous donation from The Leonard Foundation, research grants of up to \$3,000 will be awarded. Preference will be given to projects that clearly outline how the work will support educational experiences in northern communities.

Applications using Indigenous ways of research are allowed and encouraged.

Applications are due **January 31, 2024**, with the successful applicants announced in March 2024.

To access an application, please contact mcdowell@stf.sk.ca or visit the website at www.mcdowellfoundation.ca.

