The culture of an organization can be summed up as *'the way we do things around here.'* An organization is functional and more effective when its relationships and 'way of doing things' are morally good and consistent with its official directions and stated purposes. The values of an educational organization and its leadership team are those that are lived out every day in interactions with each other, with students, with parents and with other partners in education. The South Slave Divisional Education Council (SSDEC) aspires to develop an ethical culture within our education system that seeks and develops principled leadership. Recognizing that all that we do ultimately affects the development, achievements and lives of our students, the SSDEC and its District Education Authorities (DEAs) and staff are committed to positively modeling five underlying and virtuous principles or values for effectively working and learning together:

Respect –
Respect is a unifying and universal value often separated into respect for self, for others and for property or for the environment. With regard to working and learning together, respect is showing that we value others by treating them in a courteous and considerate way. We must be mindful of the dignity and rights of all persons, even those whose beliefs and behaviours differ from our own. Respect is an essential component of all relationships and also implies empathy (identifying with and feeling other people's concerns), conscience (knowing the right and decent way to act) and self-control (regulating our thoughts and actions so that we act the way we know is right). Respect always points towards collaboration rather than confrontation, and it is shown through the patterns of communication and relationships developed between and among people. This value is the characteristic of choosing to be open-minded, acting in a just and fair way and appreciating and honouring diversity.

Integrity –
Integrity is the quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles or professional standards. It is the characteristic of being fair, just, truthful and morally upright, accepting responsibility for personal decisions and actions and responding to challenges with courage (doing the right thing even if it's not popular). It is an absence of falsehood. For example, when we make a mistake, we should be the first in line to discuss it—full disclosure is made even when it would cast oneself in a bad light or would bring some negative consequence to bear on oneself. It is essential that we have full disclosure within the chain of command so that our time is spent working together as a team to solve the problems that are identified. We all will fall short of the high expectations held of us at some time. It is not fatal to err, and it is tremendously important that we operate with honesty in our dealings with one another through the chain of command.

Loyalty -
Most codes of ethics refer to the common definition of loyalty that is, if you have a conflict or disagreement with someone else in the organization, you go directly to that individual or to the

individual in the chain of command who can solve the problem rather than gossiping or complaining to others.

The second aspect to loyalty is the concept of ambassadorship. It is essential that each member of the team strive to be a positive ambassador for the schools, communities and division. Allowing untruths to be expressed about the organization or people in it should not go unchecked. Neutrality is also not good enough. This stance does not mean that we ignore our shortcomings. It is extremely important that we address any negatives within our organization and bring solutions so that we can improve. We cannot expect the citizens to think well of our schools, have confidence in the services we are providing and be willing to provide support, if we are permitting either untruths or shortcomings to perpetuate. We depend increasingly on the positive support of local governing bodies, volunteers, partnerships and our parent community. It is important that our optimism and our successes are relayed to our community and that we clarify our shortcomings and let our communities know we are prepared to do something about them. These actions show loyalty to purpose.

Commitment to Growth -
Effective organizations have the responsibility and the capacity to learn and grow. They are proactive, intentional and relentless in their pursuit of excellence. A great deal of research, literature and practice has focused on the creation of research-driven and data-based *professional learning communities* that are required in effective organizations not only to keep pace with the speed of change, but to improve further. It is important that we internalize the concept that *'we always want to improve,'* and that we are constantly seeking ways, collectively, to improve our schools and better meet the needs of our students:

<div style="text-align:center">

It's *All* about *Learning*
All Learning
Learning for *All*

</div>

This value and our motto *Creating Futures* both speak to an intent to improve not only our schools and students, but to improve ourselves professionally and personally also. Perhaps one of the most difficult things to change is ourselves; our personal habits, our character or our attitudes. However, change must start within each of us, members of the team each personally being prepared to make individual changes to make us more effective and to ensure that we better serve our clients collectively. In its simplest form, this value means we have the capacity to strive to improve, whether that improvement is to say *"I am sorry"* or *"I was wrong"*, to search to see the other person's point of view or to accept personal responsibility for fixing the problem, not the blame.

Advocacy -
There is no organization that has affected us more than the one we first experienced, our family. Like a well-functioning family, it is desired that each member of the team strive to build the team and show kindness and caring for other team members. Our mission statement and motto, *Creating Futures*, suggest that we will achieve our mission, in part, through an inclusive and caring network of productive teams. It is important that care for others (board members, staff, students, parents) is demonstrated on a daily basis as we carry out our work, not because others

deserve or merit it, but because it is our nature and our business to be concerned about the welfare of others. By modeling cooperation, care and concern for others up, down and across the organization, we speak volumes, not only to each other but to the hundreds of students and families whom we serve.

A related and important quality of effective people is that they maintain a positive attitude. They are *optimists* as opposed to *pessimists* or negative talkers. Emotional intelligence research has shown that inserting an optimist into a group changes the tone and productivity of the group for the better, while inserting a pessimist or a negative talker accomplishes the opposite. Allowing negativity to be expressed about students, parents or community should not go unchecked. Neutrality is not good enough here. If we are negative or deceitful, we destroy our commitment to these values, our relationships, the perceptions others have of our organization and our likelihood of success in achieving our mandate. Negativity and deception should not be tolerated by anyone in the system, and action should be taken immediately by any one of us to correct negative and deceptive behaviour.

As we carry out our responsibilities as collaborative members of the team, it is essential that we be guided by the above core values, principles or standards of conduct—our moral and purposeful compass—and that they become second nature to us as we interact and learn one with another. These basic values transcend religious and cultural differences and express our common humanity and purpose. These values also affirm our dignity, promote the development and welfare of individuals while also serving the common good, and they inform our rights and responsibilities. They form the basis of good character, create caring communities and serve as key leverage points as we seek to achieve our mission and work effectively to provide quality educational services to our students, while maintaining and strengthening the support of our communities.

- This set of overlapping values for working and learning together is not intended to be all-inclusive.
- The values espoused here apply to the network of collaborative teams within the region such as governing bodies, school staffs and committees.

Date: February 2007