
PRIVATE HOME PLACEMENT PROGRAM

PROGRAM REVIEW
REPORT
May 2012

Manitoba First Nations
Education Resource Centre Inc.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Private Home Placement (PHP) program is funded by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC). The PHP program makes it possible for First Nations students to access secondary education if the high school program or specific academic and/or vocational courses of study are not available in their community (AANDC 2010-2011 Education Handbook). The PHP program operates predominantly in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario and has been in existence since the 1960's.

The PHP Program Review is a research initiative that entails data collection, framework development and the provision of recommendations, for the PHP program enhancement and capacity building.

The review is intended to inform and enhance the current program and to provide quality education services for First Nations students who have to leave their communities to access a program of education not offered in their home community.

The PHP program review was a collaborative process between the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC), Manitoba First Nations, federal and provincial governments and provincial school divisions. A Review Team, representative of these entities provided oversight to the process.

THE FINDINGS

In Manitoba, First Nations people, over the past 60 years, have been engaged in a determined effort to create change in the policy and legislation that have had widespread detrimental results for First Nations children, families and communities.

The stakeholders involved in this project and those who have been advocating for First Nations education have long recognized the importance of attaining control of education in order to optimize educational opportunities for First Nations people.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs called for a review of the PHP program as another effort to address a program that is perceived as inadequate to meet the needs of First Nations students.

The participants in the review process view the program as an opportunity for students to access an education not available in their home community.

However, many issues were identified including a lack of program standards, guidelines for social and academic support, a lack of transitional programming from one system to another, poor coordination and communication amongst all stakeholders, inadequate funding, and a lack of record keeping for monitoring and tracking students.

The review was conducted to provide recommendations to improve the educational services provided to First Nations students through the PHP program.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS¹

- *That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners ensure the PHP program has adequate funding support.*
- *That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners ensure that the PHP program offers a continuum of standardized services from one system to the other including assessments, placement, transitional programs, tracking and communication.*
- *That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners develop and implement standardized PHP Program and Services.*
- *That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners ensure the PHP program have standardized counselling and academic supports.*
- *That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners develop professional standards for the PHP program.*
- *That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners ensure continued research and knowledge development to enhance the PHP program.*
- *That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners involved in the project establish a Task Force/Implementation Committee to support the PHP program reform.*

¹ Recommendations are all important and not in order of priority.

INTRODUCTION

A First Nation mother gives a painful account on the loss of her child who left home to go away to school and provides one of the strongest reasons to review the PHP program. She gave the interview because she fears for her other child who wants to go to school. She speaks for changes to improve the program; to keep her child safe.

Like when my oldest boy went, I didn't expect this would be the last time I'd see him... and I never did see him again...he was a valedictorian, he won all kinds of trips, trophies, he was such a good kid and I think someone did something to him.; he wouldn't just take off, not come back, he wasn't the type; he would come and ask me if he could go and sleep at his friends; ...hardest part is not knowing... (Parent Interview, March 2009)

Other First Nations families have expressed similar concerns regarding the safety of the students in the PHP program as well as concerns about the quality of the social and academic program available to their children. These concerns are shared by the sponsoring First Nations and their service delivery agencies.

At every opportunity, First Nations have called for changes in First Nations education to include jurisdiction, management, quality and resourcing. The call has been found in the highly crafted research documents by First Nations educators/academics such as Verna Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt who wrote that First Nation learner success requires an education system that “respects them for who they are, that is relevant to their view of the world, that offers reciprocity in their relationships with others, and that helps them exercise responsibility over their lives” (Canadian Council on Learning 2007). It is also clearly articulated in the anecdotal evidence by First Nations people, themselves, as demonstrated in a statement by Chief Tootosis to the 1946-48 Special Joint Committee, “...that boarding schools were an inferior way to raise children” (Raptis and Bowker, 2010).

The stakeholders involved in this project and those who have been advocating for First Nations education have long recognized the importance of attaining control of education in order to optimize educational opportunities for First Nations people.

First Nations constitute a significant and growing proportion of the work force in Manitoba. Education and training accessibility and effective supports for student retention and graduation is a good investment for all Manitobans. Success in educational endeavors means participation in the work force, the strengthening and support of self-sufficiency in First Nations, and the strengthening of local, provincial and national economies.

In 2009, the Chiefs of Manitoba requested a review of the PHP program, Manitoba Region. The MFNERC included the PHP Program Review as a component of the Education Partnerships Program (EPP) proposal.

The PHP Program Review is a research initiative that entails data collection, provision of recommendations for program enhancement and capacity building. The project has three main deliverables:

1. A PHP Program Review Project Report to be presented to Manitoba First Nations Chiefs and Manitoba First Nations entities that deliver or administer the program and other partners to the project.
2. A PHP Program Framework that sets out the principles, ideas, agreements or rules that provides an outline of enhanced programs and services, policies and supports to be developed in partnership with other stakeholders;
3. A PHP handbook, a supporting document to help service providers improve administrative and service delivery efficiencies and support all PHP stakeholders in the delivery of an effective program.

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

Ensuring that high school education is accessible to First Nations students and providing effective supports for retention and graduation is a First Nations priority. For First Nations who do not have a high school and for those who do not have adequate facilities to support a complete high school program, this means that their children must leave their families, friends and community to pursue their educational goals including children as young as thirteen years of age.

Although the Private Home Placement (PHP) program provides financial, academic and other assistance, the review was initiated because it is perceived by First Nations that the PHP program does not allow for adequate services and supports, and as a result, many students experience challenges that prevent them from achieving educational success.

The objectives of the review are to:

- Identify the specific, social, emotional, cultural, academic, logistical, and related challenges experienced by students;
- Identify and evaluate the current practices, programs, strategies and resources intended to meet demonstrated needs;
- Highlight gaps in service/support provision;
- Develop a First Nations-Provincial support framework with enhanced/ coordinated resources to facilitate student achievement of learning outcomes; and
- Build the capacity of First Nations, educational institutions, and federal, provincial, and participating agencies to maximize student success.

BACKGROUND

In Manitoba, First Nations people, over the past 60 years, have been engaged in a determined effort to create change in the policy and legislation that have had widespread detrimental results for First Nations children, families and communities. In Manitoba, two of the systems which have undergone intense scrutiny and critical shifts in approach by and for First Nations people, over the past few decades, are the child welfare and education systems. For the purpose of this research project, the emphasis is on the education stream.

Without doubt, First Nations education and life-long learning needs to be a priority in Manitoba. In 1971, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood released *Wahbung Our Tomorrows by the Indian Tribes of Manitoba* which stated “Education as a program of government has fallen tragically short of its objectives of Indian advancement. As a tool to develop the capability to participate equally with the rest of society, the education process has been notably narrow in its concept and rigid in its approach. The time has come for a drastic change in the orientation of education in order to pursue a program of education in its broadest context, a program to include all aspects of the community...”

The recommendations on First Nations education made in *Wahbung* are closely reflected in the nationally documented recommendations for First Nations education in the succeeding 1972 National Indian Brotherhood position paper *Indian Control of Indian Education*. The recommendations by First Nations are consistent over time; from their presentations at the federal 1946-48 Special Joint Committee on the Indian Act to the 1984 Assembly of First Nations National Review of First Nations education, and, regionally, in Manitoba’s 1991 *The Indian Education Funding Study* to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs’ 1993 *Education Agreement Framework an Interim Report* and right up to the current international *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* which states; Article 14(1) Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning, and Article 15(1) Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

The First Nations position is an antithesis to the initial policy goal of assimilation by the federal government regarding First Nation education; “In carrying out its responsibilities for Indian education, the federal government turned to the churches, which shared the government’s goal of imparting Christian, European values...residential schools were used deliberately to break down the transmission of culture and language from one generation to the next”(Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996).

The disturbing federal government policy shift following the Special Joint Committee’s 1949 report on First Nations education was from ‘segregation’ through residential schools to ‘integration’ by utilizing the provincial school systems. This was the primary recommendation on the matter and it reflected neither the views of First Nations or non-First Nations’ presentations to the committee. It was a policy direction that appeared to have followed the direction of the U.S. Indian policy development and it resulted in the 1951 amendment to the Indian Act that enabled the Minister of Indian Affairs to enter into agreements with provincial governments, school boards and charitable organizations for schooling (Raptis and Bowker, 2010).

In Manitoba, by 1971, 50% of First Nations students were attending provincial schools (Manitoba Indian Brotherhood 1971). In response to these federal policy eras of segregation and integration, the commitment to a First Nations agenda of ‘Local Control’ became even stronger. By the early 1970’s, First Nations leadership was adamant in their position that the aim of assimilation through segregation and integration was unacceptable, not only as it affected the student and their families, but also as an attempt by Canada to eradicate their special status and to diminish the integrity of their treaty rights (Cardinal, 1969).

In Manitoba, First Nations education, as a priority, led to the unique Education Framework Agreement (EFA) and to the creation of the Manitoba Education First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC), both in the 90’s.

The Overview of First Nations Education in the EFA articulated guiding principles for First Nations education;

- *must focus on the well-being of all students and that each student must have a safe learning environment;*

- *based on a holistic approach which prepares First Nations students for living both in a traditional setting and contemporary society;*
- *incorporating a deep respect for the natural world with the physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and life skills for the development of an individual;*
- *cultural identity and language are nurtured as an integral part of the school curriculum so that First Nations values will help students develop a strong sense of pride and respect for their culture, family and community;*
- *actively seek to involve all parents;*
- *opportunity to learn at all levels and stages of education so that they might function effectively in all societies;*
- *allow students to achieve academically, economically, and socially to the best of their abilities; and*
- *opportunity for freedom of choice, independence and self-determination.*

The vision statement of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Center clearly articulates the principles of a holistic educational system;

- *inclusive of First Nations languages, worldviews, values, beliefs and traditions;*
- *exemplary academic standards;*
- *under First Nations jurisdiction; and*
- *for all learners to achieve mino-pimatisiwin/honso aynai/tokatakiya wichoni.*

The First Nations' child-centered approach for First Nation education reflects a traditional understanding of family, community and worldview. It was similarly articulated in the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, "Presenters told us that education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nations. Youth that emerge from school must be grounded in a strong, positive Aboriginal identity. Consistent with Aboriginal traditions, education must develop the whole child, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically." (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996)

If the priorities for First Nations education have included "Indian Control of Indian Education" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972) and the involvement of community/family and tradition, and the inclusion of language and culture, then how do

we place the Private Home Placement program within the vision First Nations have for their children's education? The majority of the PHP students are in the provincial education system. How do we measure success within the PHP program? How do we set standards for the PHP program? How do we evaluate the educational and social outcomes for First Nations youth in the PHP program?

“Unless we explore practical public policy issues facing American Indians from entirely different world-view or, more specifically, from a widely shared foundation (what Deloria calls metaphysics) of indigenous North American worldviews, we will continue to make many social problems worse” (Wildcat, 2001). The idea that First Nation policy is developed within the context of First Nations experience, knowledge and worldview is critical to First Nations education whether it is within the federal (Band operated) or provincial education systems. The current progress in partnership and collaboration between First Nations, the federal and provincial governments reflects a critical shift in policy planning.

If the aim of the PHP program is for student success, regardless of whether the youth is in the private home placement or the residential home placement arrangement and whether it is within federal (Indian control) or provincial systems, then this program review must be reflective of First Nations worldview, values, needs and aspirations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE REVIEW

The review of the PHP program was limited by a lack of readily available information on the PHP program. Historical data on the program, graduation rates, and past and current student numbers have been difficult to obtain.

A search of the AANDC websites nationally and regionally failed to locate any information or research to provide a background and statistical review of the program. Any data must be gleaned from the nominal roll that is limited in its capacity as it does not differentiate or identify PHP students. AANDC does not have a computerized data base that could generate summary reports for the past five years as requested.

Nor is standard record keeping a practice at the local level to track students. While some First Nations have computer programs to manage student data, most First Nations are only now being provided the Maplewood system by the Reforming First Nations Education Initiative through MFNERC for this purpose.

In addition, communication and sharing of information among service providers such as sponsoring agencies, sending schools and receiving schools is not a standard practice. Some First Nations have excellent communication with their receiving schools but most do not.

Another limitation was the difficulty in accessing information from the community level. Many of the local education leaders were contacted to seek information and assistance in accessing the students, parents and house parents to participate in the surveys with little success. Many have not returned completed surveys required for this review.

The responses to current student surveys were largely collected from students in a residential placement (145) as opposed to students (40) in private home placement. The information is therefore heavily influenced by students in a residential setting, and less so by students in a private home placement.

The response from the former students and parents was limited, and there was no response at all from house parents.

METHODOLOGY OF REVIEW

The MFNERC partnered with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), First Nations representatives and stakeholders, AANDC, Manitoba Education and representatives of partnering school divisions to complete the deliverables and inform the study.

To implement the partnership model and conduct the review, the PHP project was guided by a Review Team. The Review Team was representative of the partners and selected by referral and included individuals who had extensive experience with the Private Home Placement program.

The methodology was developed through communication and consultation with various stakeholders. The research sites included Frontier Collegiate, Southeast Collegiate, Sapotawayak Cree Nation, Berens River Student Services and individual First Nations offices in Winnipeg and Thompson, Manitoba. Participating groups included former and current students, parents, house parents, counsellors, and education administrators and other appropriate staff selected through this process.

The PHP Program Review Report was informed by surveys, telephone and face to face interviews, focus groups, and discussions with the Review Team.

Consultants were selected to conduct the review. Meetings, workshops, focus groups, including group and individual interviews were convened. The Review Team, experts in the field, and other stakeholders provided feedback on the PHP program review. Students, parents, house parents and service providers also informed the study.

The following were surveyed and/or participated in focus groups:

- One hundred and fifty-two (152) students were surveyed at Frontier Collegiate and all responses were compiled and analyzed.
- Fifty-six (56) students were surveyed at Southeast Collegiate and all responses were compiled and analyzed.

- Forty (40) students in private home placement (predominantly from the Berens River First Nation) were surveyed and all responses were analyzed and compiled.
- Four focus groups involving 17 students were convened at Frontier Collegiate.
- A focus group was convened March 9, 2011 with twelve (12) representatives with extensive experience delivering the PHP program and representative of Southern Chiefs Organization, Tribal Councils, Manitoba Indian Education Association, MFNERC, Frontier School Division, Manitoba Education and AANDC.
- A PHP province-wide forum was convened March 18, 2011 to discuss the PHP program. The thirty-six (36) participants of Manitoba First Nations Education Authorities and Boards of Education were representative of the demographics of Manitoba First Nations, small and large schools from the north and south.
- Utilizing a questionnaire to solicit statistics and other information, interviews were conducted with parents, Chiefs and Councils, and service providers. Telephone contacts were made with the 28 First Nation communities utilizing the PHP program. Telephone interviews were conducted with eight Directors of Education.
- An interview was conducted with an official at the AANDC Manitoba Regional office to ascertain the First Nations utilizing the PHP program, background information on the program, program guidelines and any available statistical data.
- Seven (7) site visits were conducted to interview students, First Nation Directors of Education, tribal council and residential placement school counsellors.

FINDINGS

First Nations Education

In 2005, First Nations people comprised approximately 10% of the population of Manitoba. The Aboriginal population is relatively young and growing at a rate more than twice that of the non-Aboriginal population. In the 2006 census, *Aboriginal Identity Population by Age Group*² found that in Manitoba total population was 175,395, with 90,355 that are 0-24 years old and 85,040 who are 35 years old and older. Given the statistics, it is critical to do whatever can be done to ensure First Nation student success.

The formal educational attainment rates of Aboriginal people in Manitoba are improving, but still do not match those of the general population. For example, 9% of Aboriginal youth (aged 15-29) in Manitoba have not completed Grade 9, yet, for non-Aboriginal youth, only 1.6% of population has less than Grade 9. Similarly, 37.1% of Aboriginal youth have completed high school, compared to 63.7% of non-Aboriginal youth. Participation and completion rates for university, however, are much lower. For example, only 4% of Aboriginal people over the age of 15 have completed a university degree, as compared to 14.2% of the non-Aboriginal population. It should be noted that, in virtually all areas, the formal educational attainment rates of people who are status Indian and living on-reserve in Manitoba are lower than those of status people living off-reserve or of Métis people living in either rural or urban areas.

There are encouraging trends; Aboriginal people who do complete high school often go on to pursue post-secondary education or training.

Private Home Placement Program (PHP)

The PHP makes it possible for First Nations students to access secondary education if the high school program or specific academic and vocational courses of study are not available in their community (AANDC 2010-2011 Education Handbook).

² www.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/demo60a-eng.htm

The PHP program operates predominantly in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario and has been in existence since the 1960's. In 2005, the funding for the PHP became formula driven and although AANDC continued to monitor the program through the nominal roll process, First Nations responsibility to monitor or track students was heightened (AANDC, 2011).

According to AANDC program guidelines, under the PHP program, students may be placed in a private home, a collective placement at a private school or a First Nation or Provincial school such as the Southeast Collegiate or Frontier Collegiate.

The AANDC Private Home Placement Program Guidelines stipulate that students must reside with their parents or legal guardians on a reserve or on crown land without access to educational facilities, services and programs in their home community to be eligible for the PHP program. Students may also be funded if the program of studies (i.e. a provincially recognized complete program of studies such as vocational) or grade level required by the student is not available in the area where the student resides. The PHP also supports students who wish to upgrade their courses to university entrance level usually in the sciences such as biology, chemistry and physics. The students must go back to school immediately after their first graduation to be eligible for assistance. Support is limited to placements within the Manitoba Region only.

The department (AANDC) recognizes parents have the right to choose an education program provided by a private school or equivalent. Funding may be provided for their children, where an education program is not provided on-reserve. Where education services are normally purchased from a provincial school division, funding may be provided to attend a private school in an amount not to exceed an amount equivalent for a child to attend the same program in the Winnipeg School Division.

According to an interview conducted with an AANDC official, funding is provided by AANDC to the First Nations through various forms of contribution agreements based on the E-12 Post Secondary Guidelines. Funding is provided for room and board (south \$425 and north \$455), local transportation (bus pass roughly \$650 per year per student), seasonal transportation (two trips to and from school at \$1300 per year), ancillary services (books and supplies and gym costs at \$261 per year per student), allowance (\$45.00 a month). Students that attend Frontier Collegiate and Southeast Collegiate and live in the residence are funded at a rate of \$17,389.00 per year. Tuition is funded

according to the school division the student attends. On average AANDC provides \$5,650.00 per student per year. Administrative costs include salary for a Home School Coordinator for an amount that was not provided.

When questioned, the AANDC official indicated that each First Nation is funded differently based on geographical indices. Each First Nation can develop their own PHP Policy and elect to enhance the funding provided to their students. However, no additional funding is provided so interviews conducted with First Nations Directors of Education found most do not because they are not in a financial position to enhance these rates.

Reporting for these funds is done through the nominal roll reporting process.

Thirty (30) First Nations utilize the PHP program.

Keewatin Tribal Council (KTC), South East Resource Development Council (SERDC), Interlake Reserves Tribal Council (IRTC), West Region Tribal Council (WRTC), Swampy Cree Tribal Council (SCTC), and the Island Lake Tribal Council (ILTC) administers the PHP program for member First Nations that have elected to share resources. Other First Nations administer their own PHP program independently.

These communities are in various geographical locations from the very isolated fly-in communities to communities located close to major urban centres.

The schools offer a range of grades as indicated in Table 1: First Nations with Students Eligible for PHP 2010-2011³.

³ AANDC, Manitoba Region 2011

Table 1: Manitoba First Nations with Students Eligible for PHP 2010-2011⁴

COMMUNITY	SPONSOR	GRADES OFFERED	# of STUDENTS ELIGIBLE for PHP					
			Gr. 9	Gr. 10	Gr. 11	Gr. 12	TOTAL	
Barren Lands First Nation (Brochet)	KTC							
God's Lake Narrows First Nation	KTC	N – 9						
Manto Sipi Cree Nation	KTC	N – 11						
Shamattawa First Nation	KTC	N – 10				17	17	
York Factory Cree Nation	KTC	N – 8						
KTC ⁵			12	44	25	28	109	
Berens River First Nation	IND	K – 9		24	44	66	134	
Black River First Nation	SERDC	K – 10						
Bloodvein First Nation	SERDC	K – 9						
Brokenhead Ojibway First Nation	SERDC	K-9						
Little Grand Rapids First Nation	SERDC	N – 10						
Paungassi First Nation	SERDC	N – 9						
Poplar River First Nation	IND	N – 9		11	17	33	61	
Ebb & Flow First Nation	WRTC	N – 12		1	2	2	5	
Skownan First Nation	WRTC	K – 9		1	2	1	4	
Dauphin River First Nation	IRTC	N – 8						
Pinaymootang First Nation (Fairford)	IRTC	N – 12						
Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation	IRTC	N – 10		3	5	13	21	
Lake Manitoba First Nation	IRTC	N – 8	1	4	4	5	14	
Lake St. Martin First Nation	IRTC	N – 9		18	22	18	58	
Little Saskatchewan First Nation	IRTC	N – 10	2	6	12	11	31	
IRTC ⁶			17	13	17	23	70	
Grand Rapids First Nation	FSD			1	1	2	4	
Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation	SCTC	K – 8	5	5	9	19	38	
Mathias Colomb First Nation	SCTC	N – 12		12	8	6	26	
Mosakahiken First Nation(Moose Lake)	FSD	N – 12				7	7	
Sapotaweyak First Nation	SCTC	N – 12	3	8	1	4	16	
Garden Hill First Nation	ILTC	7 – 12	1	2	3	5	11	
St. Theresa Point First Nation	ILTC	9- 12		5	11	11	27	
Wasagamack First Nation	ILTC	N – 12						
O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation			2	6	10	25	43	
O-Chi- Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation			1	2		2	5	
Gamblers						1	1	
Sandy Bay			1	3	3		7	
SERDC ⁷				61	65	63	189	
TOTAL			45	230	261	362	898	

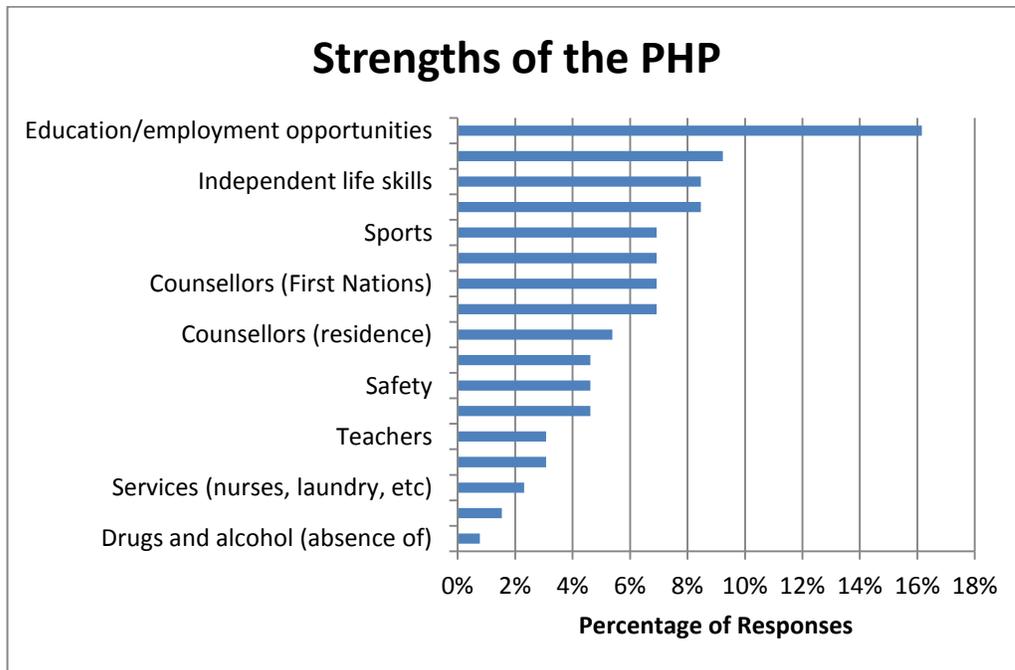
⁴ AANDC, Manitoba Region 2011⁵ KTC delivers PHP services for member First Nations who elect to share resources.⁶ IRTC delivers PHP services for member First Nations who elect to share resources.⁷ SERDC delivers PHP services for member First Nations who elect to share resources.

Strengths and Best Practices

The PHP program provides education for students who would not otherwise be able to attend school thereby increasing their ability to go on for further training and employment. Based on the survey responses, the opportunity for education and employment was considered a positive by all who participated in the review. The opportunity for students to become independent and learn life skills was also considered a strong positive of the program.

Other strengths of the program in order of frequency included the opportunity to make friends, that it met basic needs of food and shelter, allowed students to participate in sports, provided for financial support, provided services by First Nation counsellors, academic support, services by the resident counsellors, structure and rules by the institutions, safety of students, recreation activities, good teachers, kind house parents, services such nursing care, laundry, etc., culture provided by the institution and the absence of alcohol and drugs as indicated by the following table.

Table 2: Strengths of the PHP Program – All Respondents Comments



The preference for First Nations participants in the focus group was a school in each First Nation with an adequately funded and effective education program staffed with

qualified teachers, as well as specialists such as speech and language pathologists, resource teachers, reading clinicians, counsellors, etc.

Primarily when there is no high school or no school or specific programs available in the First Nation, the PHP Program provides a means to access education.

The focus group convened March 9, 2011, agreed that transfer of PHP student services to the Manitoba Indian Education Association (MIEA), Tribal Councils and First Nations has proven to support success.

Some First Nations are using creative and innovative means to help their students overcome barriers. Resource Centers in urban areas provide services in a central location including after school labs, recreational activities, tutorials, orientations, graduation activities, student gatherings and cultural awareness programs and activities. Funding is not provided to deliver these services, to access a venue or to secure equipment and hire personnel required. First Nations support the program with funds from other sources of revenue.

The institutional group homes are seen as positive by some because they provide student accommodations and a sense of community and belonging.

The focus group stated that there are local schools that do prepare students for entry into the PHP program and attending school in the provincial system.

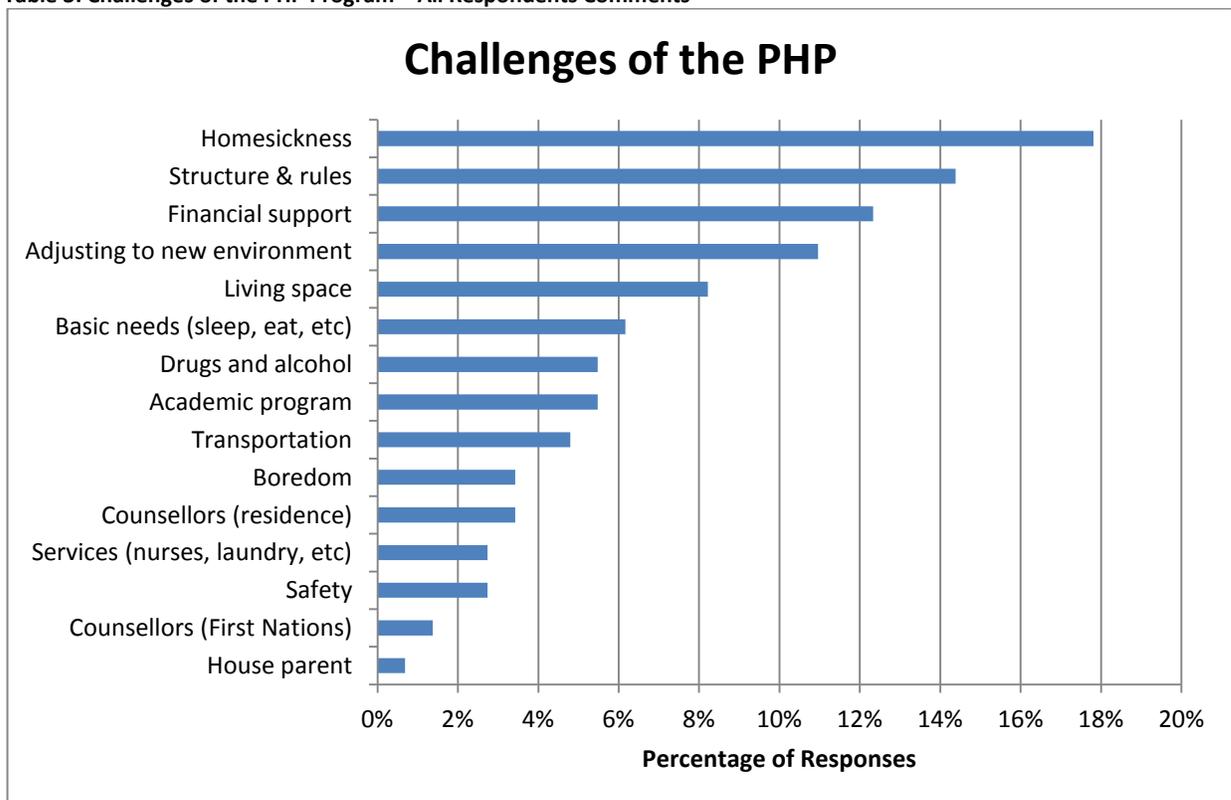
Exposure to the urban environment and different education systems can be viewed as positive as they have more options.

The number of graduates is increasing and First Nations are experiencing lower drop-out rates than in the past despite limited resources. Provincial schools are more aware of the needs of First Nations students evidenced by the personnel in place. Some provincial schools provide counsellors, tutors, study halls, cultural activities, First Nation language courses, role models and mentoring programs and other Aboriginal programming and Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum.

Challenges

The challenges that students encountered identified by all participants included in order of frequency included homesickness, structure and rules, financial support, adjusting to a new environment, problems with the living space in both the residences and finding a place to live in the city, basic needs of shelter and food, problems with drugs and alcohol, problems with the academic program, transportation (both travelling to and from school and with the transit system in the city), boredom, residence counsellors, services such as nursing care, etc, safety, issues with First Nation counsellors in terms of accessibility and issues with a house parent as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Challenges of the PHP Program – All Respondents Comments



Recommendations

Recommendation from all respondent groups, in order of frequency included increasing financial support for room and board, students allowance, transportation and all aspects of the PHP, improved living space, increased family visits, increased communication and supports, increased academic support, better food in the residence, increased funding for and improved transportation, addressing safety issues and addressing the alcohol and drug abuse by students.

The majority of students (145) completing the survey were placed in a residence setting at Frontier Collegiate in Cranberry Portage and Southeast Collegiate in Winnipeg. Some students (40) placed in a private home placement, with family or friends or with house parents, also responded to the survey.

A comparison of the student responses found that the students living in residence viewed making new friends as the main strength of the PHP program followed by education and employment opportunities, having basic needs met, and sport and recreation activities. Students placed in private homes identified education and employment opportunities followed by financial and academic support, and the support of First Nation counsellors.

Students living in a residence identified the structure and rules to be the biggest challenge followed by homesickness, adjusting to a new environment, problems with the living space, transportation related to frequency and method of travel to and from home, financial supports (mainly student allowance), drugs and alcohol issues, the academic program, safety and boredom.

Home placement was a problem with me. Since I've been going to school I've been in seven or more different homes. (Student Response to Survey, 2011)

Students in a private home placement identified adjusting to a new environment, finding a place to live, transportation related to frequency of travel to and from home as well as difficulty with the transit system, the amount of financial support, homesickness, basic needs, drug and alcohol issues, challenges with the academic program, as well as safety concerns and boredom.

The youth almost consistently indicate that they experience devastating "homesickness", due to separation from their parent(s) family and community. The challenge of loneliness and being away from their home community was a common issue.

Not being able to see family and friends for extended periods of time appears to have had a negative impact on staying focused on school work and remaining motivated:

Yeah, I want to go home because I miss my family too much and they hardly send money and that's why I always go AWOL or drinking. I'm

trying to kick myself out. It's too stressful and too many rules. I just can't handle it no more and sometimes I feel like I want to cry because I feel alone without my cousins and sisters and brothers. (Student Response to Survey, 2011)

These challenges are often compounded by a significant difference in the scope, range and quality of support provided by participating First Nation communities and the agencies and institutions that provide services for PHP students.

Adjusting to a new environment and developing new relationships with fellow students, teachers and house parents and meeting, dealing with and trusting new people, as well as, getting along and being accepted was identified by all students as a major challenge.

This was followed by the challenge of completing school work. Some students felt they were not prepared to handle the curriculum and that they had not been adequately prepared to work at grade level indicating they needed help from tutors.

The program review revealed serious challenges in delivering an effective PHP program related to the inadequate level of funding provided for all components of the PHP program, the lack of coordination and communication between service stakeholders, the lack of clear guidelines and standards, the lack of standards with respect to the provision of social and academic supports, the lack of program and professional standards, and the lack of information related to all aspects of the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The review of the PHP program was conducted as a result of concerns expressed by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and other stakeholders that the program was not meeting the needs of First Nation students. The following recommendations are provided to respond to the issues and concerns shared by the stakeholders that participated in this review.

Funding

Current PHP funding rates were established in the 1960's and have increased minimally since that time (\$10 per month per student for accommodation). The lack of financial resources has a negative impact on the program overall.

Room & Board

All participants identified the inadequate funding for the program as a serious issue and especially in this area. The level of funding for room and board is making it increasingly difficult to find people willing to act as house parents.

Rather than people applying to act as house parents and having to meet eligibility requirements and standards for home placements, sponsoring agencies have to look for people to take students or placing students in residential settings.

There is a marked difference between federal and provincial funding for similar programs administered by First Nations and provincial entities. The monthly rate for international students attending provincial schools and staying in private home placement is significantly higher per month than it is for First Nation students. The program is silent on standards for living accommodations.

Program	Monthly Rate	Service
St. James-Assiniboia School Division International Student Program Winnipeg, Manitoba (Homestay Program)	\$600	includes private room, meals, and laundry facilities
Mountain View School Division uphin, Manitoba (Homestay Program)	\$700 (\$30 per extra day)	includes private room, meals, and laundry facilities
Homestay Program of Manitoba	\$600	includes private room, meals, and laundry facilities
AANDC ⁸ Northern Manitoba ⁹	\$455	Room and board
AANDC Southern Manitoba	\$425	Room and board
Frontier School Division ¹⁰ Northern Manitoba	\$470	includes private room, meals, and laundry facilities
Frontier School Division Southern Manitoba	\$440	includes private room, meals, and laundry facilities

International students who attend provincial schools through the Homestay Program in Manitoba receive anywhere from \$175 to \$275 more than First Nation students for room and board per month.

⁸ AANDC rates for home placement have not increased in 20 years

⁹ Northern refers to north of the 53 parallel

¹⁰ Frontier rates for home placement have not increased in 20 years.

Transportation

The program provides for two trips per year to and from the community. There is no policy to cover student travel if they have to go home for other reasons.

Travel increases are required to address cost and number of trips home during the school year and long weekends. Students experience homesickness and need to be able to go home more than twice a year.

Teachers and Counsellors

Teacher salaries at the First Nation schools were cited as contributing factor to the problems students were having with the academic program when they reached the receiving schools. Lower teacher salaries made it difficult to hire qualified teachers, specialists, clinicians and other personnel such as counsellors. Counsellors are the lifeline connecting the students to the community. The funding provided through the PHP program is not adequate to hire the number of qualified counsellors required. The Directors of Education stated they did not have the counsellors required to monitor the number of students placed in different communities throughout the province. Some counsellors have upward of 80 students on their case load.

Social and Academic Supports

The social supports such as programming to surround students with their culture, and personal counselling are critical to student success, as are academic supports such as mentoring, tutoring, access to computers, homework clubs etc. Funding for students with additional support needs is an issue, since federal dollars are not transferable to province and the province does not support federally funded students. Additional resources are required to address the cost of extracurricular activities such as recreation, sports, and cultural including club fees, clothing, and equipment.

The PHP program does not provide adequate funding nor does it provide clear standards and guidelines for the programs and services required by the students. As a result, students do not all receive the same quality of services.

Recommendation 1:

That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners ensure the PHP program has adequate funding support.

CONTINUUM OF SERVICES

The lack of coordination and communication among all stakeholders was cited as a major concern with the PHP program.

Effective communication between stakeholders involves the sharing of information on students. Participants responded to survey questions on the PHP program (Appendix A) and the number of people who responded “they did not know” was very high.

Sponsoring agencies are not providing clear policy and guidelines for sending schools or receiving schools. Sending schools are not providing student information such as personal data, medical backgrounds, and other relevant information such as cumulative files in a timely manner. This makes it difficult for receiving schools to provide the appropriate services the students need.

On the other hand, progress and other reports are not being provided from schools to parents and students, sending schools and house parents. Parents and house parents are not communicating on the personal and academic needs of the students.

Students are not receiving the continuum of services they need to move seamlessly from one system to the other. Clear transitional protocols that include the monitoring and tracking of students through the education experience are required amongst all stakeholders.

Recommendation 2:

That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners ensure that the PHP program offers a continuum of standardized services from one system to the other including assessments, placement, transitional programs, tracking and communication.

PROGRAM AND SERVICES

The Education Directors and the PHP Review Team expressed major concern regarding the legal liability associated with the delivery of the PHP Program. There is no vision and mission statement, nor are there any program policies and guidelines or standards for the social and academic programs and services that must be provided to the students in the PHP program.

Student safety and related legal issues were cited as a concern by all groups in the education forum (March, 2011). The PHP does not provide funding for life/property/liability insurance nor are criminal and child abuse registry record checks required from house parents.

Legal Issues have not been addressed with respect to who is liable for the underage student's welfare.

Some First Nations have used their own funds to provide additional supports to their students and others are simply not in a position to do the same.

Ensuring students can access comparable quality social and academic programming was important to all participants in the review. Connecting students to their culture and traditions and providing Elder support regardless of their home placement is an important consideration to program and service development.

Most of the Directors of Education interviewed indicated they utilized the policy developed by their respective Tribal Council and did not have one of their own.

Forum participants stated it was important to promote a sense of belonging and community through an orientation for students to the city or new community.

Some indicated the Tribal Council provided an orientation on the PHP program to their parents and students and others provided an orientation in the community as well as in the city and schools their students would be attending. Others do not provide an orientation at all.

Recommendation 3:

That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners develop and implement standardized PHP Program and Services.

COUNSELLING AND ACADEMIC SUPPORTS

Counselling and academic supports are provided to students in the PHP program. Some sponsoring agencies provide more than others depending on the funding levels, geographical location and the number and qualifications of their staff.

Some communities have counsellors to provide services and supports in the communities where larger numbers of their students are located. Others share services through the Tribal Councils and some of these have 40 to 80 students to monitor and assist. Some students are able to access after school labs, tutoring sessions and other academic supports depending on their sponsoring agency.

Developing options and supports for students who were not experiencing success and preparing students for the transition starting in earlier grades were recommendations by the Directors of Education (Education Forum, March 2011.) The Directors of Education also stated that there is a lack of consistent programming and standards indicating that guidelines and standards are required for all stakeholders, such as a student handbook, local standards, and guidelines and eligibility criteria for house parents.

Parents and house parents require orientation regarding education for successful learning. Information packages for students and supports to address student work ethics and motivation are required.

Policy statements, orientation to prepare students and their parents on the PHP program, and training workshops to communicate roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, expectations and supports to be provided to sending and receiving schools are necessary to ensure students are getting a standard of educational programs and services they need and deserve.

Recommendation 4:

That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners ensure the PHP program have standardized counselling and academic supports.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Many teachers, counsellors and other school personnel in receiving schools are not aware of the situation the students are in or of the social and academic needs of First Nation students. Students cited adjusting to a new environment, meeting and trusting new people as one of the biggest challenges they faced while in the PHP program.

First Nations are inadequately funded and some are forced to hire counsellors who are not qualified for the position. Untrained counsellors may not be able to provide the level of support the students need.

First Nations are also experiencing difficulty in finding house parents to provide a home for their students. Some students and former students indicated issues with house parents and their living space. Parents and sponsoring agencies have expressed the need for house parents to understand their role and responsibilities in the PHP program. Safety concerns and concerns about liability especially for underage students have lead to concern that house parents meet requirements of child abuse registry and criminal records clearance.

Recommendation 5:

That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners develop professional standards for the PHP program.

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

There are no standard programs and services for the PHP program and there is a distinct lack of coordination and communications amongst the stakeholders. Finally, there is no historical information or recording keeping in place to monitor or track students.

There is clear evidence that research is required for the continued development of the program related to the integration of First Nation perspectives, recording keeping and

tracking of students, coordination and communication strategies, and accountability and reporting mechanisms for all components of the program.

Recommendation 6:

That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners ensure continued research and knowledge development to enhance the PHP program.

CONCLUSION

The majority of First Nations believe that to ensure equity of access to education, each First Nation should have a properly funded N/K-Grade 12 school on the reserve that can deliver a quality education program to meet the needs of their students.

The other challenge is the broad range of experiences and developing a framework which will fill the gaps. For example, many of the students responded that, overall, they are happy with their experience but at the other end of the spectrum were First Nation citizens that participated in the research who, almost unanimously, grapple with the reality that they have several students who, tragically, have never returned home from the PHP program. The mother of the missing student said, *“I’m not ready to lose another child...I know it’s their education ...but I just can’t do it again, don’t want to take that chance...I cut my daughter’s education off and she wants to go back”* (Parent Interview, March 9, 2010).

It is, therefore, important to acknowledge the range of experience and seek pertinent information with the aim of enhancing the PHP program and responding to the needs of the stakeholders.

While the optimal situation would be a comprehensive education system in each First Nation community, the size of the student body and available financial and human resources make this extremely unlikely.

The PHP Program is necessary to many First Nations communities for the education of their youth. As stated earlier in this report, available statistics for First Nations education clearly indicate that success rates for completion of high school is lower than for the mainstream population.

As such, a subsequent program reform of the program necessitates a careful review of the report and the recommendations. It is critical that the reform be implemented with strong commitment and dedicated people from all the partners mentioned.

Recommendation 7:

That the First Nations, the MFNERC and its partners involved in the project establish a Task Force to support the PHP program reform.

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APPENDIX “A” SURVEY RESPONSES

Table 1: Strengths of the PHP Program – All Respondents Comments

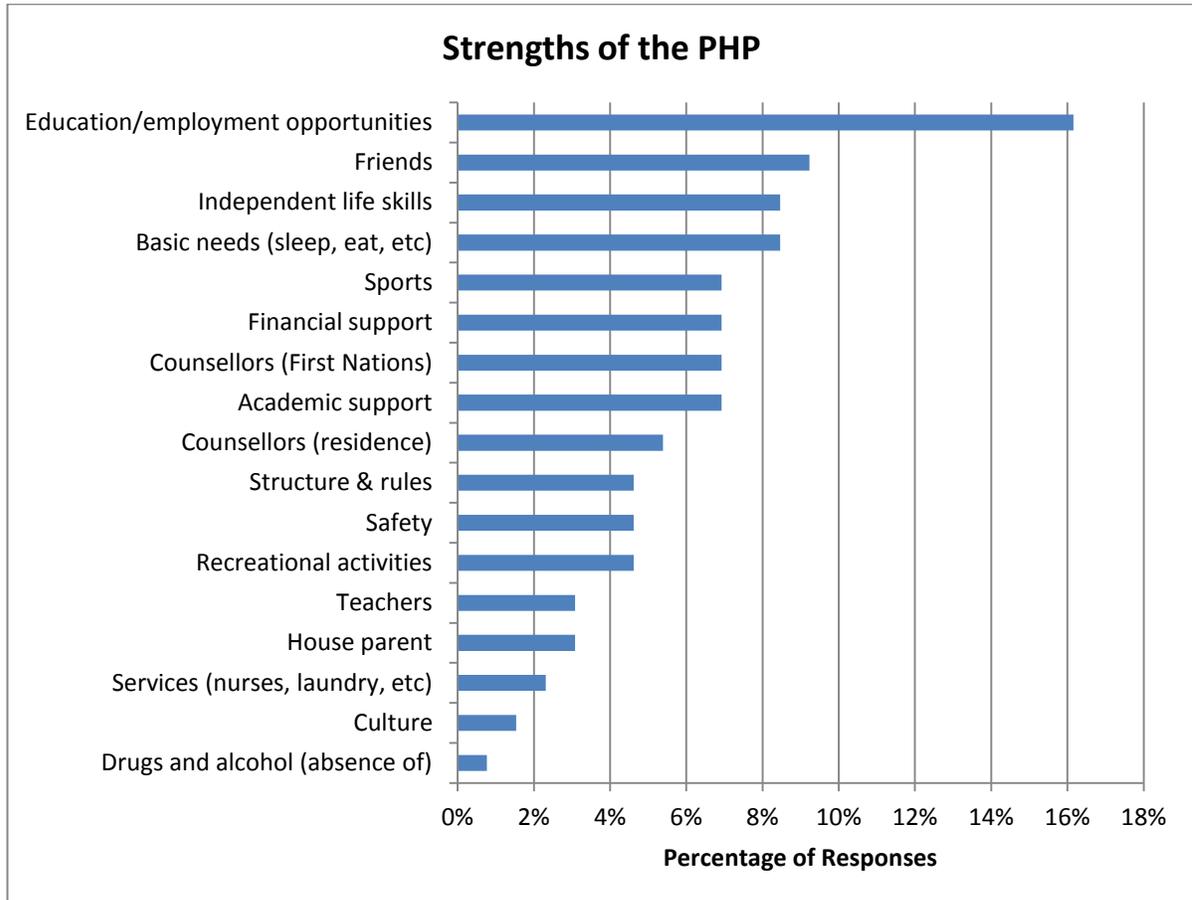


Table 2: Challenges of the PHP Program – All Respondents Comments

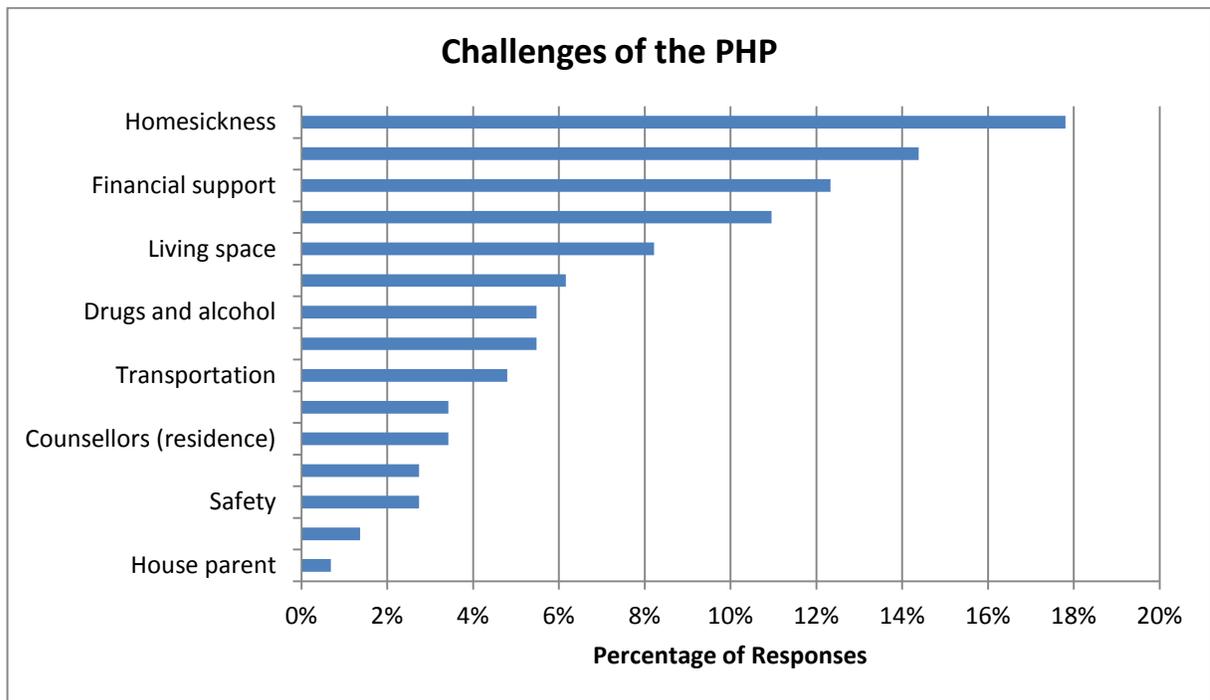


Table 3: Recommendations for PHP Program – All Respondents Comments

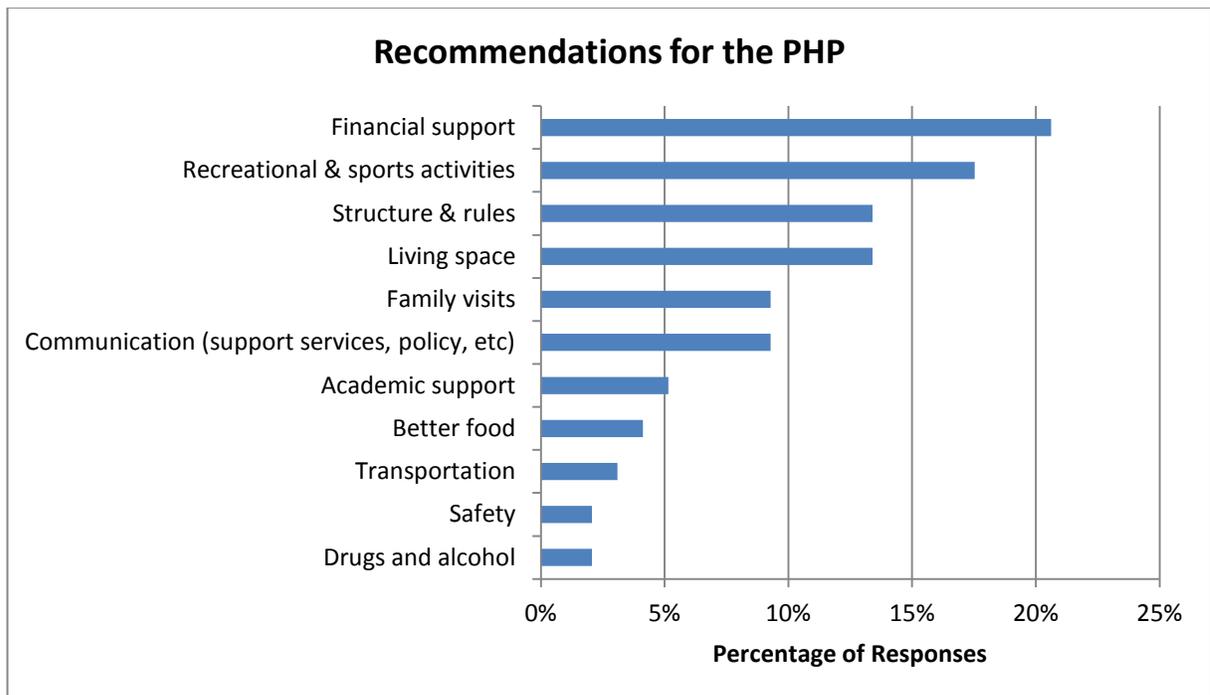


Table 4: Comparison of Residence and Non-Residence Student Responses

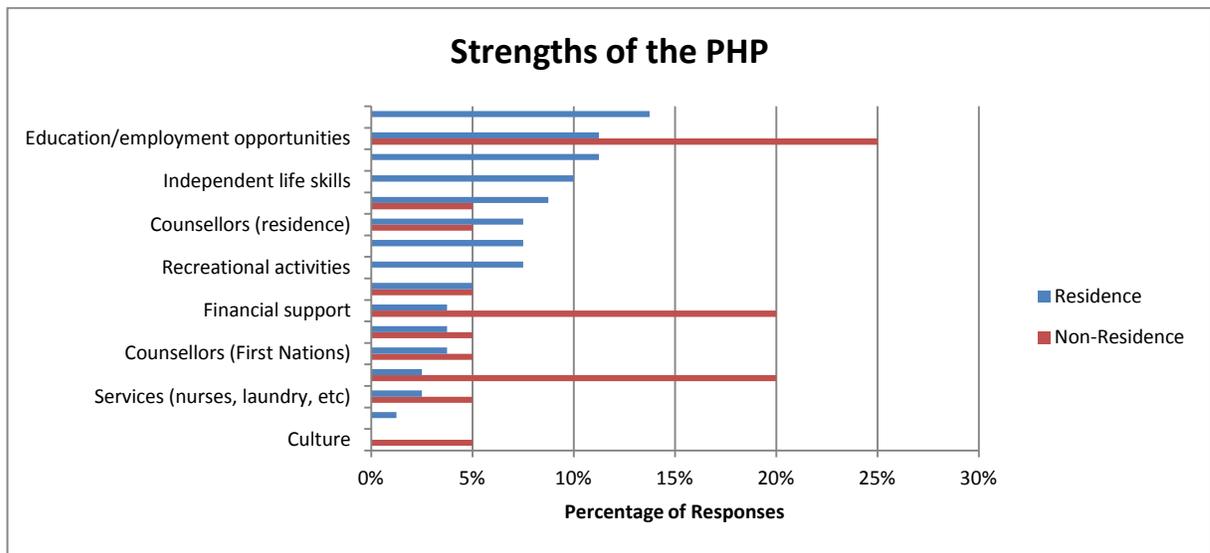


Table 5: Comparison of Residence and Non-Residence Student Responses

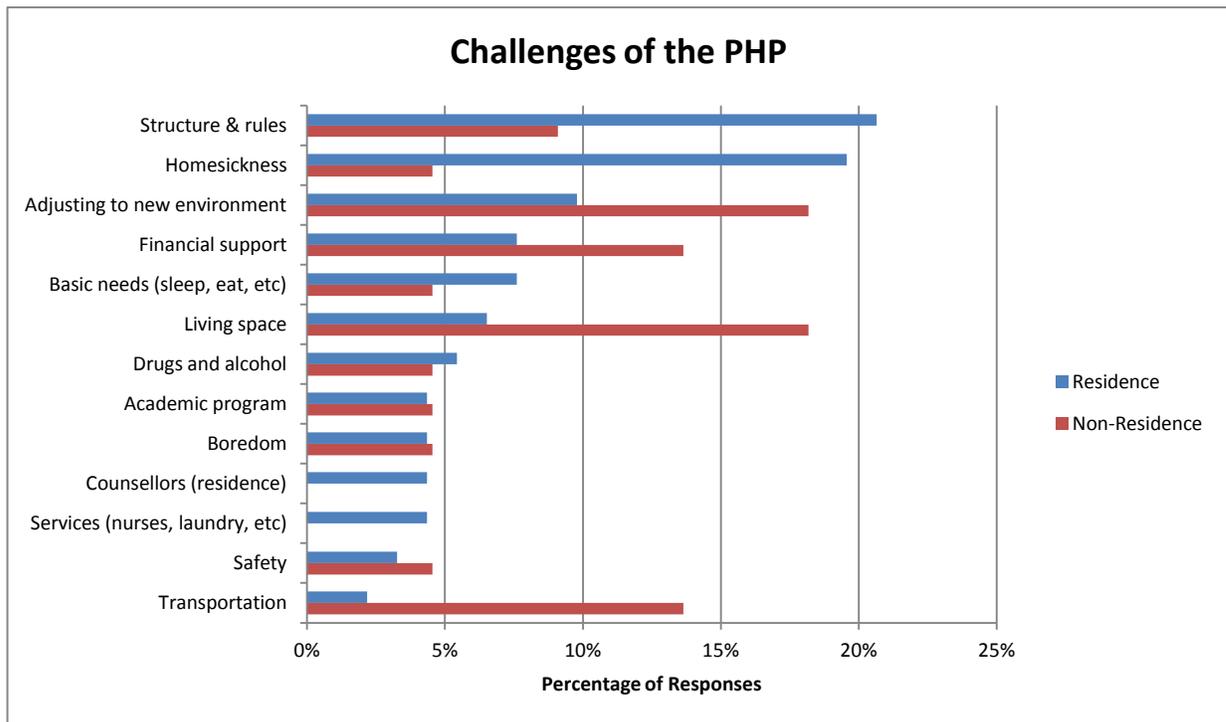


Table 6: Academic Counselling – All Respondents

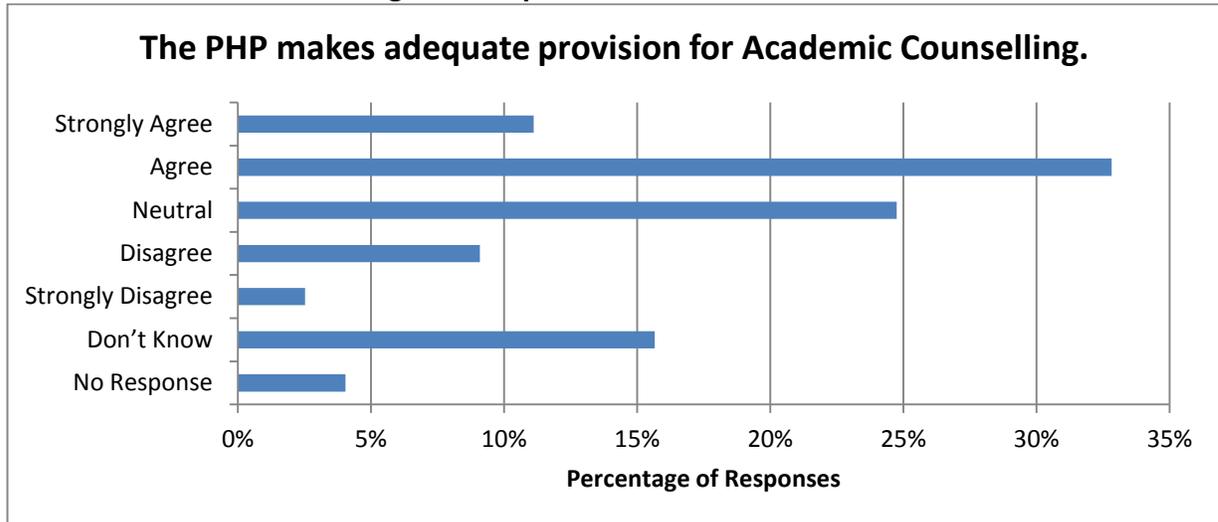


Table 7: Personal Counselling – All Respondents

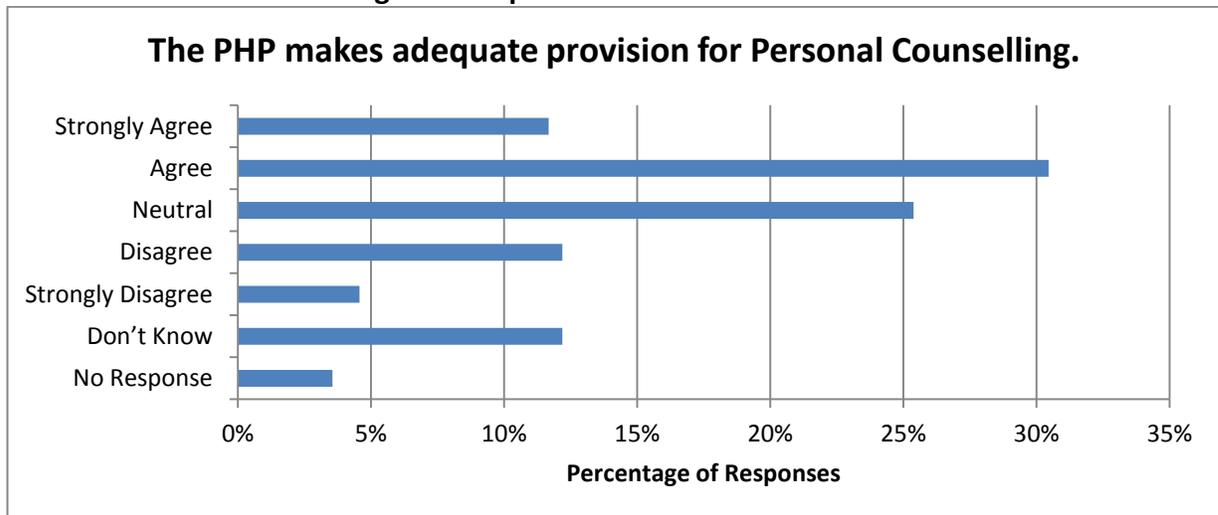


Table 8: Tutoring – All Respondents

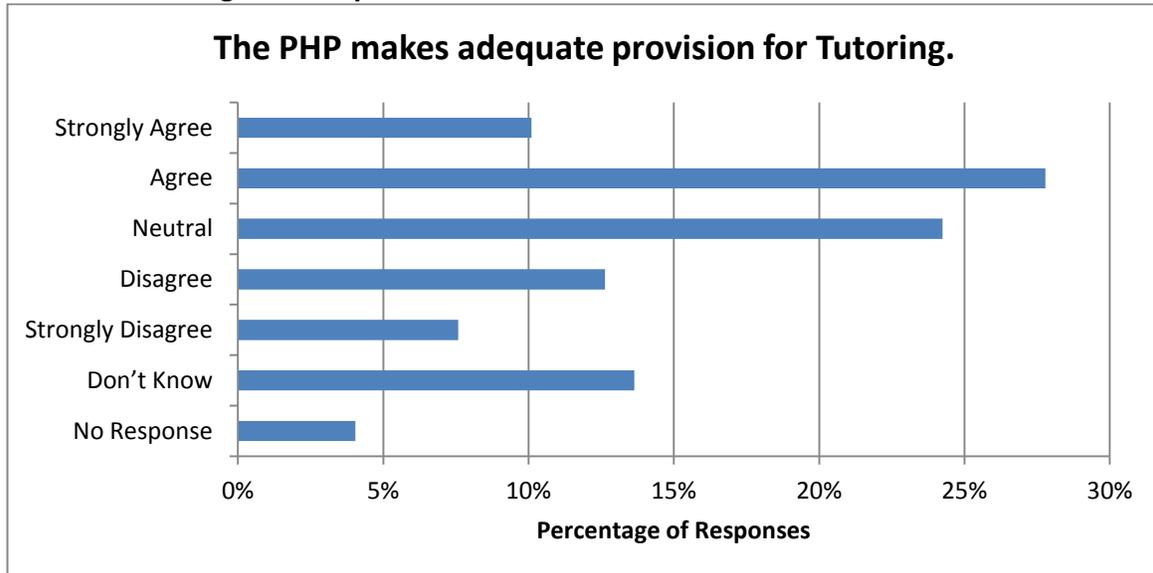


Table 9: Home Placement – All Respondents

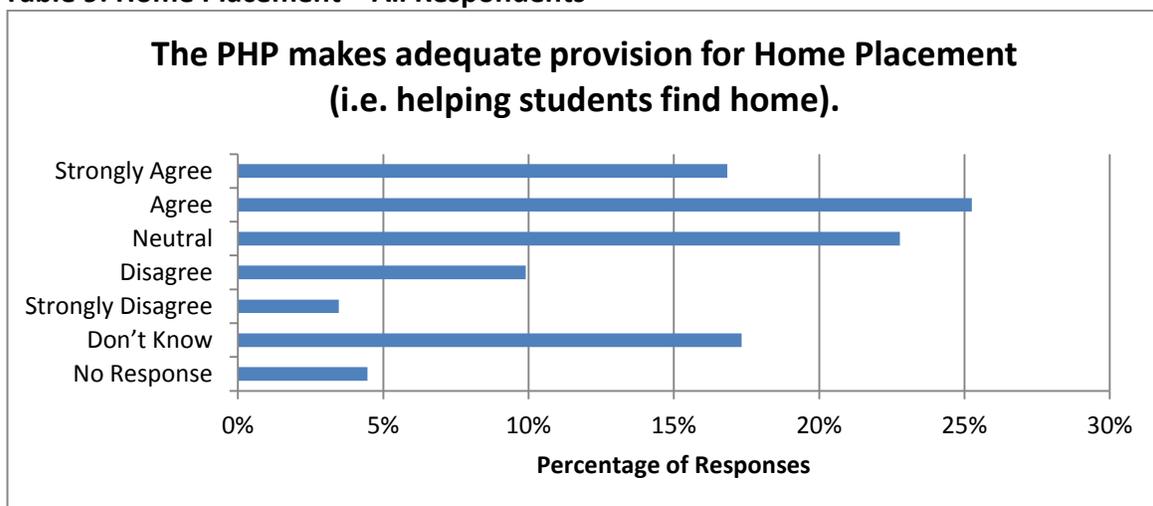


Table 10: Student Transportation – All Respondents

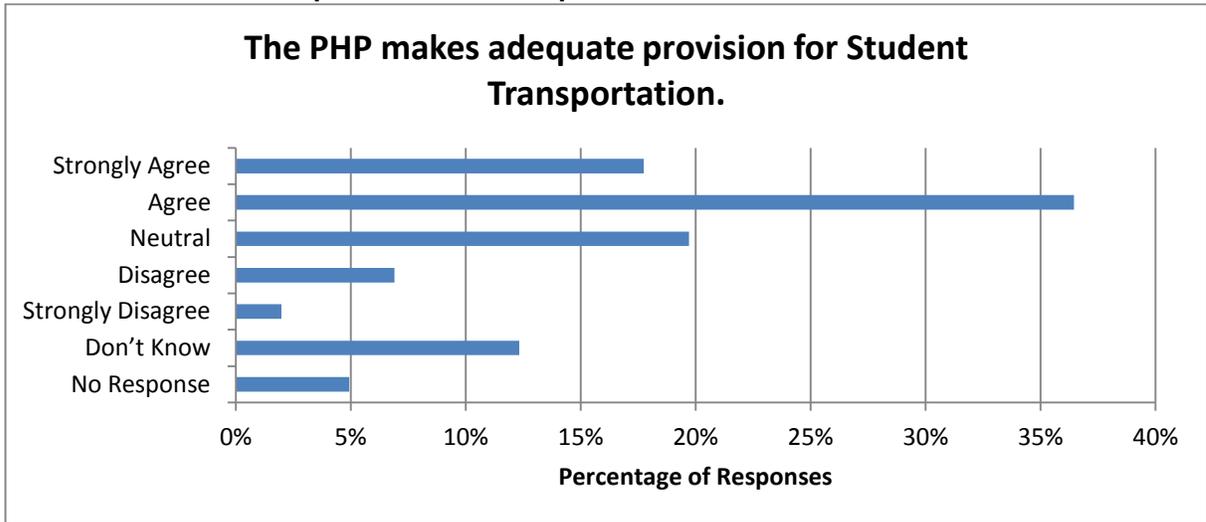


Table 11: Written Policy Document – All Respondents

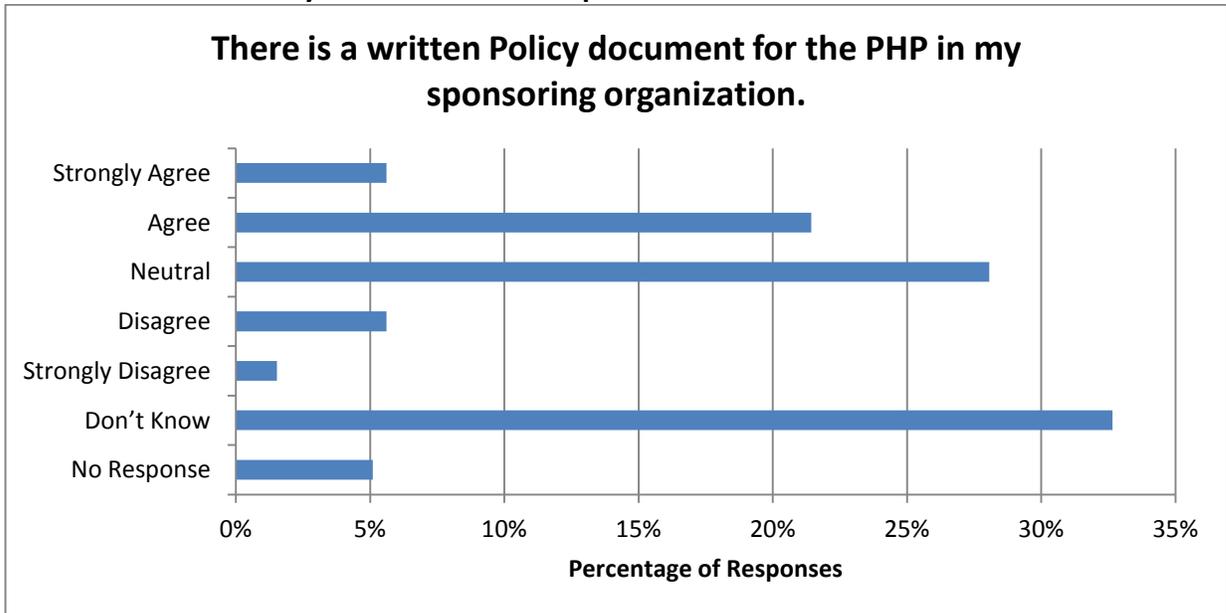


Table 12: Orientation Program – All Respondents

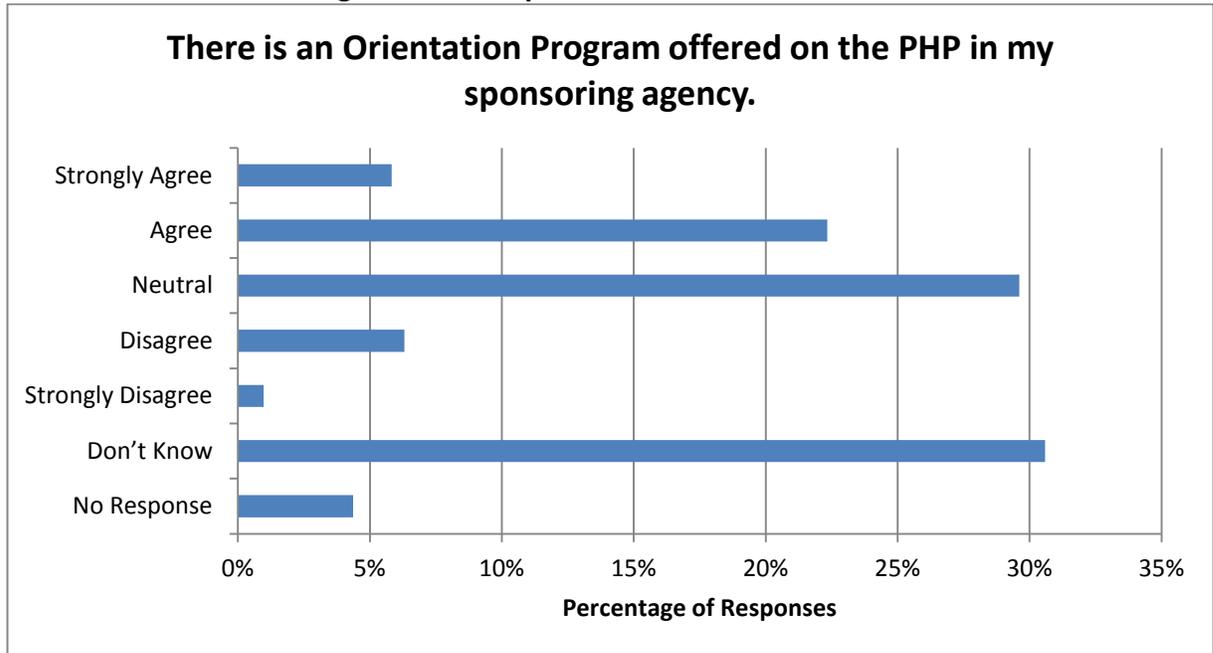


Table 13: Social and Recreation Needs – All Respondents

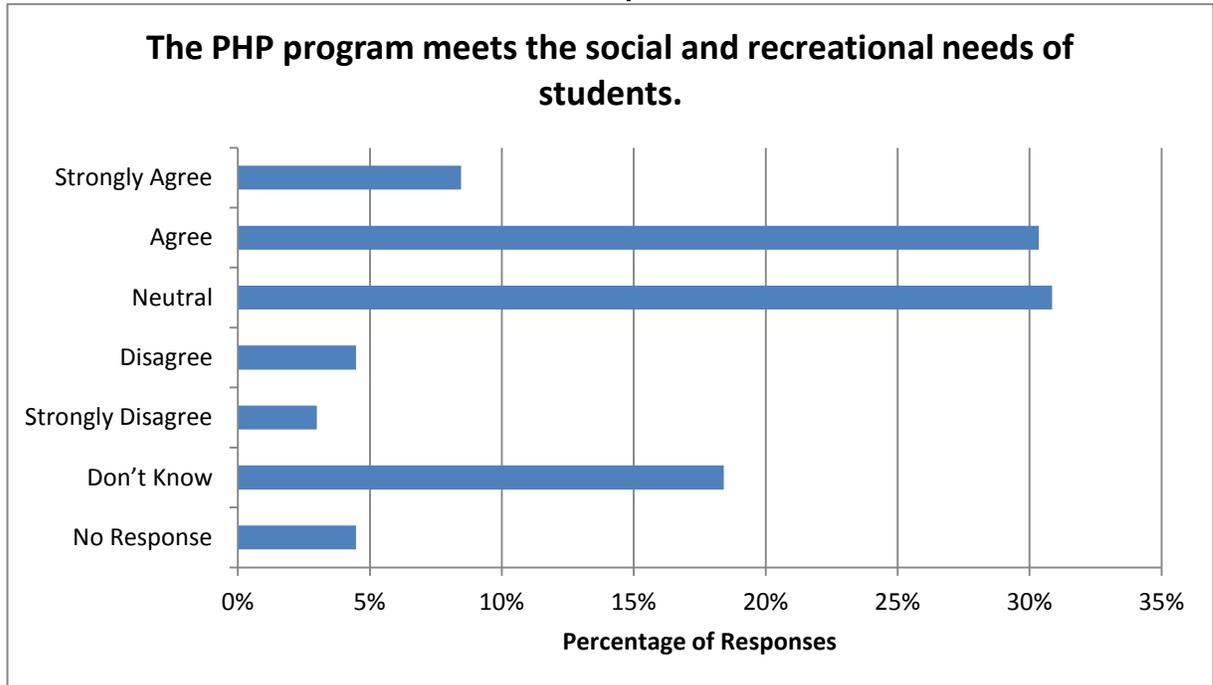


Table 14: Communication – All Respondents

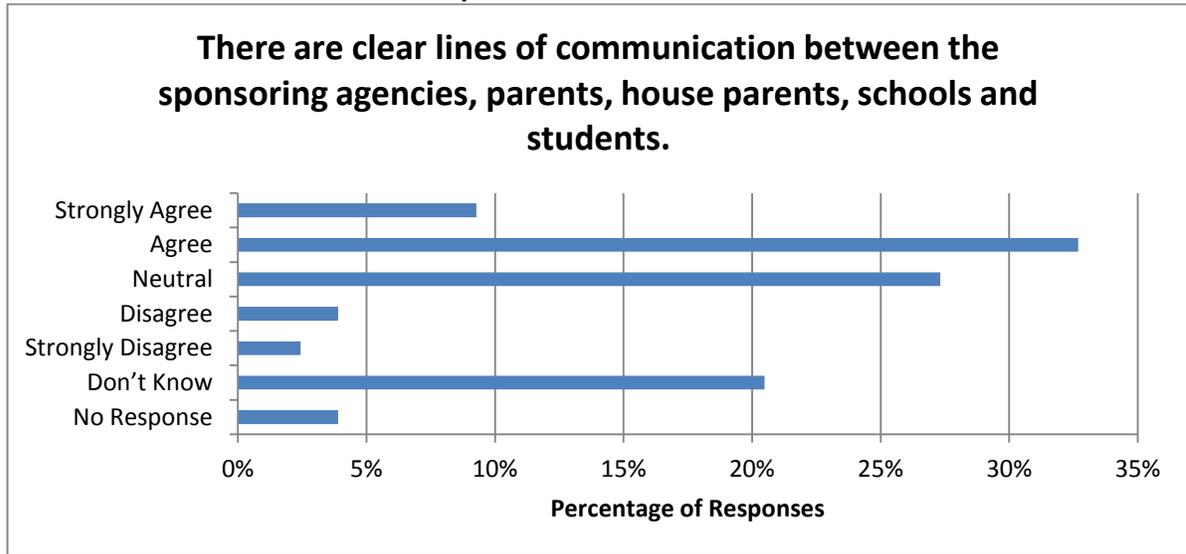


Table 15: Funding – All Respondents

