EDUCATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA

DATE: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2023
TIME: 6:00 PM

https://sd38.zoom.us/j/62447359495
Passcode: 6000

The Richmond Board of Education acknowledges and thanks the First Peoples of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ (hun-ki-meen-um) language group on whose traditional and unceded territories we teach, learn and live.

1. **ADOPT AGENDA**

2. **APPROVE MINUTES**
   Attachment: In-Camera minutes from meeting held September 14, 2022

3. **EQUITY IN ACTION SCAN REPORT**
   Rav Johal, Director of Instruction, and Navshina Savory, District Administrator

4. **ASPEN REPORT**
   Braunwyn Thompson, Director of Instruction

5. **NEXT MEETING DATE – Wednesday, February 15, 2023 at 6:00pm**

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

School District No. 38 (Richmond)
7811 Granville Avenue, Richmond, BC V6Y 3E3

EDUCATION COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of a **PUBLIC** meeting of Education Committee held virtually via Zoom on Wednesday, September 14, 2022 at 6:00 pm.

Present:
Heather Larson, Chairperson
Debbie Tablotney, Vice-Chairperson
Richard Lee, Trustee Member
Norm Goldstein, Trustee
Sandra Nixon, Trustee
Ken Hamaguchi, Trustee
Donna Sargent, Trustee
Jane Macmillan, Assistant Superintendent
Brooke Douglas, District Administrator
Catherine Jule, District Administrator
Liz Baverstock, President, Richmond Teachers' Association
JW Cho, Pro-D Officer, Richmond Teachers' Association
Dionne McFie, Richmond District Parents' Association
April Pikkarainen, Member, Richmond Association of School Administrators
Taffy Jackson, Executive Member, Richmond Management And Professional Staff
Rebecca Rubio, Coordinator of Library and Information Services
Shamirah, Executive Assistant (Recording Secretary)

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm.

1. **ADOPT AGENDA**
   The agenda was adopted as circulated.

2. **APPROVE MINUTES**
   The minutes of the meeting held Wednesday, June 22, 2022 were approved as circulated.

3. **SPECIAL RECOGNITION**
   Assistant Superintendent, J. MacMillan, recognized R. Rubio, Coordinator of Library and Information Services, as the one of the four Canada-wide recipients for the Angela Thacker Memorial Award 2022. The award honours teacher librarians who have made contributions to the profession through program development and more. R. Rubio, thanked the committee for the recognition and thanked fellow librarians for their contribution and hard work.

4. **FOCUS ON EARLY LEARNING**
    Assistant Superintendent J. MacMillan introduced District Administrators, B. Douglas and C. Jule who presented a PowerPoint presentation on early learning. The presentation provided an overview of the early learning framework, the initiatives, programs, and goals currently in place in the Richmond school district, and the next steps.

5. **NEXT MEETING DATE – Wednesday, January 18, 2023 at 6:00 pm.**

6. **ADJOURNMENT**
    The meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Larson
Chairperson, Education Committee

Report to the Education Committee (Richmond)

PUBLIC

DATE: **January 18, 2023**

FROM: **Jane MacMillan - Executive Director, Learning Services**
Ravinder Johal – Director of Instruction, Student Services & Data Analysis

SUBJECT: **Equity in Action Project Report**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Education Committee recommends that the Richmond Board of Education direct staff to proceed with the recommendations contained in the Equity in Action Project report.

STRATEGIC PLAN REFERENCE

Priority 1: Inspired Learners
  Goal 3: Indigenous Peoples' history, perspectives, and learning approaches are embedded within district planning and practices.
      I.   Honour and implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action related to education.
      II. Deepen understanding of and embed the First Peoples' Principles of Learning.
      III. Increase access to authentic learning opportunities and resources to enhance understanding of Indigenous Peoples' culture and history.

Priority 2: Equity and Inclusion
   Goal 1: District learning environments are equitable and inclusive.
      I.   Support all learners to develop a sense of connection, belonging and positive personal and cultural identity.
      II. Provide equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for all learners.
   Goal 2: The district actively addresses unconscious bias and privilege, systemic discrimination and marginalization based on factors such as ability, colour, cultural identity, gender, gender identity, Indigeneity, political beliefs, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.
      I.   Identify and develop a plan to respond to current district challenges related to systemic discrimination and marginalization.
      II. Enhance awareness and understanding of unconscious bias and privilege and how they influence interactions throughout our learning community.
      III. Support students and staff to develop a deeper understanding of the history and impacts of systemic discrimination.

IV.   Ensure students and staff have access to current and relevant learning resources that reflect the diversity of, and the challenges faced by, our community and the world.

Priority 4: A Progressive Workplace
Goal 1: Inclusion, equity, and diversity are foundational to employment at every level of the
    district.
V.   Ensure all HR practices consider and reflect equity, diversity and inclusion to actively address various forms of implicit bias, discrimination and privilege.
VI.   Develop and provide opportunities for employees to learn about workplace equity, diversity and inclusion.
VII.   Build capacity for equity, diversity and inclusion appreciation and understanding as part of standard workplace culture.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in 2016, the Ministry of Education created an Equity Scan Framework and vision to support school districts in identifying promising practices as well as barriers that are impacting Indigenous student achievement and success. This was done in response to the Office of the Auditor General's report (2015) on Aboriginal Education, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (2015).

During the process, school districts are encouraged to find their own most appropriate and relevant ways to collect data, analyze policies and practices, address the educational experiences of Indigenous learners and their families, and evaluate educators' practice and pedagogy. In the Richmond School District, the Equity Scan Team chose a collaborative inquiry model with a focus on authentic and meaningful data collection and analysis.

The attached report outlines the steps taken in the Richmond School District's Equity Scan process, the findings in each of the 4 key areas, and the subsequent development of a Theory of Change and accompanying Equity in Action Plan designed to better serve the Indigenous learners, families, and communities in the District.

CONCLUSION

The Richmond School District is committed to enacting change that will improve experiences for all Indigenous learners, while also ensuring that Indigenous Peoples' history, perspectives, and learning approaches are embedded within district planning and practices. The Equity Scan process offers the Richmond School District an opportunity to reflect on complex concepts such as unconscious bias, privilege, systemic discrimination, belonging and connection, recognizing that equity and inclusion are not possible without acknowledging and addressing systemic discrimination and marginalization. The Equity in Action journey of the past two years has illuminated what is working for our Indigenous students and families, while also showing areas for further growth. Ongoing actions resulting from the the Equity in Action report and through the Board of Education's Strategic Plan provide key pathways and commitment in the journey of reconciliation.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jane MacMillan
Executive Director - Learning Services

Ravinder Johal
Director of Instruction – Student Services and Data Analysis

EQUITY IN ACTION PROJECT

EQUITY IN ACTION PROJECT

Table of Contents

"We acknowledge and thank the First Peoples of the hǝṅ̓q̓ǝmiṅǝm̓ language group on whose traditional and unceded territories we teach, learn and live."

The Richmond School District has a deep respect for the people of the hǝṅ̓q̓ǝmiṅǝm̓ language group and their stewardship of this land. The School District would like to extend its gratitude to the Musqueam people who continue their culture, history, language, ceremonies, traditions, and spiritual teachings on this land and in this place.

INTRODUCTION: WHO AND WHERE WE ARE

The city of Richmond is located on the traditional, unceded, ancestral territory of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ language group. The city of approximately 225,000 encompasses 15 islands at the mouth of the Fraser River, including Lulu and Sea Islands.

Countless settlers have chosen to build their lives in this island city. It is a community strengthened by diverse cultures, languages, and histories, and it is a place that recognizes and appreciates the tapestry of stories that have created this community. It is also a place where First Peoples have gathered and lived for thousands of years, and it is a place where the Musqueam people continue to practice their traditional knowledge systems, language, and ways of being. The School District #38 is a vibrant part of the Richmond community, also celebrating and building upon the rich diversity of the students and families that it serves.

The Richmond School District is comprised of 38 elementary schools, 10 secondary schools, almost 21,000 students and 3,500 employees. SD38 strives to create a respectful learning community that reflects kindness, values collaboration, seeks understanding and celebrates achievement. To that end, the District is committed to bringing together diverse ideas, experiences, and histories in order to re-imagine and create an education system that supports all learners and respects their contributions, histories and perspectives.

In the 2021-2022 school year, there were 274 students in the school district who self-reported Indigenous ancestry, all with diverse backgrounds and experiences and each with a unique story. The Richmond School District is committed to all Indigenous learners and their families feeling valued, successful, and connected within their learning community. In addition, the District is committed to the work of truth and reconciliation. A commitment to truth means recognizing the historical relationship between Indigenous people and the Canadian education system and addressing the impact of systemic racism which has, and can continue to be, a barrier to success for Indigenous learners and their families. The Equity in Action Project detailed herein is one tool in uncovering these impacts, while the resulting Equity in Action Plan outlines the next steps needed to move towards an education system that better reflects and represents its Indigenous learners.

As this work continues, there is great hope and optimism in the children and the communities that are served, who can imagine and work toward a reconciled Canada, one that educates for understanding of the past, is encouraged yet dissatisfied with present and is committed to an equitable future for Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) people.

"Accommodation of Aboriginal culture and identity should be regarded as a core responsibility of public institutions rather than as a special project to be undertaken after other obligations are met. Educational institutions have a pivotal role in transforming the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian Society."

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1986

WHAT IS THE EQUITY IN ACTION PROJECT?

Beginning in 2016, the Ministry of Education created an Equity Scan Framework and vision in order to support school districts in identifying promising practices as well as barriers that are impacting Indigenous student achievement and success. This was done in response to the Office of the Auditor General's report (2015) on Aboriginal Education, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (2015).

The collaborative phase and consultations across the field were completed in 2017-2018. The Ministry of Education expanded the number of participating districts in subsequent years, with the Richmond School District beginning the process in the fall of 2020. At the time of this report, there were 59 BC school districts participating in the Equity in Action Project, all at varying stages of the process.

The steps of the Equity Scan Process have been clearly defined by the Ministry of Education. Districts are expected to:

- build an Equity Scan **Team**
- conduct an **Equity Scan** of current practices, processes and services already in place
- construct an **Equity Profile**
- determine a **Theory of Change** and
- develop an **Equity Action Plan** in service to Indigenous learners, families and communities.

Four dimensions are explored in the Equity Scan process:

1) **Student Learning Profile** – looks for key indicators of achievement and learning trajectories for Indigenous students
2) **Policy and Governance** – processes, plans, and policies that may have an impact on results for Indigenous learners
3) **Pedagogical Core** – the experiences of learners in relation to curriculum, the presence of relevant cultural experiences and values placed on Indigenous Worldviews and Perspectives
4) **Learning Environment** - includes human and educator bias, and learning spaces

During the process, school districts are encouraged to find their own most appropriate and relevant ways to collect data, analyze policies and practices, address the educational experiences of Indigenous learners and their families, and evaluate educators' practice and pedagogy. In the Richmond School District, the Equity Scan Team chose a collaborative inquiry model with a focus on authentic and meaningful data collection and analysis.

The following report outlines the steps taken in the Richmond School District's Equity Scan process, the findings in each of the 4 key areas, and the subsequent development of a Theory of Change and accompanying Equity in Action Plan designed to better serve the Indigenous learners, families, and communities in the District.

> *"The Equity Scan project will define and formalize a process for school districts and the Ministry of Education to enter into a genuine and meaningful assessment dialogue about the experience of education for Indigenous learners and to respond strategically to create conditions for success."*
>
> *Equity in Action 2019-2020, Ministry of Education, Indigenous Branch*

Indigenous Student Success

EQUITY IN ACTION: CONNECTIONS TO THE RICHMOND BOARD OF EDUCATION'S STRATEGIC PLAN (2020-2025)

"The Board of Education is committed to supporting the educational journey of every student in the Richmond School District. We recognize that the world is in a state of continual change, and we must therefore adapt our learning environments to ensure that every student can thrive and be successful. Through thoughtful planning and deliberate action, we believe that we can inspire and support everyone in our educational community to be lifelong learners. "

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Vision: The Richmond School District is the best place to learn and lead.

Mission: The Richmond School District's mission is to cultivate a safe, accepting and engaging community that inspires a passion for lifelong learning.

Values: The values that guide our work together to achieve our Vision and Mission are: collaboration, creativity, curiosity, resilience, respect and equity, for all.

The Richmond Board of Education's five-year Strategic Plan identifies **5 Strategic Priorities**:

1. Inspired Learners
2. Equity and Inclusion
3. Optimized Facilities and Technology
4. A Progressive Workplace
5. A Connected Learning Community

Three of these priorities and several of their goals and objectives connect to and support the SD 38 Equity in Action Plan.

Strategic Priority 1: Inspired Learners

We are all learners—our students and parents, our staff, our community partners. We will provide welcoming and engaging school environments where all can thrive. We aim to inspire everyone in our educational community to be lifelong learners.

Goal 3: Indigenous Peoples' history, perspectives, and learning approaches are embedded within district planning and practices.

Objectives:
    I.   Honour and implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action related to education.
    II.   Deepen understanding of and embed the First Peoples' Principles of Learning.

III. Increase access to authentic learning opportunities and resources to enhance understanding of Indigenous Peoples' culture and history.

Inspired learners are those who see themselves as valued, contributing members of their school and classroom communities. The Richmond School District is committed to enacting change that will improve experiences for all Indigenous learners, while also ensuring that Indigenous Peoples' history, perspectives, and learning approaches are embedded within district planning and practices.

Strategic Priority 2: Equity and Inclusion

Equity and inclusion are foundational to learning and leading, and are critical to success, wellbeing, and fulfillment. It is our mission to ensure that our students, families, and staff feel welcomed, are treated respectfully, and have a sense of belonging. We acknowledge our responsibility to support all learners so that they may successfully complete their education with a sense of dignity, purpose, and options.

Goal 1: District learning environments are equitable and inclusive.

Objectives:
I. Support all learners to develop a sense of connection, belonging and positive personal and cultural identity.
II. Provide equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for all learners.

Goal 2: The district actively addresses unconscious bias and privilege, systemic discrimination and marginalization based on factors such as ability, colour, cultural identity, gender, gender identity, Indigeneity, political beliefs, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

Objectives:
I. Develop a plan to address the identified district challenges related to systemic discrimination and marginalization.
II. Enhance awareness and understanding of unconscious bias and privilege and how they influence interactions throughout our learning community.
III. Support students and staff to develop a deeper understanding of the history and impacts of systemic discrimination.
IV. Ensure students and staff have access to current and relevant learning resources that reflect the diversity of, and the challenges faced by, our community and the world.

The Equity Scan process offers the Richmond School District an opportunity to reflect on complex concepts such as unconscious bias, privilege, systemic discrimination, belonging and connection, recognizing that equity and inclusion are not possible without acknowledging and addressing systemic discrimination and marginalization.

Strategic Priority 4: A Progressive Workplace

We will attract and retain the best people by promoting and supporting the health and wellness and professional development of our workforce. We will raise awareness of Richmond School District as an employer of choice and the best place to learn and to lead.

Goal 1: Inclusion, equity, and diversity are foundational to employment at every level of the district.

Objectives:
I.   Ensure all HR practices consider and reflect equity, diversity and inclusion to actively address various forms of implicit bias, discrimination and privilege.
II.   Develop and provide opportunities for employees to learn about workplace equity, diversity and inclusion.
III.   Build capacity for equity, diversity and inclusion appreciation and understanding as part of standard workplace culture.

The Richmond School District recognizes the importance of recruiting and retaining Indigenous individuals across all employee groups. Professional learning that centers equity, diversity, and inclusion is prioritized and supported across all employee groups.

Please see Appendix A for additional documents that helped to guide and support the Equity in Action Project.

THE EQUITY IN ACTION PROCESS

Who? The Team

The Richmond School District began the Equity in Action process in October 2020. After an initial orientation meeting between district staff and the Indigenous Education Branch of the Ministry of Education, a small Equity in Action Team, consisting of senior staff and representatives from various employee groups, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Richmond Association of School Administrators (RASA), Richmond Management and Professional Staff (RMAPS), Richmond Teachers' Association (RTA) began work on developing a course of action which would be unique to Richmond.

A staff Equity in Action Working Team was then established early in November 2020, consisting of a Director of Instruction, a District Administrator, and two teacher consultants who were part of the Indigenous Success Team.

What? Data Collection And Analysis

Due to COVID restrictions and the inability to hold in-person meetings for much of the 2020-2021 school year, the Working Team decided to focus on the following aspects of the scan during that time:
- the development of questionnaires and other data collection tools for various stakeholder groups
- the completion of the Policy and Governance scan/review
- the collection of data from elementary-aged Indigenous students

By the end of June 2021, banks of questions for various stakeholder groups were prepared. These included questions specific to Indigenous students and families, the Indigenous Success Team, as well as all staff, school-based and non-school based (see Appendices B, C, and D). An external consultant was engaged to review all aspects of Richmond School District policies and governance as they relate to equity for Indigenous students. Every elementary Indigenous student was interviewed by an Elementary Indigenous Success teacher, and work had also begun on interviews with secondary Indigenous students.

During the 2021-2022 school year, the Equity in Action Working Team completed the data collection from secondary Indigenous students, both by interview and questionnaire, while also surveying and interviewing Indigenous parents and guardians. Shortly after, school-based staff were introduced to the Equity in Action process and invited to complete an online survey. The Equity in Action Working Team then reviewed the data collected and determined themes. It was important that the perspectives of Indigenous students and their families be heard and prioritized, together with the perspectives of the Indigenous Success Team. These voices, along

with the other data collected, shaped the recommendations outlined in this report. Details of the exploration of the four Equity in Action dimensions follow.

A SCAN OF THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF EQUITY IN ACTION: DATA AND ANALYSIS

1. <u>Policy And Governance</u>

During the 2020-21 school year, the Richmond School District hired an independent research consultant to review and report on all District policies to determine if and where equity for Indigenous students and communities is represented.

The Equity Scan Workbook from the Ministry of Education provided the following guiding questions for districts to consider:

- Describe the authority and decision-making of district structures and who is responsible for ensuring that actions and decision-making for equity are in place for Indigenous learners.
- Does your district have policies, practices and governance procedures that support equity?
- How does your district policy, practices, and governance educate about the history and current realities related to issues of inequity and gaps in opportunity for Indigenous learners?
- Does the district have in place policy or agreements that reflect a dedication to equity in budgets, employment/hiring and specific service to Indigenous learners?
- Does your district have an Indigenous parent, family and community engagement policy or strategy?
- Describe participation and representation of local First Nation communities, as legally responsible for the education of their members, in the decision making and change process to programs and services that directly affect their children.
- Does your district have specific policy related to access to Indigenous language and cultural programs?
- What processes have been developed to ensure that Indigenous languages are a visible and valued part of each learner's experience?

As outlined on the Richmond School District website, "Policy provides a framework of guiding values, overall purposes, specific goals and required actions that complement the School Act and provincial regulations. It contains policies and regulations that are developed and maintained by the Board of Education for School District No. 38 (Richmond)."

The Richmond Board of Education's policies, regulations and guidelines are separated into 10 sections:
- Section 100:   District Philosophy
- Section 200:   Governance
- Section 300:   Administration
- Section 400:   Human Resources
- Section 500:   Students - Education

- Section 510:   Students – Programs
- Section 520:   Students- Services
- Section 600:   Finance
- Section 700:   Facilities
- Section 800:   Community Relations

Of the 279 District policies that were reviewed, the consultant was able to identify two which contain a reference to Indigenous communities. They are:

- <u>Policy 106 Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity</u> and <u>Policy 106-R Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity</u> both include "two spirited" in a list of communities that are recognized as experiencing discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. This policy was written and adopted by the Board in 2018.
- <u>Policy 513.4-G in Education: Programs and the Selection of Resources</u> cites the First Nations Education Steering Committee in the guidelines for selecting appropriate learning resources. This policy was revised and approved by the Board in April 2020.

The Ministry also provided the following table for school districts' use in determining their place within the rubric:

1	2	3	4	No Evidence
District Policy and Governance structures are largely silent on equity. There is no or limited shared language and planning for equity among partners.	The District is aware of the need for Policy and Governance structures related to equity. Partners are willing to work together to support equity.	District Policy and Governance structures consider equity and have some plans for action. Partners are aware of and support equity and the direction of the district.	District Policy and Governance structures are known to and supported by all partners. Policy enables equity work and governance structures routinely focus attention on and review equity in the district. Action plans are obvious to all.	The Equity Team is unable to determine the district's Policy and Governance related to equity work due to lack of evidence.

Policy and Governance - Findings

While the review demonstrated that the majority of the Richmond School District's current policies make little or no reference to Indigenous communities or Indigenous history, it should be noted that there are other official Board of Education documents that do in fact recognize and value the importance of Indigenous perspectives, worldviews, and ways of knowing. These include the previously mentioned Board of Education's Strategic Plan (2020-2025), and particularly the goals that were noted:

- Indigenous history, perspectives and learning approaches being embedded within district planning and practices.
- District learning environments being equitable and inclusive
- The district actively addressing unconscious bias and privilege, systemic discrimination and marginalization based on factors such as ability, colour, cultural identity, gender, gender identity, Indigeneity, political beliefs, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
- Inclusion, equity, and diversity are foundational to employment at every level of the district.

With the Richmond Board of Education's Strategic Plan being the primary guiding document for the district over the coming years, it can be assumed that these priorities, goals and objectives will encourage the Richmond School District to continue to review and revise current policies to better reflect the communities that they serve.

"Together, we have developed a strong plan with goals and objectives which, as we achieve them, will move our district forward in continuing to do our best in serving our students and their educational journey."

Richmond Board of Education Strategic Plan 2020-2025

2. <u>Student Learning Profile</u>

During the 2021-2022 school year, there were 274 self-identified students of Indigenous background across the 47 school sites in School District #38, with 158 students attending elementary schools, and 116 attending secondary schools. The students come from diverse backgrounds and represent Indigenous communities across the country.

The Ministry suggests the following guiding questions and rubric in order to ascertain the district's progress regarding support for Indigenous students and their learning:

- Anecdotally, how would you describe the achievement profile for Indigenous learners and are student achievement results improving?
- Are student learning trajectories toward graduation (6 year completion rate) considered by the classroom, school, and district on an annual basis?
- How do school improvement plans reflect equity and specific strategies to serve Indigenous learners individually and as a group?
- Are multiple points of data considered when assessing the abilities and learning needs of Indigenous learners e.g., are Ministry, district, school and classroom assessments considered together?
- What happens when an Indigenous learner is not achieving a year's worth of progress in a year's worth of schooling?
- What systems are in place for keeping track of achievement for Indigenous learners and how is the responsibility for responding understood?

| 1	2	3	4	No Evidence
Learning Profiles are random and unconnected to the learner. Learning is not evidence-informed and there are no or limited supports for learners when achievement lags. Profiles are determined by opinion rather than evidence. There is no evidence of collaborative and reflective practice.	Learning Profiles and cultures of reflective practice are emerging, and learner needs influence resourcing and interventions. There is professional awareness of appropriate interventions that should be in place and professionals are working toward implementation.	Learning Profiles play an important role in designing learning and responding to required supports and interventions. Systems are in place that defines professional conversations and collaboration in support of the learner.	Learning Profiles are robust and evidence-informed. Up to date profiles direct resourcing and interventions in time to make a difference. Mature cultures of reflective practice dominate the professional environment. There is a high degree of advocacy for learners and empowering systems of belief are evident.	The Equity Team is unable to determine the characteristics of the Learning Profile.

Student Learning Profile – Findings

The Richmond School District staff looked at a variety of Ministry data available to them regarding the Indigenous students enrolled in SD38. This includes completion rates, grade to grade transitions, FSA results, secondary assessment results and student satisfaction surveys.

District level data collection began with elementary students. Facilitated by the Indigenous Success Team, oral and written surveys were provided to 120 elementary students. Indigenous students at the secondary level were provided an opportunity to respond to a confidential online survey. A focus group of nine Indigenous secondary students also met with two teachers from the Indigenous Success Team and gathered in person to share their stories and experiences in the Richmond School District.

Ministry Data:

For the period of 2016 to 2021, the completion rate for non-Indigenous students in Richmond has been between 92 and 97% (provincial average is 87-90%), while the completion rate for Indigenous students varies between 59 and 80% (provincial average is 66-72%). Due to relatively small numbers of Indigenous students within each grade, variations which may appear to indicate large fluctuations in graduation rates may more accurately reflect a smaller cohort of graduates compared to the previous year.

Completion Rate Over Time for Indigenous and BC Residents
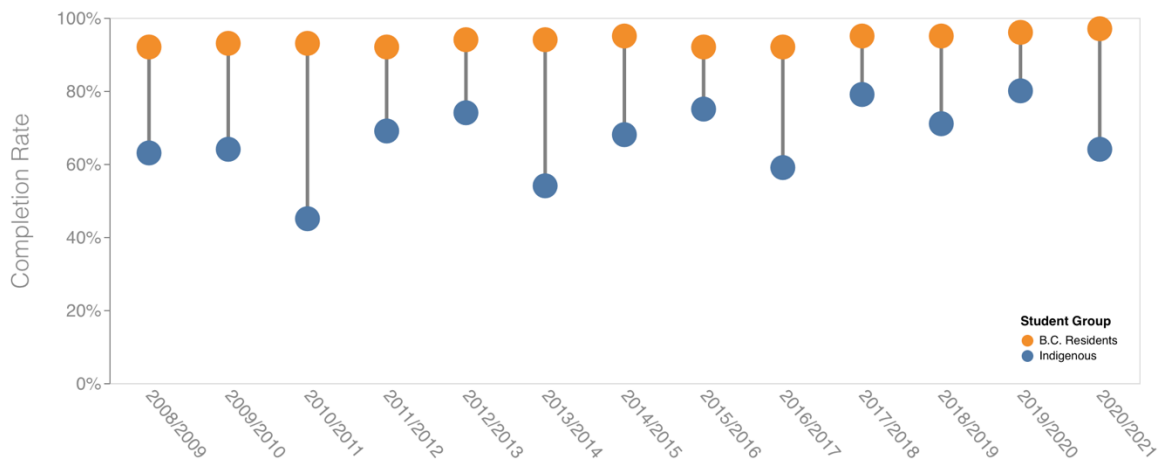
Also, Grade to Grade transitions for Indigenous students over the last five years has been as follows:

Grade 8 to 9

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21

All students	99%	99%	98%	99%	98%
Indigenous students	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Grade 9 to 10

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
All students	99%	99%	99%	98%	99%
Indigenous students	100%	97%	100%	96%	96%

Grade 10 to 11

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
All students	94%	93%	97%	98%	96%
Indigenous students	97%	100%	96%	96%	100%

Grade 11 to 12

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
All students	97%	97%	97%	97%	99%
Indigenous students	95%	85%	95%	96%	95%

In terms of Foundation Skills Assessment results, the small number of Indigenous students across the district (1.4%) and at each grade level has meant that most often, the results for Grade 4 and 7 students in the areas of Reading, Writing and Numeracy are "masked" and are therefore not a reliable way of tracking student achievement and progress. Masking is done to protect the privacy of potentially individually identifiable students. School-based assessment and subsequent support are utilized within schools to provide a more robust picture regarding student achievement and progress. The following data is available for the previous 5 years:

Percentage of Indigenous students "meeting" expectations or "on track" in FSAs":

I	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Gr. 4 writing	87%	msk	msk	msk	83%
Gr. 4 reading	61%	67%	msk	msk	msk
Gr. 4 numeracy	msk	80%	msk	msk	msk
Gr. 7 writing	75%	88%	msk	msk	msk
Gr. 7 reading	69%	75%	msk	msk	msk
Gr. 7 numeracy	65%	msk	msk	msk	msk

The same is the case for the Grade 10 Literacy and Numeracy assessments that all students are required to complete for graduation. In each of the four years that the assessments have been in place, the results of Indigenous students have been masked due to low numbers of students at the Grade 10 level.

In regard to the student satisfaction surveys offered to all students in Grades 4, 7, 10 and 12, 39 self-identified Indigenous students at the elementary level and 30 students at the secondary level responded to these surveys in 2021. The following notes their responses for two important questions on the survey:

Question	Students	Agree/Strongly Agree
Do you feel welcome at school?	All Elementary	77%
	Indigenous Elementary	64%
	All Secondary	71%
	Indigenous Secondary	53%
Is school a place where you feel like you belong?	All Elementary	64%
	Indigenous Elementary	36%
	All Secondary	57%
	Indigenous Secondary	37%

In the area of post-secondary and career preparation, it is interesting to note that while Grade 10 and 12 students overall were not particularly satisfied with the job that school has done in preparing them for a job or a post-secondary education (less than 50% responded "many" or "all the time"), the Indigenous students surveyed seemed slightly more satisfied than their non-Indigenous counterparts.
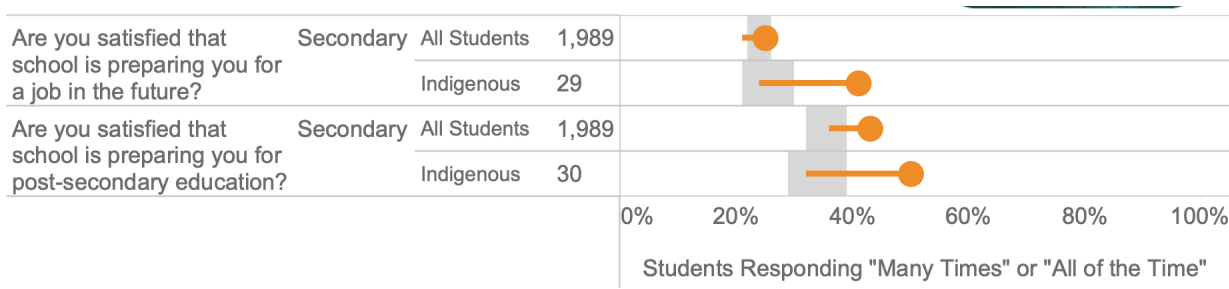
District Survey and Anecdotal Data:

When looking at student responses to district survey and focus group questions, there are themes that emerged from these responses. All district survey questions for all stakeholder groups can be found in the Appendices B, C, and D.

There were 15 secondary students who answered the district online survey. This represents approximately 10% of the total number of self-identified Indigenous secondary students in the Richmond School District.

Theme 1: Student Engagement

Primary-aged students showed higher levels of engagement and joy in school than the older students, as well as a willingness to share their culture and ancestry. Students reported feelings of pride, acceptance and respect when asked about their Indigenous ancestry. One student expressed, "It's cool 'cause you're not just Canadian, you're part of a community." Other students expressed feelings of respect and acceptance, "It feels nice actually", "It feels special."

Students across elementary schools told interviewers that they enjoyed school when they had the opportunity for choices about how and what they learned. One student expressed that she learned best when she had, "...more choice projects. Things that involve my decisions." There were references to passion projects as well as being able to make decisions about materials and resources, "I loved choosing books."

Of the 15 secondary students who responded to the online survey, 8 students answered in the surveys that they liked school, 10 reported feeling a sense of belonging at school, and 12 stated that they felt safe at school. 5 of those who completed the survey reported experiencing racism at school, while 14 believed that there were adults in the school that supported them.

Theme 2: Feelings of Academic Anxiety

Survey results for the 15 secondary students showed that:

- 73% felt supported in their learning at school
- 60% felt that their teachers know who they are and what their goals are
- 93% reported that their teachers had high expectations for them to succeed
- 60% felt that their teachers were clearly communicating with them about their learning progress

However, starting in intermediate grades through to secondary school, Indigenous students personally reported less academic confidence, most notably in the area of Math. Feelings of anxiety and fear that many upper elementary students identified may contribute to their lack of engagement in numeracy upon entering secondary school. One student shared, "Because like, I've struggled with math and science since I can remember, since like Grade 2. I've always had a tutor, for math especially."

Theme 3: Representation

Elementary students in the intermediate grades as well as secondary students reported that they had learned little about Indigenous cultures or histories at school. Upper intermediate students noted a lack of Indigenous representation in their schools, "...we don't see anything on the walls, or talk about it much. We have not learned anything about First Nations. It doesn't feel great." Students felt there was a diminished level of representation of Indigenous worldviews,

perspectives and content as students move through the upper intermediate grades, "We only sometimes learn about Indigenous peoples."

15 secondary students who responded to the district survey answered the following questions:

- When you walk into your school, are there visible representations of Indigenous culture? 53% said yes
- Is the Musqueam culture visibly represented in the school? 60% said yes
- At school, have you had the chance to learn about your Indigenous ancestry? 53% said yes
- Do you feel that your Indigenous identity is respected by the adults and students in your school? 80% said yes
- Have you learned about Indigenous people, histories or cultures in your classes? 73% said yes
- Is it important for you to learn about Indigenous histories, cultures and perspective in school? 93% said yes

In personal interviews, some students did express feeling a lack of representation of Indigenous content, worldviews, and perspectives in their school experience. While students said that some events, like Orange Shirt Day and National Indigenous Day, were recognized at most schools, and that some content, like residential schools, were included in course curriculum, they felt that an overall understanding and embedding of Indigenous content and perspectives was still lacking.

One secondary student noted a perceived lack of understanding by educators about the effects of the Indian Act, saying, "I think most teachers know about the Indian Act, but they don't know what it means, and they think it is in the past." Students agreed that the Humanities courses included Indigenous content and perspectives more deliberately, but that Math and Science lacked meaningful and authentic connections.

Secondary students felt that teacher comfort and confidence in incorporating Indigenous content, worldviews, and perspectives varied greatly. "Some teachers do a really good job, and some do not include it at all. It is really up to the teacher." When students were told that all teachers are responsible for including Indigenous content and worldviews in their practice, some expressed surprise.

Students also voiced the need for more representation of Indigeneity in their classrooms as well as in the school building. One student responded to a question about representation this way, "All I see is nothing. There isn't anything for Indigenous students in this school...There are not even words on the wall saying that we are on someone else's land. You should have something on the wall saying you are on this territory. Or just do a daily announcement acknowledging the land. Just being grateful and say where you are. We definitely don't say it enough. This is a huge school. There should be representation here."

Theme 4: Student-Teacher Interactions

Several students identified being singled out or approached by teachers when Indigenous content or perspectives were addressed, "Because I've noticed, like, with my Foods teacher, when there was an Indigenous part of the lesson, she would come to me and she'd be like, 'Well, do you know how to eat this? Do you know how to cook that?' And it's a put-off. It's a turnoff." Another student told us she felt singled out when a teacher addressed the findings of the Kamloops Residential School, "The teacher asked me in front of the whole class how it made me feel. It was really hard. I didn't know what to say. How did she think it made me feel?"

3. Learning Environment

The Ministry of Education again suggests the following guiding questions and rubric in order to analyze the learning environment in all Richmond Schools. This would include support for Indigenous students and their families, inclusion of Indigenous content and perspectives in classrooms and the curriculum, and equity of access to programs, etc.

- What processes have been developed to educate staff about the district's expectations regarding the learning environment in schools and classrooms where Indigenous students learn?
- How do the students, families, and communities served by the district have input into the learning environment for their students?
- How are families and communities made to feel welcome and valued as part of the learning environment?
- How are families informed about the curriculum, teaching practices and graduation requirements impacting their students?
- Describe your district's systematic practices for reviewing classroom and instructional practices (lesson plans, assessments, resources, etc.) for racial bias.
- Does the learning environment readily reflect the First Peoples Principles of Learning?
- What are the stories told at the community level and is there a feeling that the professionals are respectful and inclusive of Indigenous learners, families, and communities?
- Are there processes for routine scanning for equity in access to transportation, extra-curricular activities, codes of conduct, specialized programs (e.g. outdoor education, culinary arts, leadership) and transitions from early years programs to K-12 programs.

1	2	3	4	No Evidence
The Learning Environment lacks attention to equity. There is no or limited understanding about implicit bias and privilege issues and the dominant language characterized by learner deficit and low expectations for success. Focus ed on equality rather than equity.	The Learning Environment is beginning to acknowledge issues of bias and privilege. The adults are beginning to use a more positive language to refer to learner strengths, contributions, and future. As a result, learners are beginning to connect to the Learning Environment. Shifting from equality to equity.	The Learning Environment is characterized by a commitment to bias and privilege awareness. Most learners have a sense of belonging and experience the positive influence of high expectations. The adults in the environment share a positive language to refer to learner strengths and contributions.	The Learning Environment has a high degree of bias and privilege awareness. Each learner experiences high and motivating expectations for their learning and their future. Upholds values of equity. Learners are confident and have a profound sense of belonging to their classroom, school and district.	The Equity Team is unable to determine the characteristics of the Learning Environment.

The Richmond School District Equity Scan Team also provided a confidential online survey to all Indigenous families. There were 24 families who responded. In-person interviews were also conducted by the Indigenous Success Team with some Indigenous families. Several themes emerged from the survey responses and these conversations.

Learning Environment – Findings

Theme 1: Connection and Belonging

Seventy-one percent of families reported on the survey that their children enjoy going to school and 67% shared that they felt informed about their children's program and curriculum opportunities at school. Some families expressed a good connection and a sense of belonging at their schools. 79% of parents stated that they felt welcomed at their child's school and 75% felt that the staff at school was receptive to their concerns and comments: "Being respected enough to be heard and understood not just "told" what is and isn't happening". 67% reported that their children felt a sense of belonging and the same percentage also believed that their child had found an adult that they could turn to for help. Many families expressed gratitude for the relationships that they had with members of the Indigenous Success Team, "I know how hard they work to connect my children with their culture." Other families expressed connections through school activities, "They enjoy participating in activities such as band and sports."

There is consensus from families that the support of the Indigenous Success Team is an integral component of students' school experiences.

Theme 2: Cultural Representation

Families were asked if they felt that Indigenous cultures were well-represented and visible in their schools, and many families of elementary students reported that their children's cultures and ancestry were respected. "My son is treated so well at his school and is always encouraged to share his culture", and "My kids are proud of their Indigenous identity, and I think their experience at school has been positive and celebrates their culture." "My kids are proud of their Indigenous identity and I think their experience at their school has been positive and celebrates their culture which is wonderful. Some teachers are ensuring their classes provide a daily land acknowledgement. It has become an expectation for my kids that a land acknowledgement takes place when there is a gathering. I'm very happy they notice when it doesn't occur. A land acknowledgement should take place in all classrooms or be a part of the morning announcements at every school. The school library has a significant Indigenous collection."

A few people did report perceived knowledge gaps in Indigenous knowledge, history, and experiences on the part of some teachers. They expressed a need for more Indigenous educators in schools as they felt "It is a challenge for teachers who have so much to learn and unlearn to teach Indigenous issues" and "I'm encouraged that teachers are open to learning, but I'm discouraged at the amount of learning that has to be done." One parent stated, "I believe the more school staff learns, uses, and promotes Indigenous ways of knowing, the more successful

all children will be. Providing opportunities for staff to grow their comfort and proficiency in this area is important."

Additional Family Anecdotes

Families reported feelings of discrimination and marginalization in their school experiences. Some families expressed staff having low expectations for their children. "I have been reluctant to identify my daughters because I know there will be low expectations because of it". Families also reported feeling they did not always have the right to make the best decisions for their own children. "I have felt pushed, many times, to get my kids to take courses that are easier". Some families expressed a need for more understanding of the generational impacts of systemic racism, "A lot of teachers don't understand that the impacts of racism and trauma are multi-generational."

4. **Pedagogical Core**

Suggested guiding questions and a rubric from the Ministry regarding the district's pedagogical core include the following:

- Is there practice and decision-making that demonstrates a value shift from equality to equity?
- Describe the ways in which equity and opportunity gap issues facing Indigenous learners are being addressed in professional growth plans for the district, school and classroom.
- What opportunities for professional growth in equity and Indigenous education are available for district and school staff?
- Is there evidence that the adults (Teachers/EA's/Administration) believe that all students will be successful, and are professional and strategic supports in place to ensure success?
- Are there opportunities in place for developing skills and deepening understanding of Indigenous worldviews, perspectives and pedagogies?
- Are issues of *implicit bias and racism* raised and addressed as possibly impacting the nature of instruction, assessment and learning for Indigenous learners?
- Describe assessment practices being utilized in your district that address the individual needs of Indigenous learners.
- Describe how assessment focuses on quality feedback for student learning rather than on behaviours, suspensions, penalties for lateness, assigning "zeros" etc.
- Describe how assessment is systematically reviewed for racial bias.
- What opportunities are there for students, families, and communities to learn about and give feedback on effective instruction, curriculum, and resources that are used in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	No Evidence
The Pedagogical Core lacks agency and advocacy for equity work. The learners' experience is singular and does not connect to the need for equitable opportunities. Learners are assigned to programs and classes according to opinion about cultural background and perceived learning abilities. Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives are	The Pedagogical Core is beginning to connect learning to the cultural backgrounds of learners. Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives are beginning to be incorporated into the classroom experience of each learner.	The Pedagogical Core is maturing and incorporates empowering experiences for all learners most of the time. Learners' cultural backgrounds are acknowledged and attempts are made to connect learning to personal experiences. Resources connect to the learners' experience most of the time. Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives are	The Pedagogical Core is mature in taking responsibility for equity of opportunity for all learners. Learners are empowered to challenge themselves to succeed and they recognize that their cultural background is respected through the appropriate use of resources. Learning experiences are intentionally designed to promote opportunities for all	The Equity Team is unable to determine the characteristics of the Pedagogical Core.

absent. Classrooms are disconnected from families and communities.		incorporated most of the time.	learners. Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives are always present. Classrooms are highly connected to families and communities.	

At the district level, data was collected from several employee groups through interviews and online surveys. The surveys were distributed to both school-based and non-school based staff. Of the school-based staff, there were approximately 500 respondents, 80% of whom were RTA (Richmond Teachers' Association) members, 5% of whom were RASA (Richmond Association of School Administrators) members, and 10 % were CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) members, which includes Education Assistants, clerical staff and custodial staff. With regards to the non-school-based staff (those who would work in Facilities and Maintenance or other departments in the School Board Offices), there were approximately 30 respondents, and they were fairly evenly split between CUPE and RMAPS (Richmond Management and Professional Staff) members.

In addition to this information, two teacher consultants who were part of the Equity in Action Team conducted in-person interviews with members of the Indigenous Success Team, which is comprised of three Elementary Success Teachers, one Secondary Success Teacher, one Cultural Success Worker and two Teacher Consultants. Each member of the team participated in two interview sessions.

The four Success Teachers and the Success Worker primarily interact directly with Indigenous students, focusing on cultural services and supports, while the two consultants work with classroom educators and curriculum. The cultural services and experiences led by the Indigenous Success Teachers differ for each student and are designed with the child's interests and strengths in mind. The Success Worker supports the work of teachers across the district and endeavors to connect families to community resources and outside agency support. The two consultants support teachers in their growing understanding of First Peoples Principles of Learning, curriculum integration, equity, and anti-racist pedagogy. The team is a mix of staff who are of Indigenous background and others who are not.

Pedagogical Core – Findings from School-Based and Non-School Based Staff

Of the over 500 respondents to the surveys, just over 50% of school-based staff had been in their role in the district for 10 or more years. School staff was asked the following questions and were asked to use a Likert Scale (1 being minimal use and 5 being extensive) to respond:

- To what extent are you currently including Indigenous content, First Peoples Principles of Learning perspectives and worldviews in your practice? 58% rated their inclusion of Indigenous content, etc. as being a 3 or higher.

- How comfortable are you with incorporating Indigenous content, perspectives and/or worldviews in your practice? 67% responded with a 3 or higher.
- How important do you think it is for educators to incorporate Indigenous content and pedagogy into their practice? 94% responded with a 3 or higher.
- To what extent do you believe that systemic barriers impact success for Indigenous learners? 82% responded with a 3 or higher.

There were also several open-ended questions that provided some interesting data. When asked to identify the strengths of the Indigenous students with whom they worked, school-based staff identified several strengths. Students were described as "resilient", "hard working", "artistic" and "strong", as well as having:
- a sense of community
- a sense of pride and identity.
- direct connections with their own culture and history, a willingness to share in safe spaces
- an openness to learning
- great communication; willingness to share
- pride in culture and their heritage, a grounded and focused knowledge of their people's history and identity

The data revealed a lot of positive views and aspirations on the part of school-based staff around the importance of Indigenous education in the Richmond School District. There was overwhelming agreement among respondents that Indigenous worldviews, perspectives, and content were an important part of classroom practice, and many respondents expressed a desire to learn more and an interest in accessing more resources, support, and professional learning to help them. There were many comments about how this continues to be an area of growth for the individual teachers and for the district overall.

When asked "What support, information, and/or opportunities would assist you in building better relationships to support the engagement and achievement of Indigenous students and their families?", responses included more professional development opportunities, more opportunities to work with and learn from the Indigenous Success Team, and more resources, including games and activities and books by Indigenous authors for all ages. Comments also mentioned a desire for the following supports:

- Having conversations with those students and families about what we could do to help them be successful (whatever successful looks like for them).
- Connection to Indigenous Elders in the community.
- More opportunities to hear from Indigenous voices at Pro-d etc.
- I think continuously finding ways to highlight of many achievements of Indigenous Canadians, past and present.
- More guidance/concrete examples of how we can apply the First Peoples' Principles of Learning in our classes.

"In order to teach our history, I need to continue learning about it."

While some respondents stated that they did not believe that there were systemic barriers or racism in their schools, the majority were quick to point out barriers such as teacher bias, Eurocentric teaching methods or styles, lower expectations for Indigenous students, negative stereotypes in outdated textbooks and in society in general, lack of representation in literature and the curriculum, and a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of staff.

"(There are barriers when) …. Indigenous content is presented as a standalone unit rather than integrated throughout curricular areas throughout the year. When the focus of Indigenous education is SOLELY on the negative aspects of history (e.g., residential schools) and not on the positives (e.g., their contribution to Canada). "

Many respondents indicated that they did not currently work with Indigenous learners or were not aware if they worked with any Indigenous learners. Given the small number of self-identified Indigenous students in the district, this is not surprising. However, regardless of whether there are Indigenous students in a particular school or classroom, it is important that First Peoples Principles of Learning as well as Indigenous history, worldviews and perspectives be included in all learning situations, and this is not always the case. Several teachers reported anxieties about not being well prepared to address Indigenous content in an authentic, purposeful, and meaningful way.

"I think this is a powerful survey...but the key is that there is a huge leap between me typing these answers and having a) the supports I need to move forward in my classroom ……… and b) the permission to try and fail...since I don't know what I am doing rightly or wrongly, it would be great to be able to try different strategies without fear of getting in trouble if I would do something "wrong""

"I need to have a better understanding of the culture. I am very worried about "saying the wrong thing" so sometimes I don't want to say anything."

Of the approximately 30 non-school based staff, only 15% had been in their roles for 10 years or more. While 88% of respondents stated that they had no direct contact with Indigenous students and/or Indigenous families and 78% said that contact with Indigenous families did not inform their work, 38% of them had engaged in professional learning around Indigenous education and 78% would be interested in learning more. When asked the question, "What is your level of understanding with respect to issues related to Indigenous Education and recommendations from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission?" (1 = minimal, 5 = extensive), 60% responded with a 3 or higher.

Pedagogical Core – Findings from the Indigenous Success Team

Three themes emerged from interviews with the Indigenous Success Team: systemic barriers and challenges, understanding the work and role of the team, and enhanced supports for Indigenous students.

Theme 1: Systemic Barriers and Challenges

The team articulated that some Indigenous students and families have a fragile or even dysfunctional relationship with the education system, which can be characterized by not having a connection to or established trust with school staff. This can be due to a variety of reasons, including negative personal experiences in the past with a particular school or teacher or to an overall sense of mistrust of the public education system.

The team was able to give specific examples of systemic barriers that they see in the work that they do. Teachers' low academic expectations for Indigenous students was identified by the whole group. One person talked about how the students are sometimes undervalued and described as "being behind" by educational staff. The team also provided examples of academic discrimination. For example, one person reported being told, "Indigenous students cannot learn Science", while another heard that an Indigenous student "...was not a good fit for (an academic) school."

These interviews were conducted before the Ministry announced the addition of a new graduation requirement for Indigenous coursework. The team reported how challenging it was to get Indigenous courses on the timetable, despite significant interest from Indigenous students. "I think there is a real problem with course selection. Indigenous students are discouraged from taking certain courses, or for advocating for Indigenous courses. They are always told that there is not enough interest, and that they can't run courses with small numbers."

With respect to land acknowledgements, the team reported that there was a lack of consistent representation across the district, citing varying levels of understanding about land acknowledgements, "Some schools are doing them over the morning announcements, and some schools are not doing them at all. When land acknowledgements are not done respectfully and with meaning, it is distressing for Indigenous students."

The team also cited the importance of having Indigenous representation in school leadership, as well as at the district level. "Indigenous voices need to be in positions of power that make decisions." The team highlighted the need to prioritize the recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees across all employment groups, "You can't underestimate what it means to see someone who looks like you in a leadership role. That is powerful for Indigenous kids to see."

Theme 2: Understanding the Work and Role of the Indigenous Success Team

The members of the Indigenous Success Team believe that for some educators, there is not always a clear understanding of the work of the team, as the Success teachers are often asked to help classroom teachers with planning and curriculum (something that is within the purview of the Indigenous Teacher Consultants) or they are asked to come and "cover" Indigenous topics or content for a class. "There is a misunderstanding of our roles. We are there to provide support and experiences for Indigenous students."

The team suggested that an area of growth would be for more understanding of the role of and supports provided by the Indigenous Success Team. As one team member noted, "Cultural knowledge and understanding is completely undervalued, so the program that we provide is seen as 'extra' instead of essential." Another person added, "The kids are always being told that if they come to see me, then they are going to be missing something that they will need to 'catch-up' on. The Math lesson will always be the priority over a cultural experience for Indigenous kids. That's a problem. Why is it not valued the same way?" The team also articulated that the program is sometimes used as a reward for good behavior or work completion, "The program should not be about rewards and punishments, it's not transactional. It's real work that is really important."

Theme 3: Enhanced Supports for Students

The team acknowledged other areas of growth in supporting students and their families, as well as for professional learning for staff across all employment groups in the district around Indigenous protocols and working with Indigenous peoples. Each member of the team reported feeling that they could not service enough students consistently, as they are spread across many school sites. The team believes that additional support would be beneficial to students and their families.

The team was aware that there are policies and processes at the school and the district level that do not reflect Indigeneity. They suggested that more professional learning was needed around school and district protocols with regards to working with Indigenous peoples, "There need to be policies and procedures that universalize how we treat Indigenous people." The team also reported a lack of understanding of protocols from employment groups when working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

Finally, the team also reported the need for Indigenous Gathering Spaces across school sites throughout the Richmond School District. This is consistent with what students and families told interviewers, and speaks to themes of connection and belonging, as well as representation.

"B.C.'s Framework for Enhancing Student Learning reflects a public commitment by education partners to work together to continuously improve student learning. They commit to addressing long-standing differences in performance among particular groups of students. These include Indigenous students."

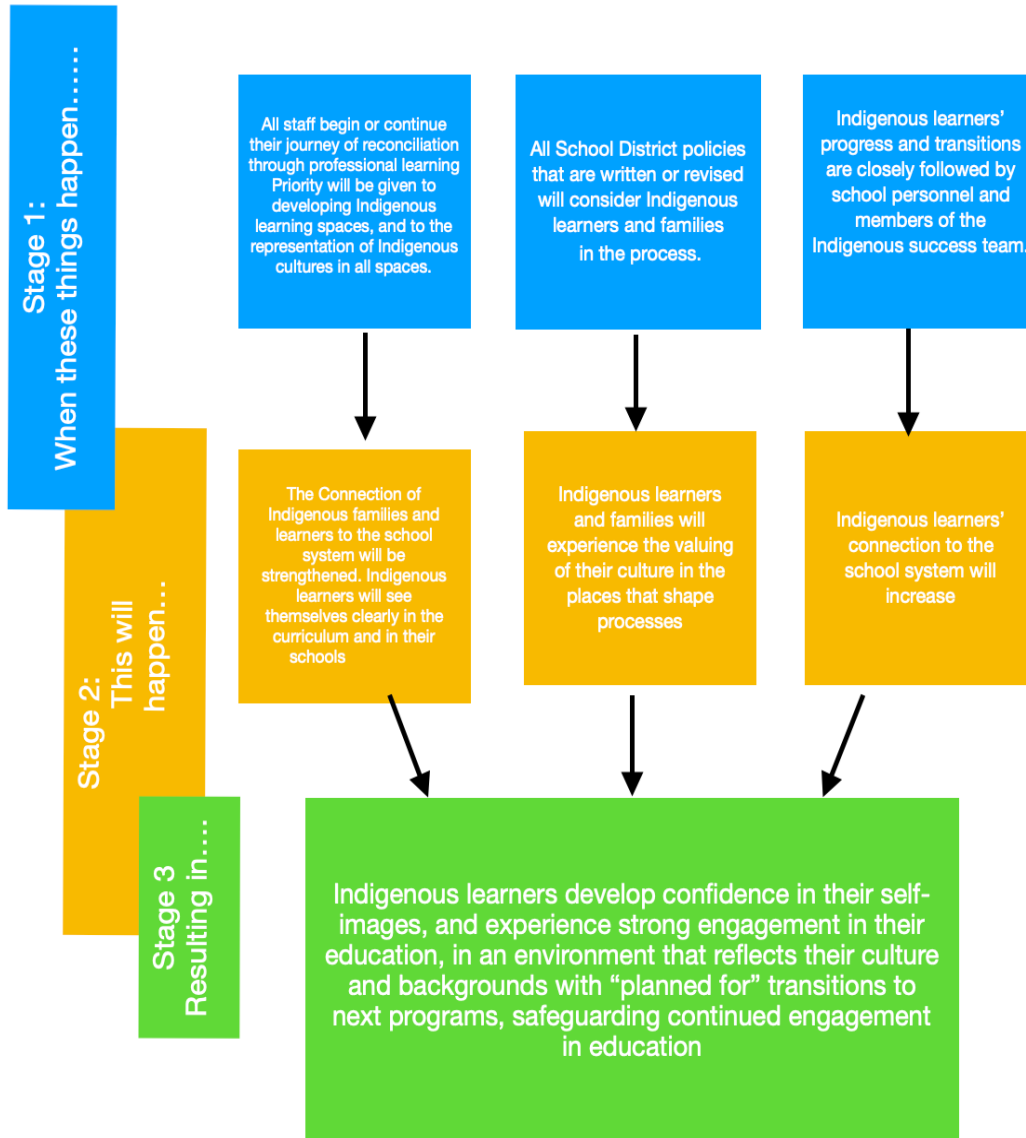*Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, 2019*

EQUITY IN ACTION – RECOMMENDATIONS

The process of the Equity in Action Project has provided several possibilities for areas of growth as the work in Indigenous Education continues in the Richmond School District. Attention to these areas will guide next steps for the school district and will support the strengthening of outcomes for Indigenous students and the connection of their families and guardians to schools. It is important to note that several of these recommendations are already part of the school district's commitment to Indigenous Education. The Richmond School District began a journey several years ago to support staff in their understanding of reconciliation, and to support the success of Indigenous learners with a variety of opportunities. Some examples include:

- The Indigenous Success Team asked for consideration of Indigenous gathering spaces within the school district. Currently, they use a space at Cambie Secondary and another at Grauer Elementary. These spaces are being used to host a variety of cultural learning opportunities for Indigenous learners.
- Professional learning opportunities for staff, led by both the Indigenous Success Team teacher consultants as well as external speakers have been ongoing for many years. These learning opportunities support staff development in Indigenous Education and First Peoples Principles of Learning.
- Three years ago, the Indigenous Success team launched the k̓ʷəməy̓əm program, which invited a staff member at each school to be a volunteer advocate for Indigenous Learners. This program grows every year as more staff step forward to support students.

There is a strong desire to maintain the current work, as well as to broaden and deepen what is presently in place, and to continue support all staff as they move along the path to reconciliation. The Richmond School District's "Theory of Change" as it relates to Indigenous Education (see below), describes the process through which the District believes that equity for Indigenous learners will occur. This theory, a required part of the Equity Scan process, delineates that when all staff are better informed about reconciliation, when policies, spaces and curriculum are increasingly Indigenized, and when the needs of Indigenous learners are prioritized, these learners will meet with increased success in the Richmond School District.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Stage 1:
When these things happen........

All staff begin or continue their journey of reconciliation through professional learning Priority will be given to developing Indigenous learning spaces, and to the representation of Indigenous cultures in all spaces.

All School District policies that are written or revised will consider Indigenous learners and families in the process.

Indigenous learners' progress and transitions are closely followed by school personnel and members of the Indigenous success team.

Stage 2:
This will happen...

The Connection of Indigenous families and learners to the school system will be strengthened. Indigenous learners will see themselves clearly in the curriculum and in their schools

Indigenous learners and families will experience the valuing of their culture in the places that shape processes

Indigenous learners' connection to the school system will increase

Stage 3
Resulting in......

Indigenous learners develop confidence in their self-images, and experience strong engagement in their education, in an environment that reflects their culture and backgrounds with "planned for" transitions to next programs, safeguarding continued engagement in education

A number of recommendations have emerged through analysis of the data and findings previously outlined in this report, and are respectfully submitted here:

Policy and Governance

It is recommended that:
- the principles of DRIPA are enacted at the district, school, and classroom level. This would include specific DRIPA actions such as:
    - identify and undertake concrete measures to increase the literacy and numeracy achievement levels of Indigenous students at all levels of the K-12 education system, including the early years
    - identify, develop and implement mechanisms and approaches to enable boards of education to better support Indigenous students, including increasing and ensuring equitable access to education and safe environments
- as new Board policies and regulations arise and older policies are reviewed, the Richmond Board of Education look to create new policies and revise older policies with Indigenous communities, families, and students in mind
- the Richmond School Districts continues to recruit and retain Indigenous CUPE, RTA, RASA RMAPS, and exempt positions staff
- the Richmond School District and Board of Education continue to build a reciprocal relationship with the Musqueam First Nation

Learning Profiles

It is recommended that:

- Indigenous students have timely access to required supports and services including but not limited to assessments, literacy and numeracy interventions, and district-based specialized supports
- school-based staff regularly review the progress, assessment data and transitions of Indigenous students and prioritize access to required resources

Learning Environment

It is recommended that:

- the Richmond School District continues to provide and encourage professional learning opportunities in Indigenous history, perspectives and worldviews for all district employees
- the Richmond School District continues to encourage and support visual representation of Indigenous cultures in all district facilities and schools
- the Richmond School District continues to expand the number of Gathering Spaces for Indigenous students across the district

Pedagogical Core

It is recommended that:

- the Richmond School District continues to incorporate Indigenous student success, First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) and decolonizing school-based practices into the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (FESL) process.
- the Richmond School District continues to provide professional learning opportunities that promote Equity, Anti-Racism, Trauma Informed Practices, and DRIPA in classroom practice.

MOVING FORWARD

For over a decade, the Richmond School District has had an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Committee in place as a consultative body. As the current Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement expires in June 2022, the Equity in Action Team is recommending that the District transition to a formalized Indigenous Education Advisory Committee with clear Terms of Reference, to operate as a new consultative body. Composition could include the following representatives:

- Board of Education
- Senior Staff
- District Administrator, Equity and Inclusion
- Teacher Consultant, Equity in Action
- Teacher Consultant, Indigenous Education
- Teacher Consultant, Equity and Inclusion
- Indigenous Community Partner representation
- Partner Group Representation: CUPE, RASA, RDPA, RMAPS, RTA, students, community partners (i.e., City of Richmond, post-secondary institutions, etc. as appropriate)

It is suggested that the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee could meet 3 to 4 times a year and report to the Board of Education on a regular basis regarding the District's progress with the recommendations outlined in this report, in alignment with the Board's Strategic Priorities.

CONCLUSION

As the journey towards reconciliation continues, supporting staff in their learning about Indigenous Education and true Canadian history becomes critically important. The Equity in Action journey of the past two years has illuminated what is working for our Indigenous students and families, while also showing areas for further growth.

In the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ language, nə́ċaʔmat šxʷqʷeləwən means "We are of one heart and one mind". The Richmond School District and its diverse communities are on a collective learning journey when it comes to reconciling what they have learned, not yet learned, or are beginning to learn, with what they are coming to understand.

"Education is what got us here and education is what will get us out."

Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner, Justice Murray Sinclair

ADDITIONAL GUIDING DOCUMENTS

There are several documents that support work within the Equity in Action Project, helping with its vision and purpose. They are listed below:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was established in 2008 by the parties of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. In June, 2015 the Commission released an executive report of their findings as well as 94 Calls to Action. The Calls to Action include recommendations regarding reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous peoples. Calls to Action 62-65 refer specifically to Education for Reconciliation:

62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
    i.   Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
    ii.   Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
    iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
    iv.   Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:
    i.   Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
    ii.   ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
    iii. iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
    iv.   iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

64. We call upon all levels of government that provide public funds to denominational schools to require such schools to provide an education on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Elders.

65. We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation.

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Action Plan (Government of British Columbia, 2022)

On March 30, 2022, the provincial government released the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Action Plan. It was co-created with Indigenous leaders and includes collectively identified goals and outcomes that form the long-term vision for implementing the UN Declaration in B.C. It also has 89 priority actions - tangible steps that will advance this work in key areas over the next five years. Several objectives and actions are specific to education.

The four main goals in the plan are:

- Self-Determination and Inherent Right of Self-Government
- Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Ending Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination
- Social, Cultural and Economic Well-Being

The 9ᵗʰ Professional Standard (BC Teachers Council, 2019)

In June 2019, a ninth professional standard was added to the Professional Standards for BC Educators. These standards are the responsibility of all BC educators and are a requirement for certification as well as employment. While each of the professional standards demand that educators promote equity and inclusion, the overall success of all learners and a broad knowledge base in their subject area, the 9ᵗʰ standard refers specifically to Indigenous education.

- *Educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future. Educators contribute towards truth, reconciliation, and healing. Educators foster a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and being, histories and cultures of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis.*
- *Educators critically examine their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices to facilitate change. Educators value and respect the languages, heritages, cultures and ways of knowing and being First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Educators understand the power of focusing on connectedness and relationships to oneself, family, community, and the natural world. Educators integrate First Nations, Inuit and Métis worldviews and perspectives into learning environments (BC Teachers Council, 2019, p. 5).*

Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples (Government of British Columbia, 2018)

Guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as well as the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the 94 Calls to Action, the province of British Columbia has drafted 10 principles intended to guide and support strong and positive relationships with Indigenous peoples. These 10 principles are:

1. The Province of British Columbia recognizes that all relations with Indigenous peoples need to be based on the recognition and implementation of their right to self- determination, including the inherent right of self-government.
2. The Province of British Columbia recognizes that reconciliation is a fundamental purpose of section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982.
3. The Province of British Columbia recognizes that the honour of the Crown guides the conduct of the Crown in all of its dealings with Indigenous peoples
4. The Province of British Columbia recognizes that Indigenous self-government is part of Canada's evolving system of cooperative federalism and distinct orders of government.
5. The Province of British Columbia recognizes that treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements between Indigenous peoples and the Crown have been and are intended to be acts of reconciliation based on mutual recognition and respect.
6. The Province of British Columbia recognizes that meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples aims to secure their free, prior and informed consent when B.C. proposes to take actions which impact them and their rights, including their lands, territories and resources.
7. The Province of British Columbia recognizes that respecting and implementing rights is essential and that any infringement of section 35 rights must by law meet a high threshold of justification which includes Indigenous perspectives and satisfies the Crown's fiduciary obligations.
8. The Province of British Columbia recognizes that reconciliation and self-government require a renewed fiscal relationship, developed in collaboration with the federal government and Indigenous nations that promotes a mutually supportive climate for economic partnership and resource development.
9. The Province of British Columbia recognizes that reconciliation is an ongoing process that occurs in the context of evolving Crown-Indigenous relationships.
10. The Province of British Columbia recognizes that a distinctions-based approach is needed to ensure that the unique rights, interests and circumstances of Indigenous peoples in B.C. are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented.

STUDENT QUESTIONS

PRIMARY interview questions:

1. Do you enjoy coming to school? What do enjoy most about being at school?
2. What do you like to learn at school? What have you learned so far that you're excited or proud about?
3. Are there times when you wish you didn't have to be at school? Can you tell me about those times?
4. How does being at school make you feel?
5. How does it feel to be Aboriginal/Indigenous/First Nations?
6. Do you think that your Indigenous heritage is respected at your school? How do you know?
7. Have you ever been teased at school because of your Aboriginal/Indigenous/First Nations culture?
8. Can you tell me about two adults in this school who make you smile and who make you feel good about being at school? Can you tell me who they are and what they do to make you feel happy?
9. Are there times when you need help at school? What kind of help are you thankful for?
10. How could school be made better? What do you wish your teacher knew that would make school better?

INTERMEDIATE interview questions

As above and in addition:

1. Is school a welcoming and safe place for you?
2. Do you learn about Indigenous people, or culture in your class and school? Can you describe what you have learned? How does it make you feel?
3. In your school, do you encounter negative comments/stereotypes regarding Indigenous peoples? Can you describe this and how it makes you feel? Is there anything that could be done to help this situation?

SECONDARY QUESTIONS

1. Do you like school?
2. Do you feel safe at school?
3. Have you ever felt bullied, teased, picked on or uncomfortable at school due to your race?
4. Do adults in your school treat all students fairly?
5. When you are having challenges at school, do you go to someone at school for help?

6. Is your cultural identity an important part of who you are?
7. Is your cultural identity respected by students and staff at your school?
8. Are Indigenous worldviews, perspectives and knowledge taught in your classes?
9. Do you feel there is enough support for you at school?
10. Do you feel school is preparing you for your future after grade 12?

Questions were also reframed for in-person, one-to-one interviews:

1. How do you feel about coming to school?   What do you enjoy most about school? Are there times when you don't want to be at school? Can you tell me about those times?
2. What makes you feel a sense of belonging at school?
3. Have you ever experienced racism at school? Can you tell me more?
4. Do you feel that there are adults in the school who believe in you? Who are they and how do you know?
5. Can you tell me about your Indigenous ancestry and what it means to you?
6. Can you identify any evidence of Indigenous representation in your school? If so, what is it, and how does it make you feel?
7. What have you learned about Indigenous people, or culture in your classes? How did it make you feel?
8. How is your learning going? How do you know?
9. What changes would you like to see to support your learning at school?
10. What are you planning to do after Grade 12? Do you feel that there is a high level of expectation shown by your teachers for you to succeed at school and in the future?
11. If you could say anything to your teachers or principals to make school better, what would you advise?
12. What does success in school mean to you? What does success in life mean to you?

APPENDIX C

PARENT QUESTIONS

On a Likert scale:

1. My child enjoys going to school.
2. When I walk into my child's school, there are representations of who he or she is an Aboriginal person.
3. My child feels a sense of belonging at school.
4. My child is happy in his or her classroom.
5. My child's school is preparing him or her for the next academic year.
6. My child has made good progress in his or her academic work.
7. My child has made good progress in his or her relationships with others.
8. My child has found adults he or she can count on for help at school.
9. My family's Indigenous heritage is respected at my child's school.
10. My child learns about Indigenous people, knowledge, culture, or ways of knowing in his or her classes and schools.
11. My child has complained about bullying or conflict at school this year.
12. I am satisfied with the way my child's school is dealing with bullying/conflict or other issues.
13. I feel that I have a voice at my child's school.
14. I feel that there are opportunities to give feedback on effective instruction, curriculum and resources that are used in the classroom.
15. I feel welcome at my child's school.
16. Staff are receptive to parent concerns and comments.
17. The school community treats all students fairly.
18. I see evidence of racism at my child's school.
19. The school is preparing my child for a future after Grade 12.

Open-ended questions:

1. How would you describe your child's connection to school?
2. What does a sense of belonging in school mean to you?
3. What do you believe should be included in your child's learning or at school to make it more culturally responsive?
4. In your child's school, what's working well? What's not?
5. What do you want the school to know about your child? What are your child's strengths?
6. How supported as a family do you feel by your school and district programs?
7. What are your top priorities for your child(ren) at school?

8. What evidence of racism exists in your child's school, if any? If your child has experienced racism at school, can you share what that looked like?
9. What should be in place in schools to encourage equity for Aboriginal students?
10. What does your child's success in school look like to you?

STAFF QUESTIONS

School-Based Staff Questions

1. What is your employee group?
2. What grades do you teach or support (check all that apply)?
3. How long have you been in your role?
4. If applicable, what is your area of learning?
5. To what extent are you currently including Indigenous content, First Peoples Principles of Learning perspectives and worldviews in your practice? (1 = minimal, 5 = extensive, N/A = not applicable)
6. How comfortable are you with incorporating Indigenous content, perspectives and/or worldviews in your practice? (1 = minimal, 5 = extensive, N/A = not applicable)
7. How important do you think it is for educators to incorporate Indigenous content and pedagogy into their practice? (1 = minimal, 5 = extensive, N/A = not applicable)
8. How often do you see racism directed towards Indigenous students in your classes or in your school? (1 = minimal, 5 = extensive, N/A = not applicable)
9. To what extent, do you believe that systemic barriers impact success for Indigenous learners? (1 = minimal, 5 = extensive, N/A = not applicable)
10. What strengths are you observing in the Indigenous students with whom you work?
11. How do you gain professional knowledge to include Indigenous content, perspectives, and pedagogy in your practice?
12. Can you provide examples of any systemic barriers (process, rules and regulations, policies, etc.) or acts of individual racism (stereotyped images, derogatory comments, racial slurs, etc.) that may be impacting the achievement of Indigenous learners?
13. How are barriers to the success of Indigenous learners being addressed? Do you have further suggestions as to how these barriers should be addressed?
14. What support, information, and/or opportunities would assist you in building better relationships to support the engagement and achievement of Indigenous students and their families?
15. If you have any specific questions or comments about this survey or the Equity Scan process, please include them below

Non- School Based Staff Questions

1. Please indicate your employee group
2. How long have you been in your role?

3. What is your level of understanding with respect to issues related to Indigenous Education and recommendations from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission? (1 = minimal, 5 = extensive)
4. In your work, do you have any direct contact with Indigenous students and/or Indigenous families?
5. In relation to the above question (#4), to what extent does that contact with Indigenous students and families inform your work? (1 = minimally, 5 = extensively, N/A = not applicable)
6. Have you engaged in any professional learning around Indigenous education?
7. If professional learning opportunities were made available to your employee group, would you be interested in learning about Indigenous education?
8. Can you provide examples of any systemic barriers (process, rules and regulations, policies, etc.) or acts of individual racism (stereotyped images, derogatory comments, racial slurs, etc.) that may be impacting the experiences of Indigenous learners?
9. Can you provide examples of any systemic barriers (process, rules and regulations, policies, etc.) or acts of
10. individual racism (stereotyped images, derogatory comments, racial slurs, etc.) that you have witnessed or experienced with respect to Indigenous peoples in your work role?
11. If you have any specific questions or comments about this survey or the Equity Scan process, please include them below:

APPENDIX E

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Report to the Education Committee (Richmond)

PUBLIC

DATE: **January 18, 2023**

FROM: **Jane MacMillan - Executive Director, Learning Services**
                   Braunwyn Thompson – Director of Instruction, Inclusive Learning

SUBJECT: **Aspen Learning Centre Program Review**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Education Committee recommends that the Richmond Board of Education direct staff to proceed with the recommendations contained in the Aspen Learning Centre Program Review.

STRATEGIC PLAN REFERENCE

Priority 2: Equity and Inclusion
        Goal 1: District learning environments are equitable and inclusive.
                II. Provide equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for all learners
                III. Devote focused attention and specialized support to address the individualized needs of learners with disabilities and diverse abilities

Priority 3: Optimized Facilities and Technology
        Goal 2: The district's facilities are well-maintained, equitable, safe and conducive to learning
                VI. Create learning environments that are flexible and support inclusive educational practices.

BACKGROUND

The Aspen Learning Centre (ALC) located at MacNeill Secondary School opened for the 2016-2017 school year. ALC was introduced as a specialized secondary program intended to meet the needs of student with complex needs requiring significant supports.

Strategic Priority Two, Goal One of the Richmond Board of Education's Strategic Plan articulates the Board's commitment to ensuring that district learning environments are equitable and inclusive. The Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) commits to reviewing the facility needs of the ALC. As a component of achieving the above stated goal and commitments, the District conducted a comprehensive review of the Aspen Learning Centre (ALC) at MacNeill Secondary.

The district engaged Laurie Smith, Inclusive Education Consultant, to lead the review. Ms. Smith is an inclusive education consultant to BC school districts and WorkSafeBC. Ms. Smith has an extensive background in Safety Planning and provides training in this area for many school districts. She worked as a District Principal for Inclusive Education and a sessional instructor in the areas of Autism Spectrum Disorders, Positive Behaviour Support, and Functional Assessment at UBC. Currently, she is an instructor in Behaviour Support and Autism Spectrum Disorders for Queen's University diploma program.

The attached report is the result of the review conducted by Ms. Smith, which took place between October 2021 and March 2022.

CONCLUSION

Staff appreciate the Board's governance guidance around program reviews and beyond. The district's LRFP and Strategic Plan, when knitted together, provide staff with clarity and direction in relationship to the need for a comprehensive review of the Aspen Learning Centre. As always, our commitments focus on our learners, community engagement, and effective utilization of our facilities and resources.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jane MacMillan
Executive Director - Learning Services

Braunwyn Thompson
Director of Instruction – Inclusive Learning

ASPEN LEARNING CENTRE PROGRAM REVIEW

Aspen Learning Centre Program Review

Foreword

School District No. 38 (Richmond) has a proud history of providing innovative supports for students with diverse abilities and disabilities. Currently, district leadership to support these students is provided by the Learning Services department, with the stated goal of ensuring "that students with special needs receive appropriate and rich learning opportunities so they are successful in meeting their individualized educational goals as members of the larger school community … focusing on students with disabilities and diverse abilities to enrich their communication, thinking, and personal and social competencies".[1] Individual educational opportunities range from full integration in neighbourhood schools, differentiated school-based supports based on demonstrated needs, and specialized programs for very few students with more intensive support needs. Aspen Learning Centre (ALC) is one example of the district's flexible approach to meet the needs of students who require intensive individualized supports.

Philosophy and Design

The Aspen Learning Centre (ALC), located at A.R. MacNeill Secondary School, opened for the 2016 - 2017 school year. The ALC was introduced as a specialized secondary program similar to the Errington Learning Centre (ELC) elementary program. The ALC is described as a "therapeutic program for students with complicated special needs who currently benefit from a smaller learning environment until the time that they are ready to return to the mainstream inclusive school community. Each student's individualized goals include developing improved self-regulation, communication skills, social/emotional development and foundational academic skills".[2] Placement of the program at A.R. MacNeill was originally planned to be temporary. The district's current Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) acknowledges the need to address the question of permanency of the ALC.

Demographics

During the first year at A.R. MacNeill Secondary, ALC enrolled 3 students. In its 6th year, ALC enrolls 11 students, 9 of whom attend full days and 2 who attend partial days. The program presently consists of 21 staff: 2 continuing teachers, 1 teacher in a temporary placement, and 18 education assistants (EAs). Program staff are supported by an Inclusion Support Teacher (IST), Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) 1 day per week, and an Occupational Therapist (OT) 1 day per week. In recognition of the complexities associated with the ALC program, the district

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[1] https://sd38.bc.ca/our-district/about-us/inspired-learners/equity-and-inclusion/students-disabilities-and-diverse
[2] ALC Program Manual

2

June 2022

has allocated a third vice-principal to the school for the past three school years (reviewed annually).[3]

Disabilities Represented

Aspen Learning Centre supports students with complex disabilities (students often have more than one diagnosis) such as:

- Autism spectrum disorder
- Seizure disorder
- Moderate to severe Intellectual disability
- Mild intellectual disability
- Mild hearing loss
- Tourette's syndrome
- Catatonia
- Microcephaly
- Physical disabilities including tics, tremors, and heart issues
- Severe behaviour issues (self-injurious and/or aggression toward others)

In addition, a significant number of the students are non-verbal, or functionally non-verbal (unable to use verbal language to effectively communicate their needs, wants and for social communication).

Objectives of the Review

One sign of strength in a school district is a commitment to ongoing reflection and renewal. To that end, in Fall 2021, a review of the Aspen Learning Centre was initiated by the district and led by Learning Services, to "assess and make recommendations regarding:

- Philosophy and design
- Sustainability of program location and physical space considerations/requirements
- Current and future needs related to staffing, resources, training, etc."[4]

Process

To complete this review, several actions were taken between October 2021 and March 2022:

Getting Started:

1. There were initial conversations with the Executive Director - Learning Services and Director of Instruction – Inclusive Learning.

2. There was also an initial conversation with the Principal, A.R. MacNeill Secondary School and a phone conference call with the Principal and Vice Principals of the school.

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[3] Information provided by Principal, AR MacNeill Secondary
[4] Aspen Learning Centre Review Proposal

3. Presentations and publications about the program were reviewed. These were prepared by Marcia Timmins and A.R. MacNeill staff, emphasizing successes in the program, and outlining expectations for staff and best practices.
4. Employee Safety Plans for students in the ALC were reviewed.
5. Relevant district policies and guidelines (e.g., 504.12 Physical Restraint of Students) were reviewed.
6. Relevant standards of practice in Special Education in BC and other jurisdictions were reviewed:

   - BC Ministry of Education document, *Student Services Review Toolkit*
   - *A Process for Reviewing the Effectiveness of Student Services at the District Level (2010)*
   - *Supporting Inclusive and Responsive Learning Environments Video Series (Shelley Moore, 2018-2019)*
   - *Policy for Student Success including the BC Learning Plan (BC Ministry of Education, 2018)*

7. Current literature in Special Education was reviewed, with a particular focus on literature concerning the education of students with complex needs.

In order to complete the review, the following questions were considered:

- What is good practice in Inclusive Education?
- What is needed to ensure that each student currently served by the Aspen Learning Centre achieves their individual potential and a positive future?
- Is the current model sustainable?
- What actions would best support the staff and students in the ALC?
- Where do we go from here?

School Visits (November 17, 18 & 19, 2021):

1. Observations of the program were completed to better understand:
   - The student composition within the program
   - Staffing levels and utilization
   - Day-to-day functioning of the program
   - Issues that arise with staffing and safety
   - The physical environment of the program, including the portables used for sensory programming and for staff preparation
   - Ongoing training and team meetings provided to program education assistants (EA) and teaching staff

2. Conversations were held with teachers in the program and the school at large, education assistants and former/current administrators to better understand:
   - Program vision
   - Professional development needs
   - Successes and challenges in meeting the needs of the students
   - Concerns raised by each group around the physical environment, safety, staffing and program sustainability
   - Impact of the program on the broader school community

3. Review of documentation included:
   - All student files
   - Individualized Education Plans (IEP)
   - Timetables
   - Program Manual
   - Entry and exit considerations

4. Visit to Errington Learning Centre to better understand the nature of the elementary supports available to students with complex support needs similar to those represented at the ALC.

Follow-Up to School Visits:

1. Spreadsheets and documentation recording safety incidents and Workplace Violence Risk Assessment (WVRA) reporting were reviewed.
2. A phone conference with the Director of Instruction - Inclusive Learning was conducted.
3. Phone conversations with former and current Speech- Language Pathologists (SLP) for ALC were conducted.
4. A follow-up conversation with the District Resource Teacher - Inclusion Support Team (IST) for ALC was conducted.
5. Learning Services conducted a survey of parents with students currently in the ALC.
6. Learning Services conducted a Student Survey using assisted visuals.

Observations

Many beneficial strategies for teaching and learning were observed, specifically:

- IEPs include very detailed information for weekly implementation
- Frequent Integrated Case Management (ICM) meetings are held with home teams
- Detailed schedules are posted for each student
- Regular meetings are held to review programming, safety and other issues that arise
- The district IST teacher for Aspen is a Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) trainer and works with staff on student specific scenarios
- All staff are trained in CPI
- Detailed behaviour tracking through ABC (Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence) sheets is evident and excellent safety plans have been developed as appropriate
- Staff are trained and given clear instructions in the use of instructional techniques, visual prompts, and the use of minimal, consistent language
- A systematic reading program (Accessible Literacy Learning) has been designed for students who are functionally non-verbal is used for all students
- There is a strong emphasis on the presumption of competence and academic skills
- EA staff work as a team where in most student support situations, one is working one-on-one with a student, and another is preparing the next activity

The SCERTS Model is consistent with evidence-based priorities for educating students with autism. These priorities include:

- Functional, spontaneous communication
- Social instruction in various settings
- Teaching of play and peer skills
- Instruction leading to generalization in natural contexts
- Positive approaches to address problem behaviors
- Functional academic skills when appropriate

(The SCERTS Model and Evidence Based Practice, 2010).

- There is an individualized program of activities designed for each student's sensory needs with an emphasis on supporting student emotional regulation
- Students have access to SLP support and Augmentative Communication devices
- The SCERTS[5] model of intervention, which is an evidence-based practice, is referenced in the design of the program and in some student planning materials
- A conversation area has been designed to support interaction between students
- There have been some successful activities involving music and woodshop to include students in groups

Some questions about the design and philosophy of the program were noted though interview and observation:

- There seems to be a lack of consensus of understanding about a mission or value statement to describe the program, and some uncertainty about the description of the program as "therapeutic"
- Despite training toward consistency, there were differences among staff members in implementation, and some EAs indicated they would like additional curriculum support and guidance
- The program emphasizes social communication skills; however, students seem to primarily interact one-on-one with adults rather than with peers or in social groups
- The environment and instructional practices are often not conducive to naturalistic opportunities for generalization of skills
- Staff indicated a need for further training and understanding using behaviour data collected, and in the development and implementation of positive behaviour support to further incorporate proactive and preventative behaviour strategies
- The safety of staff is an on-going concern
    - Example: During the 2020-2021 School Year, 77% of the incident reports for A.R. MacNeill Secondary were from the ALC (64 incidents), and many of these incidents involved some injury or attempted injury to staff
- Students in the program are complex and typically have significant intellectual disabilities - it would be beneficial to better understand what each individual needs in relationship to community, personal and/or functional skills, in addition to academic skills, to support their transitions to adulthood

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[5] https://scerts.com

- Further coordination and transition planning with home teams is needed

> **What is Best Practice in Quality Teaching and Learning for Students with Significant Disabilities?**
>
> The vital importance of education cannot be overestimated for any individual. Education is certainly critical for those individuals with severe disabilities, who often were excluded from the educational process, from a presumed inability to learn. Individuals with severe disabilities of all ages typically need more time and more opportunities to acquire and practice skills. Unfortunately, low expectations for progress, especially with regard to academic skills, have reduced the amount of exposure to typical and valued educational experiences.
>
> Students with severe disabilities can and do learn both academic and nonacademic skills. They need instruction by highly qualified teachers who can recognize their abilities and can maintain high expectations for their development and growth. Recommended practice for this population of students includes learning with peers without disabilities, systematic instruction that takes into account their chronological age, culture, interests and needs, strong family involvement, collaborative teamwork for a unified approach, and positive behavior support that keeps the focus on desired behavior.
>
> From the article Ed*ucation and Individuals with Severe Disabilities: Promising Practices, (Downing, and MacFarland) 2010:*

Sustainability of Location and Facilities Requirements

The ALC is comprised of 7 classrooms, 4 of which are along a hallway in the north part of the school that is shared with the Life Skills Program. There is one classroom upstairs, and two portables. One portable has sensory equipment, and one has a preparation space for ALC EAs and teaching staff. Each classroom is typically used for 2-3 students. Each student has a designated workspace. The classroom environment is clutter free and has very little visual distraction. The Life Skills program has 2 rooms and a shared kitchen with the ALC. There are controlled entrances and exits to the corridor and two bathrooms within this space. Mirrors have been mounted strategically to facilitate better awareness of student movement.

There are many positive aspects of the physical location observed as expressed through interviews:

- The A.R. MacNeill staff is generally accepting and welcoming of the program
- Much creative problem solving has occurred to make the space more viable
- The program seems to be generally well equipped and appropriately supported by the school district
- Great consideration has been taken to address safety concerns (e.g., temporary locks, warning of movement through technology utilization, mirrors, and storage of equipment/materials)

- The sensory portable is well designed, attractive, and appropriately used by students
- The portable for preparation is well used and contains a wide variety of materials and technology for staff

Concerns about the location of the program were noted though interview and observation:

- Staff expressed concerns about restricted sight lines of the current configuration
- The existing spaces consist of several separate rooms, one of which is upstairs, which staff believe increases the potential for safety incidents due to physical separation from the adjoining rooms downstairs
- There was significant concern focused on the numbers of individuals accessing the one corridor between the Life Skills Program and the ALC; the same corridor is used by approximately 70 individuals (staff and students), which leads to safety and crowding issues
- Sharing a crowded space seems to generate tension between the two programs
- Given the need for limiting visual distraction, and that some students tear materials off walls, etc., the ALC space is quite stark (particularly in contrast to the Errington Learning Centre) and does not lend itself to a flexible or naturalistic setting in which to generalize social and communication skills
- Some aspects of the design (e.g., lighting & material design) could better address the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum
- Outside of the program is a busy road and no outdoor equipment that could be used in an age-appropriate way (e.g., a fitness circuit).
- Some staff indicated the need for a purpose-built space to address concerns as per above

Current and Future Needs (Staffing, Resources, Training)

During the school visits many positive indicators of commitment and care from teachers, EAs and administration at A.R. MacNeill Secondary were observed:

- Staff mentioned feeling appreciated and respected by their administrators
- Staff are dedicated and committed to their work
- Staff celebrated successes in the program and for individual students
- Staff see themselves as advocates for their students
- Students were consistently treated with respect and care
- Staff are committed to developing their skills
- District support staff are highly regarded

Issues and concerns were noted though interviews and observations:

- Safety was identified as a priority issue, as episodes of injuries and incident reports were frequent, despite a clear commitment to following all WorkSafe and district procedures
- Many staff members in the program and the school indicated that intense episodes left them feeling stressed and drained, and that such episodes impacted the school at large

- Extensive administrative time for incident investigation and WVRA documentation was reported
- EA absences create issues as a replacement, if available, is often unfamiliar with the extensive needs of the student population supported through the ALC
- Administrative time needed to rearrange schedules due to EA absences each morning is seen as problematic
- Teacher and administration time is frequently used to cover EA absences and/or breaks
- General education teachers in the school expressed concerns about the use of administration time for the ALC and the negative impact this is having on other school priorities
- Teachers in the program found managing a large group of adults (EAs) beyond their training
- EA staff queried a need for further functional and/or vocational skills training

The teachers and EAs in the ALC are actively seeking further knowledge to enhance their work with complex students.

Parent Survey

Learning Services, with assistance from the staff at A.R. MacNeill Secondary, conducted a program survey of parents of student in the ALC with the following questions:

- What impact has the Aspen Learning Centre had on your child's growth and development?
- From your perspective as a parent/guardian, what are some of the highlights of the Aspen Learning Centre?
- From your perspective as a parent/guardian, what are some of the challenges associated with the Aspen Learning Centre?
- What suggestions or ideas would you offer for the Aspen Learning Centre as we look to the future?

The survey conducted had 5 responses, and the feedback indicated a high level of support for the program from the parents who responded, with comments such as:

- "Spectacular teachers and EAs. Outstanding and flexible learning environment. Being part of Aspen, we can be sure our son is in great hands"
- "The team's compassion and patience are amazing!"
- "The highlights of Aspen Learning Centre include tailor-made teaching and learning materials, the involvement of OT and collective efforts by the case manager, teaching staff and EAs who take care of, and educate my child"

Any concerns raised by the responding parents focused on staffing levels:

- "Limited hours/staffing"
- "Some challenges including allocating the right level of staff to teach different students and meeting challenging needs of different students"
- "Increase staffing and numbers of students able to attend more quickly ... smaller classes and consistent teachers are a simple way to help"

Student Survey

Learning Services, with assistance from the staff at A.R. MacNeill, Secondary conducted a survey of students with the following prompts, which were answered by identifying a corresponding visual:

- School is …
- At school I feel …
- At school I like …
- At school I don't like …
- At school I want more …

The student responses are tabulated below.
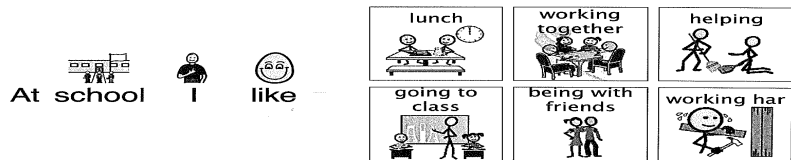
School Is …	At school I feel …	At school I like …	At school I don't like …	At school I want more …
Friendly	Frustrated	Being with friends	Noise	Choice
Friendly	Excited	Lunch		
Friendly	Awesome			
Fun	Happy	Lunch	Noise	Breaks
Friendly	Frustrated	Working hard	Going to class	Choice
Exciting Friendly	Sad Awesome	Working hard Helping	Work that's too hard Doing work	Activities Work
Fun Exciting Friendly	Bored Excited Happy	Lunch Working together Working hard	Noise Working too hard	Breaks Choice Work

		Happy		
Friendly	Awesome	Working together	Too many people	Breaks

The results of the student survey seem to indicate a high level of satisfaction with the program, with a preference for social tasks and choice activities. Some issues with noise and crowding were identified.

Recommendations

The hard work and dedication of the combined district, A.R. MacNeill, and Aspen Learning Centre staff is impressive. It is evident that all staff care deeply about providing a safe and successful educational program for these highly complex learners. This sentiment is echoed by the parents who responded to the survey. As stated previously, despite all the efforts on behalf of those involved with the ALC, concerns remain that will require the district's attention.

I respectfully submit the following recommendations for consideration:

1. **Revisit Program Vision to Consider Increased Emphasis on Quality-Of-Life Outcomes, Person Centered Transition Planning, and Instructional Practice**

   As the ALC is in the 6th year of operation, it is natural and appropriate to review the vision and goals of the program. The current program manual is clear on the important goals of individualized skills for student, such as "developing improved self-regulation, communication skills, social/emotional development and foundational academic skills", and it is evident that the staff works diligently toward these aims. However, staff may benefit from a renewal of purpose by putting these goals into a broader, life-oriented context including:

   Quality of Life Outcomes

   Inclusion Outreach[6] is a BC Provincial Resource Program which is mandated to serve students with severe disabilities in kindergarten to Grade 12 throughout the province. They suggest that considering quality of life outcomes can assist school teams in developing individualized programs for students that reach beyond a student's current setting. These outcomes are:

   Presence is the sharing of the ordinary places that define community life.

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[6] www.inclusionoutreach.ca

Choice is the experience of autonomy both in small, everyday matters and in large, life-defining matters. Personal choice defines and expresses individual identity.

Competence is the opportunity to perform functional and meaningful activities with whatever level or type of assistance required.

Respect is having a valued place among a network of people and valued roles in community life.

Inclusion is the experience of being part of a growing network of personal relationships that includes close friends.[7]

It may benefit ALC staff to share and renew their vision of the ultimate aspirations for their students through considering questions such as self-determination, independence, and quality of life indicators.

Person Centered Transition Planning

> Transition Planning:
> - Acknowledges a student's right to an appropriate education
> - Is a collaborative process
> - Is student centered and promotes independence and self-advocacy
> - Explores programming and services in relation to specific strengths, needs and aspirations
> - Uses an outcomes-based framework
> - Reflects inclusive practices
> - Is necessary for all students on individualized programs or with special needs requiring support at key transition stages
>
> Transition Planning for Students with Special Needs, Nova Scotia, 2005

Transition planning is essential and should begin years before the students leave school for adult services. The team at ALC have worked hard to coordinate with home teams and to support transitions, but an increased focus on programming decisions to have defined transition plans developed for all students beginning in Grade 9 or 10 is recommended. Detailed transition plans and person-centered planning assist teams in developing IEP goals that are specific to the student's future needs and circumstances, and may include student specific community or personal skills in addition to important communication, self-regulation, social and academic goals.

Instructional Practices

While students are provided with opportunities to participate in group activities, including outdoor walks and recreation, the primary setting for students is at their desk or workspace with one or two EAs. There are good instructional practices utilized, such as visual prompts and choice, but this setting limits student opportunities for social engagement with peers and the development of generalization of skills in naturalistic settings. Students would benefit from a focus on greater independence, self-advocacy, and engagement, focused on their interests and strengths. It is recommended that a review of each student's program include a focus on working in groups where possible, a plan to fade EA support where possible, and some

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[7] https://inclusion.com/authors/john-obrien/

consideration of increased interaction with typical peers and exposure to the larger school community.

Partnerships with Other Agencies

It may be valuable to explore partnerships with other agencies, such as Child and Youth Mental Health, Children's Hospital or The Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD).

2. **Review Evidence-Based Safety Procedures and District Safety Reporting Processes Specific to ALC**

   Safety must always be a top priority in any setting, and it is clear that the district and the school are committed to maintaining a safe environment in the ALC as indicated by:

   - Staffing allocations (e.g., 18 EAs for 11 students)
   - A commitment to CPI training that is both general and specific
   - Provision of a CPI trainer (the district IST) attached to the program
   - A clear focus on student emotional regulation
   - Carefully written and reviewed Employee Safety Plans
   - Detailed record keeping about the antecedent, behaviour, and consequence of an incident (ABCs)
   - Materials and resources provided to the program (e.g., temporary locks, mirrors)
   - School administration following all WorkSafe and district procedures

The Ministry of Education BC, in *The Provincial Guidelines for Restraint and Seclusion in School Settin*gs (2015) necessitates that "In cases where a student's behaviour could potentially cause harm to self or others, the student's educational planning must include the development of "a formal positive behaviour support plan describing positive behaviour intervention supports and conflict de-escalation procedures …", in addition to an IEP and a safety plan[8].

The ALC would benefit from a district Behaviour Interventionist (BI) trained in Positive Behaviour Support to assist the teaching staff in the collection of behaviour data necessary to inform the development of formal behaviour support plans. These plans must incorporate an understanding of a student's learning profile, preferred activities, triggers, and motivators, with a particular focus on preventative strategies (not behaviour management or compliance), such as teaching replacement behaviours. Behaviour plans can work within the context of emotional regulation, but also assist the ALC staff to better coordinate with home behaviour specialists. Safety Plans are reactive plans; behaviour plans are contextual plans designed to prevent behaviours from occurring. Preventing serious incidents must continue to be a primary focus for the ALC.

> All behavior is viewed as purposeful serving a variety of functions (e.g., communication, emotional regulation). For children who display unconventional or problem behaviors, there is an emphasis on teaching appropriate replacements and developing a range of supports for emotional regulation.
>
> Barry Prizant, SCERTS training, 2021

The district should consider replacing the third vice-principal position that has been allocated on a year-to-year basis for the past 3 years with a Behaviour Interventionist. The BI should possess expertise working with a range of complex developmental disorders.

The district should consider a review of the reporting and follow-up procedures for incidents involving injury to staff members to determine if efficiencies can be implemented with a view to decreasing the number of administrative hours involved in such tasks, while maintaining the current commitment to staff safety.

3. **Space Considerations for the Aspen Learning Centre Program**

This review surfaced that the majority of program staff felt that the current physical environment is inadequate, and that this leads to safety issues and a perceived need for increased staffing. If the program is to continue and thrive, there is a need to create a purpose-built space in another setting, **or** renovate the existing space to include:

- A larger space to support group activities

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[8] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/support/diverse-student-needs/physical-restraint-seclusion-guidelines.pdf

- Increased open sight lines so that staff can assist each other when necessary
- Have all rooms in the program on the same floor
- Create naturalistic spaces, in particular a central lounge and kitchen to accommodate social communication, peer interaction, and generalization of social skills
- Separation from the current Life Skills program, to alleviate incidental safety concerns and overcrowding
- Incorporate the use of softer furniture materials (designed for durability), colour and appropriate lighting to support the needs of students with autism
- Two bathrooms
- Purpose built storage space to safely house large equipment
- A safe outdoor space for students to engage in age-appropriate physical activity.

An important question that needs to be addressed is whether locating the program at a different school would be more beneficial to the students than remaining at A.R. MacNeill Secondary, where acceptance, relationships, and integration opportunities have been developed over time, but where concerns about the impact of the program on the school at large have also been expressed. This highlights the importance of addressing some of the issues around crowding, administration time demands and safety in conjunction with physical space considerations.

4. **Consider the Maximum Number of Students and Entry/Exit Criteria**

An appraisal of the program entry and exit criteria and the ideal maximum number of students should be considered. The ALC has a stated goal of working to return students to mainstream education in their neighbourhood schools, which is highly appropriate, but difficult in practicality. There has been an excellent exit plan developed by the district IST teacher, with careful consideration of the steps needed to exit the program, but difficulties in allocating staff to carry out the process and a reluctance to destabilize students who are experiencing success create challenges in moving students back to their neighbourhood schools. There are also challenges when the program is too large, particularly in the number of adults involved and the difficulties with supervision, communication, and movement. The ALC would benefit from:

- Clear entrance requirements, which include district support to develop appropriate behaviour and learning support plans, prior to program acceptance
- Intensive, pro-active wrap-around planning prior to entry, and ongoing while the student is transitioning into the program
- Limit student enrolment to 8 students
- A review of students who could be returned to their neighbourhood schools with temporary staffing support (if necessary) to facilitate transitions

- A yearly placement review for all students in April, with planning to move any students who may be transitioned back to mainstream education
- Wrap-around transition planning that has students in their final year moving from school to community settings, with support and coordination with home teams and MCFD
- Instituting a substantial placement review, including medical and psychiatric personnel, home teams and the MCFD when there is an incident that seriously impacts the school or staff

One consideration that arose in the review was the suggestion to split the program into middle school and secondary programs, which would mean smaller numbers in each program. This would involve the need for two purpose-built spaces. This suggestion would have the effect of increasing students transition in their secondary years, which could create additional challenges.

5. **Develop a Staffing Plan that Addresses Coverage for Absences, Allows Greater Flexibility Between Student Teams and Streamlines Scheduling**

A review of the deployment of staffing is indicated, including administration time, teachers and EAs. In the review, the administration time needed to reschedule for absences, and at times cover for EA absences or breaks, was found to be unsustainable. In addition, resource teachers are often required to provide direct support during EA breaks. If there was a renovation of the existing space or a new facility, improved sight lines should support the development of a staffing plan that allows for more flexibility than the current staffing model. In some situations, this could mean that secondary EAs could, if necessary, be available to support more than one primary EA, and one or two "float" positions could be designated to cover for absences and breaks. A new staffing plan should consider:

- How teacher time is being utilized
- Designating one primary EA for each student
- Implementation of "float" EA time
- Assigning secondary EA support more generally to specific work areas

This model could initially be very challenging, as the students are very sensitive to the individuals with whom they work, and there is a great deal of student-specific knowledge to consider. Nonetheless, these considerations can address issues of sustainability in the current model. This would not necessitate a decrease in staffing, but rather a redeployment to create an ability to support absences, etc., without the current overreliance on administrative staff. In addition, having one primary EA assigned to each student with the secondary EA working more flexibly simplifies the development of contingency planning in

case of absence and may help to alleviate the need to rearrange the schedule each morning.

6. **Develop a Comprehensive Staff Development Plan**

Staff discussed the following areas for further professional learning:

- Positive Behaviour Support Strategies with a focus on:
  - Meaningful data collection and the appropriate use of relevant data to inform planning/decision-making
  - The development of behaviour support plans
  - Increased understanding and coordination with home behaviour consultants
- Person-centered transition planning to support transition to adulthood
- Evidence-based instruction and curriculum for students
- Supporting naturalistic communication through Augmented and Assistive Communication (AAC) and the SCERTS model

The district IST teacher and the teachers in the program currently hold valuable team meetings which cover some of these areas. Collaboratively developing a professional learning plan allows for specific areas of interest to be supported that address the needs expressed throughout the review.

Final Comments

It has been a pleasure to complete this review of the Aspen Learning Centre (ALC) program. During my site visits at A.R. MacNeill Secondary School, I was provided every courtesy and assistance and had full access to materials and personnel. I appreciate the willingness of the staff of the school and the ALC to share their experiences, comments, and ideas about the program. Moreover, I was impressed with the level of commitment to the students, and the efforts taken to maintain consistent, appropriate practice in instruction and staff coordination. It is evident that those working for this program aspire to provide the best possible educational experiences for the students. This report is intended to offer recommendations and comments about the program while valuing the evident strengths of the Aspen team. Finally, I would like to thank the students, who are at the heart of it all.

Respectfully,

Laurie Smith M.Ed.

June 8, 2022

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