

2023-2024 School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

Emily Carr Elementary School is in a densely populated urban setting at Oak Street and King Edward in the Douglas Park area. We have 326 students in grades Kindergarten to Seven. The school is named after the Canadian writer and painter, Emily Carr.

Our school population has diverse needs and abilities. We fully integrate all students, including those with Ministry Designations that represent their specific learning requirements and those who are learning to speak English. We strive to achieve meaningful participation of all students. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Parents are formally involved in our school through an active and supportive Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and with generous contributions to fundraising, organizing school events, and supporting students' academic, social, and cultural growth. The PAC's Inclusivity and Diversity Committee continues to grow and promote support and connection with families who have children who have disabilities or are neurodivergent, with initiatives, such as information coffee sessions for parents. They have also worked to add books to our school library on several topics around diversity and neurodiversity.

Students at Emily Carr are well-rounded, successful children with a variety of background experiences. They have many strengths in the BC Curriculum Core Competencies including positive communication skills, solid creative and critical thinking, and a keen sense of personal and social responsibility. Students celebrate many aspects of their learning through activities including performances, assemblies, concerts, sharing within classes and between buddy classes, volunteer opportunities and field trips. Student Leadership programs (including Peer Helpers, Kindergarten Leaders, Activity Leaders, Library Monitors, Morning Announcers, Hallway Monitors and Equipment Monitors) as well as student clubs/initiatives (such as Emily Carr's Got Talent Club, Pride Club, D&D Club and Book Club) continue to grow at Emily Carr Elementary, contributing to a positive school culture where students work in teams to achieve tasks and build communication and interpersonal skills, while promoting values of volunteerism, community service and cooperation.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

Overall, the Emily Carr community of learners is highly motivated to succeed in all subject areas. Many of our students have effective communication skills, like to talk and are not afraid to ask questions. Also, they like to read and follow directions and routines well.

Our students demonstrate a strong sense of community, as seen in the growing number of student leadership programs and the consistent number of intermediate volunteers that run these student-led programs (ex.

Playground Helper, Kindergarten Helpers, Hallway Monitors, Library Monitors, Equipment Monitors, Morning Announcers and Activity Leaders). Students are eager to be helpers around the school for a variety of tasks and regularly enjoy being 'big buddies' to younger students through reading and other activities. Emily Carr students volunteer to help in a variety of ways and make a difference, both in the school and the general community. A general sense of kindness exists and is evident daily, across the grades, with many who act as champions for others who need a boost in this area.

This is an active school, with many students that enjoy participating in school sports teams (ex. cross country, volleyball, basketball, and ultimate frisbee) and daily student-initiated sports (ex. soccer, football, and square ball, etc.). Additionally, Emily Carr students express their ideas/views and explore their personal interests through a growing number of clubs (Pride Club, Book Club, Emily Carr's Got Talent, Club, etc.). They celebrate diversity and enjoy learning about social justice issues.

We have many newcomers and ELL students. We have supported them to make connections with other students and provided additional English language instruction and support to adapt to their new learning environment. We also have students with higher social-emotional needs and some students who have experienced trauma or big life challenges. Many students are continuing to learn to regulate their emotions and struggle with peaceful conflict. Many behaviour incidents can be related to students having less developed self-regulation skills, resulting in physical or verbal outbursts. Students are working on taking responsibility for their belongings, actions, and their learning. We have noticed students struggling with attention, staying calm, alert, and focused. There is a wide range of learners, academically, and students with exceptionalities, demonstrating a need for differentiated learning, support, and sometimes creative ways to help students achieve in all developmental areas.

AS A SCHOOL COMMUNITY, WE ARE WORKING ON THE FOLLOWING TO:

Improve student achievement in literacy and numeracy, physical and mental well-being, and belonging

As a school community, we are working on applying trauma informed practices in our classrooms and broader school environment to address behavioural concerns, and establishing a sense of belonging, connection, and support for all. A whole school approach to trauma-informed practice can include strategies, such as peer mentoring, teacher-student mentoring, and restorative practices. Providing students with supportive environments that facilitate learning and provide a positive impact on their emotional well-being helps them succeed academically and socially, and encourages a stronger sense of belonging. Trauma informed practices serve as a foundation to create a safer, healthier learning environment.

By understanding the effects of trauma on student behaviour and emotions, school staff can respond to behaviors in ways that are compassionate, supportive, and effective. This approach not only benefits the students but also supports families and helps create a more cohesive and understanding school community. Angela Murphy, from Complex Trauma Resources (CTR), led staff through a professional development workshop, called From Surviving to Thriving in the Classroom. She spoke about students experiencing mental health challenges or who have experienced trauma and showed us how their brains may often be in a state of hyperarousal or heightened stress response (see stress staircase leading to fight, flight or freeze, Children and Complex Trauma, Chuck Geddes, p. 83). In this state, it becomes difficult for them to take in and retain new information, which directly impacts their learning ability. Furthermore, cognitive functioning, attention, memory, academic performance, and school-related behaviour can all be impacted by experiencing prolonged

stress. Addressing mental health and trauma in a school community is crucial for creating an environment where students can learn effectively.

Emily Carr staff also took part in a professional book club, reading *Children and Complex Trauma: A Roadmap to Healing and Recovery* by Chuck Geddes. Geddes wrote,

Managing mental health and trauma in the school community allows educators to help students learn. The brain cannot take in and later recall information when it is in a state of hyperarousal. Children and youth who are experiencing certain mental health concerns, or have histories of trauma, may consistently be in this state.” Trauma-informed practices help create environments where the brain can learn rather than exist in a state of hyperarousal. By understanding trauma and its effects, school staff can respond to challenging behavior in a way that supports the students, families, and staff alike. “(Trauma-Informed Safe and Caring School Communities - Safer Schools Together)

Improve equity

Some students have a greater number of obstacles. We continue to work towards removing some of the barriers to learning that are keeping students from reaching their full potential. By adopting trauma-informed approaches, staff hope not only to help students academically but also contribute to their overall well-being and resilience. This approach supports the entire school community and promotes a positive learning environment for all.

The implementation of trauma-informed practices includes creating safe and predictable environments where students feel secure. Identifying what triggers stress responses in students allows school staff to preemptively address potential challenges and provide appropriate supports; promoting emotional regulation, fostering connections and collaborating with families to encourage a consistent approach to support at home and at school. In this way, our school will improve equity by addressing the needs of students by giving them what they need to be successful learners.

Continue our journey of reconciliation with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit

Emily Carr continues the journey of reconciliation with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit. Our commitment to education for reconciliation is demonstrated by including Indigenous perspectives and experiences throughout the K-7 curriculum. The #63 Call to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission asks for the Ministers of Education of 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. *Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.*
- iii. *Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.”*

(Truth & Reconciliation Calls to Action, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, University of Manitoba, p. 71)

We will take up this call to action by continuing to explore and amplify First People’s voices through engaging with literature, information, and media texts with local Indigenous content. Through this process we will promote diversity and contribute to a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of their experiences. This is an important way for fostering understanding, respect, and appreciation of their rich cultures and perspectives.

During the District Indigenous Focus Day on November 24, 2023, staff took time to review Indigenous resources provided by the district and brainstormed how these books could be used to support the curriculum. Additionally, they read articles on land-based education and discussed the First Peoples Principles of Learning. These resources and new learning continue to support opportunities within the regular curriculum to learn about indigenous culture and community. We hope this approach will enrich our student's education and help dismantle stereotypes and promote reconciliation.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

At the beginning of the year, grade 1-7 teachers met with the resource team to complete class reviews, looking at the needs of the students. In term 2, all teachers met again. This time, their class review narrowed in focus to identifying specific learners who were at risk in the areas of literacy, numeracy, physical and mental well-being and belonging. Teachers identified which students were thriving in the school community and which students would benefit from additional supports. Report card data on literacy and numeracy was used to substantiate students who were identified as at risk in these academic areas. In the third term written summary of learning, staff identified that 6.7% of students were assessed at the emerging level in Language Arts and that 4.2% of students were assessed at the emerging level in math. Furthermore, classroom teachers identified 15.8% of their students as vulnerable in physical and mental wellness and 10.9% of students were identified as vulnerable in belonging during class reviews. We will use this as baseline data for the 2024-2025 school year.

Using a trauma-informed lens, we have put a variety of support in place to improve student achievement. Some examples of strategy types are as follows:

- universal support (consistent classroom routines and predictable structures, such as daily schedules and class meetings)
- individual support (ex. recognize environmental triggers, front load future activities or changes ahead of time, resource support, individual counsellor support, etc.)
- school wide support (ex. Student leadership programs, clubs, big buddies)
- classroom support (ex. Counsellor led SEL program introduction, Responsive literacy Framework etc.)

In the Fall, Emily Carr staff will again review the needs of our students, from kindergarten to grade 7, during our class review process. We will discuss students that we have identified as vulnerable in the following areas: literacy, numeracy, physical and mental wellness, and belonging. Throughout the year, we will revisit any concerns that we've identified and target the various types of support (ex. individual classroom strategies, whole school approaches, increasing opportunities for student voice, etc.) that can be implemented to meet the needs of our students, particularly in the areas of physical and mental wellness and in belonging, with a focus on improving equity for all.