

2023-2024 School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

With deep gratitude and respect, the Cunningham community is honoured to be learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səliłwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh Nation).

Cunningham Elementary School was first opened in 1959 as an annex to Norquay Main School and was originally named Norquay School Annex. After the building was expanded to meet the growing population, it was officially reopened in November 1966 and named G.T. Cunningham Elementary School. George T. Cunningham (1889 – 1965) was a lifelong resident and businessman of Vancouver who was honoured for his philanthropy, public service, and dedication to education. His family continues to volunteer and be active, highly valued members of our school community.

Cunningham is a vibrant and welcoming learning community that prioritizes student social-emotional and physical well-being combined with academic success. We have empathetic learners who understand that everyone has different skills and abilities. With a student population of approximately 400, our school site and playground serve as a cornerstone for the community.

A dedicated staff work together to provide a well-rounded education for all students. Staff work to foster a supportive and inclusive environment for all, to ensure that every student can thrive academically, emotionally and socially. The staff are working to support students in building independence and resiliency. At Cunningham Elementary, student well-being is of utmost importance. We strive to create a safe and nurturing environment where students can flourish. Our holistic approach to education emphasizes physical activity, social responsibility, and academic excellence. Our students are encouraged to be curious learners, authentic individuals, respectful towards others, and enthusiastic about their education.

We have a strong emphasis on community service by the students. Various leadership opportunities also arise during the year and include assembly MCs, student announcers and library monitors. The majority of our students, upon completing grade 7, attend Gladstone Secondary. Cunningham alumni return regularly to see their former teachers and other staff that were here when they were students.

Diversity and inclusion are celebrated at Cunningham Elementary, where we embrace and celebrate the uniqueness of each learner. We are in a neighbourhood with multi-generational families. Some parents of current students attended Cunningham themselves when they were students. Our diverse student body includes a significant English Language Learner (ELL) population. Approximately fifty percent of our student population identifies an additional language, other than English, spoken at home.

Parent involvement is highly valued at Cunningham Elementary, and we have the privilege of having caring and involved parents who actively contribute to the school community. The strong relationships between home and school are nurtured and maintained, ensuring a collaborative and supportive educational experience.

Cunningham is fortunate to have an engaged Parent Advisory Council (PAC). Some PAC initiatives include creating a pumpkin patch in the courtyard and a book giveaway, where every student receives a book to read at the end of the school year. The initiatives make a big impact in building a sense of community at our school. The PAC strengthens the bond between the school and the community, providing parents with a platform to actively contribute to the school's activities. This collaboration fosters a sense of partnership and ensures that parents' voices are heard and valued.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

Our students come from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Many of our students speak a language, other than English at home. Our students are eager and willing to learn. They engage in outdoor learning opportunities with enthusiasm. Students are engaged by the hands-on learning opportunities of the courtyard space and garden beds. They are respectful, friendly, and caring. Students are willing to persevere in their learning even when it's difficult, and they are proud of their accomplishments. Our students embrace the arts. They are provided with opportunities to explore and create a variety of mediums. There is a high engagement in clubs, both at lunch and after school. Students take part in extracurricular activities when they are offered such as choir, chess, Cricut and knitting, as well as basketball, volleyball, track and badminton. Cunningham students are enthusiastic, encouraging and welcoming when we have new students who join our community.

This year, the staff looked at data and engaged in many discussions around student learning. To provide a baseline of where learners are at, we have included the CSL data for Language Arts to show the range of progress for the calendar year of 2023-2024. By focusing on oral language in the 2024-2025 school year, we are hoping to see an improvement in the overall literacy of our students. The focus on strengthening oral language should also be reflected in students' ability to read and write.

Based on the Communicating Student Learning for Language Arts data from the 2023-2024 year, in Term 1, approximately 17% of the students at the school were emerging, 53% were developing, 27% were proficient and 3% were extending. In Term 2, approximately 16% of the students were emerging, 51% were developing, 27% were proficient and 6% were extending. In Term 3, approximately 14% of the students were emerging, 47% were developing, 28% were proficient and 10% were extending. We are hoping to see a see an improvement in the proficiency scores from developing to proficient in the overall CSL scores by 3-5%.

When we teach using a UDL approach, we are enabling all students to be able to access the curriculum, which increases the sense of belonging. More tools about understanding the importance of mental health will greatly help all students and is a life skill. Therefore, we'd also like to incorporate more direct teaching and lessons about taking care of one's mental health. According to the results of the 2024 Student Learning Surveys, the Grade 4 students reported that they agree or strongly agree with the statement that they are learning to care about their mental health 32% of the time. The Grade 7 students answered the same question with a response that they agree or strongly agree with the statement 50% of the time. We are hoping to increase this by 10% for each grade next year.

The curricular integration of Indigenous worldviews is an important aspect of education at Cunningham Elementary. The school recognizes the significance of incorporating Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems into the curriculum to promote understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures. At Cunningham Elementary, evidence of understanding of Indigenous worldviews and knowledge is fostered within the school community through various initiatives. One way this is achieved is by embedding Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum across different subjects, such as incorporating Indigenous literature, art, history, and some language into lessons. For instance, teachers use books written by Indigenous authors, display Indigenous artwork in the classroom, and teach about the history of Indigenous peoples in the local area.

According to the results of the 2024 Student Learning Surveys, the Grade 4 students reported that they are learning about Indigenous Peoples sometimes, most of the time or all of the time 97% of the time. The Grade 7 students answered the same question with a response that they agree or strongly agree with the statement 84% of the time. We would like to increase this to 100% in each grade level on the 2025 Student Learning Surveys.

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

Through experiential and placed-based learning, we are working to improve and increase our students' oral language skills and vocabulary. Our literacy focus is around oral language because we believe that when the students have an increased vocabulary, we will see improvements in reading comprehension as they will have more knowledge and understanding. Our focus on developing oral language skills will help to support students' ability to communicate and express their thinking about what they are learning and how they are feeling. This focus will improve students' success in literacy and numeracy as well as their social emotional well-being. A focus on developing vocabulary and building background knowledge will help students to explain their comprehension, explain mathematical understanding and describe their scientific observations. It will also allow them to express themselves more clearly when interacting with their peers to peacefully solve problems.

Improve equity

We will strive to create opportunities for all students to actively participate and feel a sense of belonging within our community. Our equity focus is using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to ensure that every student has access to the necessary support and resources to thrive academically and emotionally, contributing to their overall success and well-being in an educational setting.

By taking a Universal Design for Learning approach when teaching all subjects, we create an equitable learning environment. This will ensure success for all learners. All topics can be accessed and used by all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or learning styles. This ensures that learners can access information in a way that works best for them. By offering multiple options for engaging learners and stimulating their interest; it can provide choices on topics or activities, incorporating multimedia elements, offering hands-on experiences, and connecting learning to real-world contexts. By accommodating different interests and preferences, we can increase engagement and motivation for all learners.

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

At Cunningham, we are continuing on our journey of reconciliation with First Nations, Metis and Inuit.

Our literacy focus on oral language ties into the First Peoples Principles of Learning. At Cunningham, we embrace place-based learning. We understand that learning is holistic, experiential and relational. We understand that learning is embedded in story-telling, which focuses on oral language development. An Indigenous Enhancement Worker works with staff and students to ensure that Indigenous knowledge and perspectives are integrated into the curriculum in a meaningful and respectful way. Through these initiatives, Cunningham Elementary has created an inclusive learning environment that promotes respect for Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems.

The Indigenous Education Worker has collaborated with classroom teachers to teach lessons exploring Indigenous cultures through story and legend telling. For example, she shared the story of Turtle Island. By being in the classrooms, she is making connections with the students who are Indigenous and is also exposing all

of the students to the story telling aspect of Indigenous cultures. She has done many story-telling workshops with follow-up Art and writing activities. She includes visuals in her lessons, and these are left behind in the classes so that students can explore more with the materials during Centers.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

To enrich students' oral language and increase their vocabulary, we strive to provide students with more experiential learning experiences to build background knowledge. Staff engage in rich conversations and discussions to increase the students' ability to critically think and to make predictions. One way the teachers can continue to increase our students' vocabulary and oral language skills is to familiarize themselves with the Vancouver School Board's Responsive Literacy Framework. This framework guides teachers to approach literacy (comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness and fluency) through the lens of First Peoples' Principles of Learning, place-based pedagogy, documentation and assessment, culturally-responsive pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning.

Vocabulary will be explicitly taught, and lessons embedded throughout each teaching area. They will continue to use visuals attached to words so that students can associate a visual when they see or hear a word.

Oral language will be enriched through taking opportunities to discuss stories read, in guided reading groups, literature circles and whole class read alouds. Students will share what they are reading individually by doing book talks and presentations. They will develop opportunities to create their own stories with story workshops and share these orally with each other. Students will understand that there's a beginning, middle, and end and this will increase the capacity of storytelling. They can make graphic novels of their experiences, and they can explain what happened before that led to where we are right now. It will also help them make connections, take more risks, and build their resiliency.

We will know that we are on track by using oral language rubrics to measure growth and improvement over a six-month period. Conducting an assessment in October and then again in April, we will collect individual scores based on the rubrics. By the end of the year, we believe that students will have shown an improvement in their oral language scores.

In addition to using Universal Design for Learning and equity to help build community and belonging at Cunningham Elementary, the staff are using social emotional learning strategies and are providing leadership opportunities. To ensure that we are on track, it is important to establish clear benchmarks and measurable outcomes. These include things like changes in student behavior and engagement, increased participation in community projects, and positive feedback from students, families, and staff. Ongoing evaluation and data collection will be essential to assess progress towards these outcomes and make any necessary adjustments to the plan. Tools that may be used are the MDI, EDI, and Student Learning Surveys. Additionally, regular communication and collaboration among all stakeholders will be key to ensuring that everyone is working together towards the shared goal of building a strong and supportive school community.

Indigenous cultural activities and events are also important for fostering an understanding of Indigenous worldviews and knowledge. To ensure we are on track, Cunningham Elementary will continue to invite Indigenous speakers to speak to students and organizes cultural field trips. These activities will provide students with a firsthand experience of Indigenous culture and help to develop a deeper understanding and respect for Indigenous worldviews.

At Cunningham, we will continue to work on our goals to improve achievement, equity, and our journey of reconciliation.