

2023-2024 School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

Charles Dickens Elementary School is located in East Vancouver. With deep gratitude and respect, we are honoured to be learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh Nation). Dickens has a population of about 440 students. The staff, both long-time and newcomers, have come to Dickens because of a strong desire to join and be part of this unique community. We embrace a philosophy where multi-age classes, committed team-teaching practice and project-based learning are common throughout the school. The main tenets of our child-centered program are that the child is the focus of education; that social responsibility and decision-making must be fostered; that learning is continuous; and that the purpose of evaluation is to promote further authentic learning.

Most classes are organized with two or three grade levels and taught with a multi-age philosophy. Dickens is a caring, child-centered school and student leadership is nurtured. The staff is committed to collaborative decision-making and work as a Professional Learning Community. We are a Collaborative Early Literacy School and offer Reading Recovery for Grade One students. In addition to the mainstream school community, Dickens is home to a district ELSP class supporting students with unique learning needs. Dickens has an active and supportive Parent Advisory Council (PAC) with high parent involvement in the classrooms and throughout the school. PAC fundraising events such as the Spring Fling help connect the community to Dickens.

The physical space of our school building is well utilized. With its wide corridors, sliding glass garage-style doorways, and adjoining classroom spaces, it is conducive to the child-centered, group learning philosophy that the community has embraced for many years. The multipurpose room and gym are additional community spaces that reinforce the multi-age group experiences such as the student-led Monday Morning assemblies. Dickens offers a variety of extracurricular activities, sponsoring cross-country, volleyball, basketball, Ultimate and track & field teams for both the primary and intermediate students. Students also have opportunities to participate in other physical activities that may be offered throughout the year, as well as school-wide programs and presentations. Student leadership is supported and shared through various school opportunities such as student-led assemblies, buddy reading, library monitors, student council, green team, and lunch monitors. Students come together to celebrate one another and the unique gifts we all bring by participating in Winter and Spring concerts and the talent show.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

As with any group of learners, Dickens students demonstrate diverse interests, strengths and needs. The Dickens community is very accepting of diversity. Our school population includes approximately 12% of students with diverse needs and 10% who are English Language Learners (ELL). 2% of students at Dickens have as learners of Indigenous ancestry. Our student population is diverse and includes a number of immigrant and refugee families. While most families speak English at home, approximately 20% of our families have a different first language. The students are well informed, curious about issues around social justice such as Black Lives Matter, anti-racism, SOGI, and truth and reconciliation.

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

For the past two years we have continued the school goal of collaboration through an inquiry question that focuses on improving student writing. This was based on the written output needs observed across grade levels by our Resource Team and classroom teachers. During the 2020- 2021 school year we engaged in professional development on writing and had rich discussions about how this goal could be achieved.

Our goal is connected to the VSB Education Plan Goals of student achievement, specifically in written output in Language Arts and in all subject areas where written communication is required. Our continued focus on collaboration and teaming supports the mental well-being and belonging of staff and of students. Equity in terms of consistency across grade levels in different classes is enhanced with teaming and common practice and expectations among teachers.

Improve equity

Dickens School is committed to nurturing a well-rounded educational environment. By offering a variety of extracurricular and intramural sports, students have the opportunity to engage in physical activity, learn teamwork, and develop sportsmanship. The school's clubs are designed to enrich learning and cultivate leadership skills, providing students with a platform to explore their interests and talents. Academically, Dickens takes a proactive approach by identifying students in need of additional support and implementing targeted secondary interventions. One such initiative is the Reading Recovery program, which is specifically tailored to enhance the reading abilities of early learners, ensuring they have the foundational skills necessary for academic success.

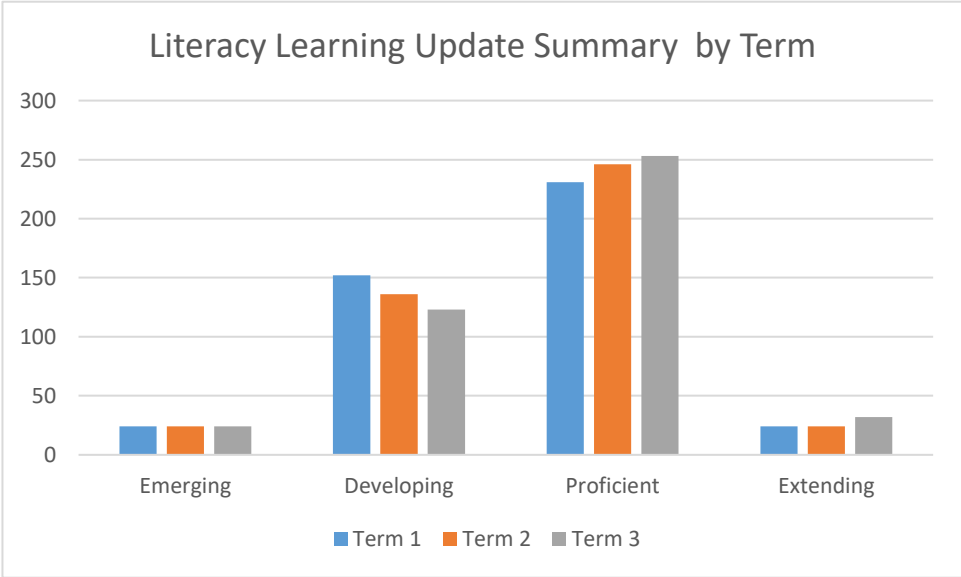
Continue on our journey of reconciliation with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit

The commitment to reconciliation through education is a powerful step towards building a more inclusive and aware community. By acknowledging the land at our weekly student-led assemblies and sharing the Coast Salish Anthem in more formal assemblies, the community honors the traditional custodians of the land and their enduring connection to it. Through the many resources and stories support by our library, written by Canadian Indigenous authors, students are exposed to diverse perspectives and histories. Furthermore, the study of Indigenous plants and their relation to seasonal cycles offers a holistic approach to education, blending natural science with

cultural wisdom. Integrating Indigenous knowledge and the First People’s Principles of Learning into educational curricula enriches learning by incorporating diverse perspectives and practices that have been honed over millennia. This integration not only broadens students' understanding of the world but also instills a deep respect for the profound contributions of Indigenous cultures.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE’RE ON TRACK?

We will know we are on track with our goal to improve written output for our students by continuing to access data through our established methods of assessment, such as classroom assessments and report cards, CELI, FSAs and school wide writes. We also plan to begin additional assessments, such as formal reading assessments, which will help us understand our students' overall literacy levels. Teachers continue to focus on professional development in written output. The primary team is committed to using the P3P: Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Protocol, which will help our primary students acquire basic early literacy skills to support their writing.



As our Learning Updates data indicates, our students have made consistent improvement as seen in a reduction in Developing and increase in Proficient and Extending. CELI data indicates an acceleration in student progress from start to end of sessions.

To track our Indigenous education and equity goal, we will continue to develop culturally responsive teaching practices within our classroom and share our learning through our weekly assemblies. This will include continued recognition and application of the land acknowledgment to help students and staff work towards understanding and reconciliation. To continue monitoring equity, students will be provided with opportunities to explore their strengths through clubs, diverse learning and structures within the class and throughout the community. We have made significant progress in these areas throughout the 2023 – 2024 school year.