

2023-2024 School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

Nootka Elementary School, positioned within the residential Renfrew-Collingwood district on the east side of Vancouver, gratefully acknowledges, 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) & səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation). The school, bordered by Renfrew Community Centre, Still Creek, and the Renfrew Ravine, integrates a commitment to place-based learning, and surrounds the school with accessible recreational opportunities and green spaces for learning.

The student body at Nootka reflects the rich cultural diversity of our community, comprising families identifying with Indigenous and settler cultures, both from within Canada and globally. Enthusiastic students, from diverse cultural backgrounds, arrive at school eager to learn. Students reside in neighborhoods throughout the city, bringing a diverse array of experiences and needs to school every day. In the academic year 2023-2024, we are serving nearly 400 students across 18 divisions.

Nootka offers three distinct educational programs at Nootka: the Classic Program, a K-7 catchment program; the District Fine Arts Program, a K-7 program emphasizing Fine Arts; and the District Elementary Learning Support Program (ELSP), designed for students in grades 4-7. At Nootka, all students are fortunate to receive music education under the expert guidance of two specialized music teachers. The dedicated staff of approximately 60 individuals collaboratively work under the leadership of a principal and a vice principal to provide a supportive, inclusive, and equitable learning environment for every student. Staff regularly participate in various Professional Development opportunities, recently centred around Indigenous Education and anti-racism.

The Nootka Fine Arts Program (K-7) is a district choice program offered by the Vancouver School District. This program places an emphasis on the four Fine Arts domains: Visual Arts, Dance, Drama, and Music. The program focuses on fostering skill development through the arts, encouraging collaboration, problem-solving, and communication among students. Further enriching the curriculum, Nootka offers electives for students in grades 4-7, providing them with a comprehensive and immersive fine arts education experience. Last year, intermediate students and staff put out a musical theatre production of Annie Jr. that ran 8 sold out shows and a student written and directed comedic play.

Nootka students and staff have the assistance of a shared Youth and Family worker and an Area Counsellor. These individuals enhance the social and emotional well-being of students by orchestrating extracurricular activities, fostering social-emotional learning in classrooms and small group environments, and liaising with our Windermere Community Schools Team Coordinator. Nootka also houses a before and after school care program through Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House. They offer programming for students between 7:30 and 9:00 am, and 3:00 and 5:30 pm. This provides childcare support for working families and caregivers in the school community.

Nootka's unique architectural design, shaped like a horseshoe, encloses a central courtyard and playground. The school's single-level design ensures comprehensive accessibility, accommodating all mobility requirements. Our premises boast a Library Learning Commons, a dance/activity studio, a drama room, a FuturePLAY room, and a gym with a stage. The outdoor spaces include playing fields, raised garden beds, playground equipment, a rock garden exploration area, and musical instruments, fostering a diverse range of indoor and outdoor inquiry experiences that enhance learning and cultivate opportunities for success.

In alignment with the district's Indigenous Enhancement Agreement, we aim to infuse Indigenous content into all curriculum areas across all grades. High expectations are set for students, and teaching teams employ many different strategies to help foster a growth mindset to ensure student success. Teachers participate in an Equity & Access through Story Workshop inquiry project, and many teachers explore Universal Designs for Learning using centres and stations available in the dedicated Inquiry Space. Our comprehensive Student Code of Conduct outlines behaviour expectations and emphasizes the school philosophy of restorative action to repair harm resulting from behaviour contrary to the code.

Nootka highly values student advocacy, promoting participation in various leadership initiatives, including Library Monitors, Crossing Guards, Rainbow Club, Peer Helpers, Nootka BRAVE Committee, and Lunch Monitors. We also offer Textiles Club, Games Club, Scrapbooking Club and multiple team sports throughout the year. The school mission is to foster a community of engaged, enthusiastic learners, ready to work with others to contribute positively to the world.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

Nootka Elementary is a vibrant learning hub, hosting a diverse group of learners. The school community is enriched by a significant representation of English Language Learners (ELL) and families new to the area, reflecting the cultural and linguistic diversity of Vancouver. This diversity is further amplified by the district's Fine Arts choice program, attracting learners from all corners of the city.

The students at Nootka are as diverse in their interests as they are in their backgrounds. Some are drawn towards the arts, expressing themselves through visual art, dance, music, or drama. Others showcase their skills in various athletic activities, while academically-oriented students excel in intellectual pursuits. Nootka is also a safe and welcoming space for students who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, and those who proudly represent their unique cultural identities.

Given this wide array of interests, the academic, social, and emotional needs of the students are equally diverse. This aligns with the first goal of the VSB Education Plan, which emphasizes personalized learning for every student. This past year we had 74% of students in grade 4 proficient or developing in Language arts and 26% of our grade 4 students were emerging according to CSL data. Our grade 4 data was similar in that 76% of students who took the assessment were "On Track" or "Extending and 24% were emerging. 100% of grade 7 students who wrote the FSA were "On Track". The CSL results for grade 7s indicated that 71% were proficient or extending and 97% were proficient, extending or developing. The school's educators are committed to providing a learning environment that meets these varied requirements, ranging from personalized academic support, to emotional counseling, to fostering social relationships.

To ensure that the needs of students are being met, and their voices are being heard, the school uses student learning surveys, MDI, anecdotal and observational data. These sources provide invaluable insights into the learning experience from the students' perspective, helping educators and administrators tailor their strategies

to improve educational outcomes. This approach also aligns with the first goal of the Ed Plan to improve school environments to ensure they are safe, caring, welcoming and inclusive places for students and families.

Financial diversity among the families is also recognized. Some students come from financially secure families, while others are from more economically challenged backgrounds. This diversity provides an opportunity for learning and understanding different societal perspectives, but also poses a challenge to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities, echoing the second goal of the VSB Education Plan, which is to create a balanced, sustainable, and equitable learning environment. The staff at Nootka are committed to creating equity through professional development, promoting inclusion through instruction and instructional resources, and providing extension opportunities to highlight diverse voices and experiences in the community. Staff have engaged PAC in the discussion about promoting equity for all learners at Nootka.

At Nootka Elementary, symmetrical learning in social and emotional learning is evident through co-created classroom norms where teachers and students collaboratively establish classroom norms, fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment. Teachers also use emotion check-ins where daily check-ins promote self-awareness, empathy, and open communication among all participants. A final example of symmetrical learning is collaborative problem-solving where teachers facilitate class discussions and students actively contribute perspectives and propose solutions, nurturing problem-solving skills and interpersonal relationships.

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

At Nootka we have introduced a new code of conduct called Nootka Eagles are BRAVE to promote behaviours and traits meant to enhance students' sense of belonging and well-being. As a staff and school, last year we explored social and emotional learning through the Second Step program as a way to develop consistent language, understanding, and tools between grade groups. This was beneficial to all learners and this year we developed the BRAVE acronym to further support our students and the community. BRAVE stands for Be Kind, Respectful, Adaptable, Vibrant, and Empathetic. The word BRAVE was chosen by the students and they were the ones to develop what each letter was to stand for. We have now moved on to the next phase of the project and are hoping to complete an understanding of what behaviours supporting each letter look like in the school, community, and greater world.

Through the BRAVE project, sports teams, Over the Rainbow Club, community activities with PAC and other extracurricular activities/clubs Nootka strives to offer students safe spaces where they can pursue their interests, and have fun with safe and caring adults. We believe that by fostering inclusion and belonging, increased achievement in literacy and numeracy will follow accordingly.

Improve equity

We are proud of our work to improve equity at Nootka. The staff have taken part in professional development this past year called “Belonging Through Anti-Racist Practice”. Staff looked at different practical ways to work through this by specifically looking at self-reflection on bias, Intent vs. Impact, microaggressions, how to listen, and how to give and take feedback. As part of this work staff have worked hard to centre voices from people and communities that have tended to be ignored by schools in the past. This year we were proud to have a wonderful Reconciliation Day assembly featuring Dakota Bear, a musical and spoken word performance by Ndidi Cascade called “Originz”, a Lion Dance Performance by the Hon Hsing Athletic Club during Lunar New Year, a Pride Parade and many other activities and in-class experiences to broaden understanding, highlight diverse voices and create stronger community connections.

The staff at Nootka joined together to create a Food Security Committee which was formed to determine distribution to students and families in need of the food resources that the school has access to. The goal of the committee was to figure out how to distribute food in an equitable and dignified way. We came up with a system of distributing snacks and a limited number of hot lunches that worked for kids and families. The Nootka PAC runs a hotlunch program and last year there were talks around the lunches and equity. We realized that the same families would buy hot lunches every week while many did not. After lots of talks and exploring various different ways of making the process more accessible we settled on a sliding-scale lunch program for our Tuesday hot lunch. This allowed families to order the lunches independently of the school staff being involved and paying what they could afford. It was an overwhelming success and we were able to provide a special hot lunch in a more equitable way and we will continue with this model moving forward.

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

Nootka has been working hard towards reconciliation and increasing knowledge, awareness, appreciation of, and respect for Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures and contributions. We held our second annual Reconciliation Day Assembly that featured an Indigenous Elder, Randy Tait, from the Nisga’a First Nation and a performance by rapper and clothing company owner, Dakota Bear. In addition to this assembly, our staff participated in Professional development this year around Culturally Responsive Teaching, Land Based Education, and the first People’s Principals of Learning. In partnership with the PAC we are please to announce an upcoming mural project with a local urban Indigenous artist, KC Hall, who has designed a beautiful piece featuring West Coast Indigenous design elements mixed with modern graffiti elements. Another part of our reconciliation actions we are adding to our collection of Indigenous books in the library and in the classrooms and supporting local Indigenous-owned businesses when possible.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

To let us know that we are on track with our Social and Emotional Learning goals we will use:

- Referral to classroom teacher or office for problem-solving conversations
- Adult help either offered to or requested by students
- Conversations with PAC and school community
- MDI Data
- Student Learning Surveys

We will use these sources to determine next steps for our literacy goal::

- Communicating Student Learning Data
- Foundational Skills Assessment
- Student Learning Survey
- School-Based Team referrals
- School wide writing assessment (two times per year)