

2023-2024
School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

Queen Alexandra School sits on the ancestral and unceded lands of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səliiwətał (Tseil-Waututh Nation) and is located at the busy intersection of Broadway and Clark in East Vancouver. After grade 7, the majority of students feed into Vancouver Technical Secondary School. Our school receives supports from the Enhanced Services and Community Schools Teams. Our vision is to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration and communication skills in students through inquiry and STEAM. QA is known for its welcoming learning environment, flexible learning spaces, and the desire to authentically integrate Indigenous ways of knowing into the school. We foster students' creativity, self-expression and respect for diversity, and we make every effort to nurture students to develop into successful global citizens. The students, families and staff of Queen Alexandra Elementary School work together in an emotionally nurturing environment so all students can succeed academically and socially.

Queen Alexandra has approximately 145 students from Kindergarten to grade 7, and a vibrant Strong Start program. There are 35 members on school staff, including classroom teachers, resource and prep teachers, a Literacy Enhancement Teacher, a teacher-librarian, school and student support workers, an Indigenous Education Worker, a neighbourhood assistant, office administrator, custodial and cafeteria workers and a principal. There is a strong sense of family among staff; many staff members have deep connections with multiple generations of families.

Family involvement is highly valued at Queen Alexandra Elementary, and we are fortunate to have a very engaged and active Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The PAC is an integral link between the school and the community, providing families 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. We run coffee mornings for families every Friday in the lunchroom, which helps further strengthen school and community bonds. We also host an Indigenous Day in June where families are invited to partake in teaching and learning sessions.

Queen Alexandra makes significant efforts to provide diverse curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for students. Sports and sportsmanship play a significant role at the school - we encourage students to participate in team and individual sports, such as soccer, volleyball, basketball, badminton and Ultimate Frisbee. For many years we have been part of the AIRS (Artist-in-Residence) program. This year our inquiry is focused on Indigenous Principles of Learning, self-identity, and the creation of a personalized studio space.

Queen Alexandra has developed diverse community partnerships, which offer opportunities for our students during and after school in arts, literacy, STEAM and sports. We work with community partners to offer winter, spring and summer programs, alongside before and after school care programming. Our school is grateful to community partners and proud of each student's learning journey.

We celebrate the community and learning with events and activities which include school-wide themes with activities like Multicultural Day, Literacy Day and Orange Shirt Day, drumming and singing the Coast Salish Anthem at events and assemblies, daily “shout outs”, weekly newsletters, school website communications, PAC meetings, Friday Morning Family Coffee, and Winter and Spring Celebrations. Each month we focus on one of the Seven Sacred Teachings, with students being honoured when they demonstrate that month’s Teaching. We also highlight these in our QA Daily News and monthly assemblies. Students’ work is displayed in the hallways and samples of their work are included in Learning Folders to share with families during student conferences. Queen Alexandra aligns our practice with the overarching goals as set out by the Vancouver School Board Education Plan.

QA students see themselves and their communities in the curriculum. Numerous resources, from the library to the playground, display this inclusivity. For example, books celebrating the Potlatch and other Indigenous cultures and traditions are abundant in our library. The QA Daily News promotes community by having students actively create and participate in bulletins, while also acknowledging each other daily. Furthermore, the outside garden is being redeveloped this year to help students learn about a sense of place. With the help of a VSB sustainability grant, we are hoping to plant Indigenous medicines, grasses and plants to rejuvenate this space.

Queen Alexandra ensures a school environment which is safe, caring, welcoming, and inclusive for students and families. Each year we evaluate and renew plans for the improvement for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners and increase our knowledge, awareness, appreciation of, and respect for Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures, and contributions.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

The diverse student body at Queen Alexandra includes over 18% of students with recognized diverse learning needs, 18% identified as English Language Learners (ELL), and more than 42% of students identifying as Indigenous.

Through staff meetings and discussions, along with family and student surveys, overall school strengths and needs of our learners were identified. This year, our grade 4 and 7 students participated in the Student Learning Survey. We intend to use this information as baseline data moving forward.

Overall Strengths

Resilience and Support:

- Students show resilience across all grade levels. Families and staff are supportive, offering care and encouragement to students facing challenges.
- The community is inclusive, welcoming, and supportive, which fosters a sense of belonging for all learners.
- Strong oral communication skills are prevalent among our learners, with many being adept storytellers.

Diversity and Inclusion:

- The community values diversity and celebrates various backgrounds, contributing to a rich learning environment.
- Relationships are emphasized, fostering connections among students, families, and staff.
- Knowledge sharing is highly valued within the community, which promotes collaborative learning.

Focus on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):

- Much of our learning takes place through a social-emotional learning lens at Queen Alexandra. Importance is placed on building relationships, self-regulation, and understanding the impact of one's actions on others.
- Staff and families work with students to develop self-confidence, build social circles and advocate for themselves. This fosters student growth and overall well-being.

Overall Needs**Individual Student Needs:**

- Students have diverse needs, including learning needs, developing self-confidence, transitioning between activities, self-advocacy, and maintaining focus.
- Students show a wide range of academic skills, in areas such as writing, reading, oral communication, computation and problem solving.
- Shyness and difficulty integrating with peers can pose challenges for some learners.

Communication and Understanding:

- Students at Queen Alexandra communicate in various ways. School staff must be open and responsive to various forms of communication.
- Understanding individual backgrounds and experiences is crucial, as some students may have experienced trauma or feel misunderstood.

Structural and Resource Needs:

- Students require structure, stability, and a sense of familiarity in their learning environment.
- Some students require additional support beyond the school setting. The Enhanced Services Team work to support families, and build and maintain community partnerships.

Our learning community demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting students' holistic development while addressing their diverse needs and fostering a culture of inclusivity and resilience. We continue to prioritize social-emotional learning, academic support, and community collaboration to enhance the overall well-being and success of students.

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

Our current focus is on developing students' foundational literacy skills to ensure they become confident and proficient readers. This year, many staff members joined a collaborative inquiry group to delve into the University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) foundations program. Alongside this, we're utilizing a variety of other programs and resources as part of Queen Alexandra's literacy program. Collaboration among classroom teachers, resource teachers, and the literacy enhancement teacher provides targeted support focusing on phonological and phonemic awareness, sight words, and fluency. Classrooms dedicate daily time to literacy, supported by resources like posters, mini-whiteboards, and word study box sets to enrich learning.

Recognizing the need for a collaborative and structured teaching approach to foundational literacy skills, staff aim for consistency and natural progression in students' learning. A range of assessments, including the Heggerty Pre-K Phonemic Awareness assessment, Kindergarten Protocol, Heggerty Baseline assessment, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, and grade-wide writes, are used to assess students.

61% of kindergarten students were meeting expectations in the K Protocol administered in January, with 39% identified as requiring intervention. Using the Heggerty Baseline assessment, 44% of kindergarten students were identified as Emerging, 25% were Developing and 31% were Proficient. For grade 1 students, 28% were identified as Emerging, 11% as Developing and 61% as Proficient. For grade 2 students, 21% were identified as Emerging, 29% as Developing and 50% as Proficient. This data indicates that less students are in the Emerging range in later primary grades, which suggests that interventions targeted at these students are working.

Using Communicating Student Learning (CSL) data in literacy for students in grades 4-7 this year, there is a general trend of students moving from the Emerging range into the Developing, Proficient or Extending ranges. For example, for term 1, 17% of students were identified as Emerging, 33% as Developing, with 50% as Proficient in grade 4. For term 3, 9% were Emerging, 45% were Developing, with 46% Proficient. In grade 6, 28% of students were identified as Emerging, 39% as Developing, with 33% Proficient for term 1. In term 3, 32% were Emerging, 32% were Developing, with 37% of students Proficient. For grade 7, 21% of students were identified as Emerging, 47% as Developing, with 32% Proficient in term 1. For term 3, 32% were Emerging, 52% were Developing, with 16% at Proficient. While we've observed a general trend of students moving out of the Emerging range from term 1 to term 3, our grade 7 students did not follow the trend. Our focus is now on reducing the percentage of students in the Emerging range and moving them into the Developing, Proficient, or Extending ranges for all grade levels.

To enhance our baseline data, we will implement the VSB P3P: Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, and Phonics Protocol for all students in grades K-3 and DIBELS Maze assessments for students in grades 4-7 starting in September 2024. We plan to use standardized assessments carefully in the future, considering cultural awareness and ensuring assessments account for student strengths, such as oral storytelling, tactile, and fine arts skills.

This year, we introduced literacy assessment folders for all students in grades K-3, which will provide regularly updated year-on-year information about students' progress. This will help identify areas of success and areas for growth. We'll continue to provide targeted support focused on foundational literacy skills, reinforced by weekly guided reading sessions where students apply their phonemic and phonological understanding with purposeful and meaningful reading materials.

Staff are dedicated to furthering their understanding of developing students' foundational literacy skills through continued collaboration, exploring additional resources, attending professional development workshops, and regularly meeting to share successes and reflect on learning.

Improve equity

We prioritize improving equity by fostering a sense of belonging within our school community. Central to this effort is the cultivation and sustenance of meaningful relationships between students, staff, families, and the broader community. Despite being a small school, there is a strong sense of family at Queen Alexandra. Students are familiar with the majority of adults in the building, and respect, inclusivity and kindness are modelled for all.

We purposefully bring a wide range of performances and workshops to our school, ranging from Lacrosse to Afrobeats to Hip Hop dancing, as well as music and theatre performances, in order to showcase the many ways individuals can express themselves. Additionally, our monthly student-led assemblies serve as platforms to remember the Seven Sacred Teachings. During each assembly, students who have demonstrated the month's highlighted Teaching are recognized and celebrated. Social justice principles are integrated into our daily teaching practices, with emphasis on Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Black History, Women's History, and cultural holidays.

At Queen Alexandra, student voice is celebrated, and students are encouraged to demonstrate their learning through various mediums, including oral storytelling, technology, visual representations, and writing. Our teaching approaches take into account the diverse needs of our students, guided by the Universal Design for Learning framework.

Furthermore, our breakfast and lunch programs not only provide nourishment, but also underscore the significance of community, where stories and smiles are shared over food. The Adam's Apples program further promotes collective well-being and care, allowing students to pick an apple not only for themselves but also for a friend.

As a staff, we are dedicated to enhancing equity by engaging in training and workshops focused on areas such as SOGI, racial equity, and anti-oppression. We actively share resources among staff to foster continuous learning and understanding, reaffirming our commitment to equity and inclusivity at Queen Alexandra.

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

Queen Alexandra Elementary recognizes the importance of Indigenous education in supporting the success of Indigenous students and all learners. We embrace the Seven Sacred Teachings as a framework for monthly school-wide focus on areas of learning. Each month, students are introduced to a new Teaching and are provided with opportunities to both learn about and practice them in their daily lives. We collect "honourings" in the office and students are celebrated at monthly assemblies and invited to share their story with the whole school.

The school aims to regularly incorporate cultural traditions and practices into our learning. We are part of the Artist in Residence program, and the focus this year is the First People's Principle of Learning that learning

requires exploration of one's identity. Our QA drummers lead assemblies and other important events where we sing. Land Acknowledgements are often accompanied by students' understanding of what a Land Acknowledgement means to them.

Events such as Orange Shirt Day, Red Dress Day, and Indigenous Day hold significant importance at Queen Alexandra. Families and members of the community are invited to join us in marking these occasions, culminating in drumming at the "Four Corners" at Broadway and Clark. Furthermore, family and community members are encouraged to share their knowledge about Indigenous cultures, traditions, and histories, enriching our understanding throughout the year.

Our staff actively seek ways to decolonize their teaching practices and the school environment. This year, staff participated in professional development activities on Indigenous Focus Day, focusing on Land-Based Learning (Dr. Jan Hare, University of British Columbia). Additionally, the entire staff annually engages in educator experiential workshops at Chekamus Centre, furthering our commitment to fostering an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

To track our progress, we will utilize a range of assessments at different grade levels. For students in Kindergarten through Grade 3, the VSB P3P (Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, and Phonics Protocol) will gauge foundational literacy skills. The DIBELS Maze assessment will be used at regular intervals throughout the academic year for grade 4 -7 students. These assessments will provide insights into students' literacy development and guide our instructional practices. In addition to these standardized assessments, teachers will use further formal and informal assessment tools to monitor student progress. This multi-faceted approach will allow us to identify specific areas for improvement and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. Data from the Student Learning Survey and parent surveys will ensure that the voices of our students and community are heard. The School Learning Plan will continue to be a standing item at monthly staff meetings. Staff feedback, progress and opinions will also be shared at smaller group meetings, such as the School Learning Plan committee, and Primary and Intermediate team meetings. Recognizing the importance of celebrating successes, we will share with families through check-ins, conferences, and Communicating Student Learning (CSL) updates and Summary of Learning. Achievements will also be acknowledged in classrooms and through school-wide celebrations of learning.