

2024–2025 School Learning Plan

With deep gratitude and respect, we are honoured to be learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the Musqueam, the Squamish Nation, and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

SCHOOL STORY

Queen Victoria Elementary Annex is located at 1850 E. 3rd Avenue in Vancouver, BC, Canada. Students, families, and families refer to it as “QVA.”

For the 2024–2025 school year, we are a school of six classes from Kindergarten through Gr. 5, with 112 students currently enrolled (as of June 2024). Student learning and experience at QVA is led by six classroom teachers, one part-time resource, one part-time Physical and Health Education teacher, four Student Support Workers, two supervision aids, a stellar custodial engineer, an Office Administrative Assistant and a Vice Principal with a combined admin/teaching load. QVA is the annex to Laura Secord Elementary, a large French/English dual-track school, which is a fifteen-minute walk away. Each year, in-catchment Gr. 5 students transition to Gr. 6 at Laura Secord. Other elementary schools in the area include Grandview, Britannia, Queen Alexandra, and Nelson. The nearby high school is Vancouver Technical Secondary School, known as “Van Tech.”

QVA is in East Vancouver, a short walk from Commercial Drive. “The Drive” is a culturally rich and colourful neighborhood, replete with restaurants, coffee shops, and independent businesses. The school is close to many community venues such as McSpadden Park, Trout Lake, Garden and Victoria Parks, the Britannia Public Library, and the Commercial/Broadway SkyTrain station.

Assets and Opportunities: Our Students!

QVA students are creative, energized, and curious about the world. They are social and enjoy spending time in each other’s company. During outdoor play at recess and lunch, students are frequently engaged playing self-organized games of soccer and basketball, as well as creative games on the playground and tarmac areas. QVA students love to play!

A strength of QVA students is their social- and open-mindedness. Their social growth is supported by the interest of the family community, teacher engagement in professional and personal learning opportunities, the local neighborhood and QVA ROCKS! — the motto which is embedded in the school ethos. This stands for QVA: Respectful, Open-minded, Community-minded, Kind, and Supportive. Students readily engage in conversation

about diversity, they embrace gender diversity, and are concerned about anti-racism, Truth and Reconciliation, and the climate.

Connecting to the VSB (Vancouver School Board) Education Plan: Creating Rich Learning Opportunities

QVA offers students a variety of arts, athletic, academic, and social programs to enrich their learning and experience. This past 2023–2024 school year, student experiences and learning have included:

- Cross-country (Fall) and Track and Field (Spring)
- Annual Terry Fox run
- Tennis XL in-school tennis program
- Curling, led by the Canadian National Curling Association
- Vancouver Trojans Football, with both in-school and during the lunch hour programs offered
- Dance programming, including Janelle Aledina (Shushwap, teaching traditional fancy shawl and jingle dancing) and Nii Okwei Engman (teaching AfroBeats and hiphop dance)
- Theatre performances, including traditional Indigenous story telling with *3 Crows Productions*
- The co-creation and performance of an original student musical theatrical production titled, *Extraordinary Magic*, with original text, songs, poetry, and dance created by students, staff, and families. This project was the culmination of six months of integrated curriculum, planning, writing, thematic analysis, composition and choreography, rehearsal, prop- and costume-building and recording sessions.
- Drag Storytelling & Opera with Calgary drag artist and tenor, *Aida Cupcake*
- A big, boisterous, and joyous school and community sing-along each term
- A year-end talent showcase, featuring talents of students and families, ranging from dance, singing, magic shows, soccer skills, piano and cello, and poetry readings.
- A rich variety of field experiences, including Rugby 7s, the Vancouver Art Gallery, salmon release, Spuds in Tubs, nature walks, the PNE (Pacific National Exhibition), and more.

In addition, experiences in recent years have also included:

- Lacrosse, led by Nationally ranked lacrosse players
- Track and Field led by UBC (University of British Columbia) Thunderbirds coaches
- Participation in the VSB/Vancouver Symphony Orchestra Music Labs program
- UBC *Geering Up!*, (STEM programming)
- School-wide field trips including Stanley Park nature-based experiences, Science World, and the Orpheum to hear the VSO perform
- Guest presentations, including Steve Harmer (Motivational Magic), John Dunn (Arctic Explorer), Rick Hanson Society (Inclusivity), and Zero Heroes (waste reduction)
- Opportunities for student leadership, including Dance Club, library monitors, and lunch club monitors.
- Student performances, community sing-alongs, and the annual (and much anticipated!) Student Talent Show.

The QVA Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is highly engaged and supportive of student experience. They sponsor and support several initiatives to support student learning and build community. In the past years, these have included (but not limited too!):

- The DPAC Extracurricular Lunch Hour Choir

- School-wide Body Science classes for students to promote healthy relationships (e.g., Shift Education, Seleema Noon)
- Information tables to promote anti-racism, Indigenous knowledge and knowing, and SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) understandings within the community
- Support for the purchase of classroom materials and school equipment
- Scholastic Book Fair
- Social gatherings, including a welcome evening in September and a year-end family picnic
- Movie night, the Spring Fling, and Family Pizza Night
- Pop-Up Popcorn events afterschool
- Bike to School Week parade and celebration
- Supportive partnerships with PACs (Parent Advisory Councils) at neighboring schools to share resources and opportunities

We are Working Together to Raise Engaged, Caring Students

Every visitor who spends a day at QVA observes that QVA is a special place; teachers and employees on-call observe at the end of their day that the students are “great,” and that they would happily return. While we have a solid foundation of indoor and outdoor learning spaces—including eight garden boxes and a terrific new playground—the strongest asset of the school are the students, families, PAC, and staff. At QVA, the people truly do make the school.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

As described in the School Story, above, the QVA community of learners are dynamic, engaged, and keen to learn. A qualitative survey of staff (May 2024) illuminated the following key descriptors of QVA students: social, creative, artistic and sporty; community-minded, accepting and inclusive; expressive, talkative, and social; socially aware and strong advocates for causes they believe in. QVA students love to talk about and share their lived experiences and feel a sense of belonging. Data from the Spring 2023 Student Learning Survey indicates that 80% of participants felt happy at school “most” to “all of the time” (compared to the district average of 75%) and 87% felt “welcomed at school.” (compared to the district average of 79%). While this is based on a relatively small number of participants, and also illuminates the important perspective that a percentage of the student population feels happy and welcome *only some of the time*, it highlights a general ethos of positive experience, while also reminding us that the work of promoting the belonging and happiness of all students is daily, on-going, continuous, and vital.

In the company, the many strengths of QVA students are student needs and areas for learning. QVA students need to feel challenged, in-charge of their learning and choices, and cared for. The Spring 2023 Student Learning Survey indicates that only 20% of participants felt that have a choice “most of the time” in their learning (which is greater than the district average of 14%), and 33% feel the work on things of personal interest “most of the time” (which is similar to the district average of 37%). We can work to promote student engagement and interest through continued experiences like school-wide projects and classroom passion projects.

As in any school setting, the needs of students and the community vary and shift each year and over time. Further, as we have move onward from the social and educational impact of COVID-19, there are areas for growth socially and academically that have been identified through informal and reflective conversations with staff, families, and the PAC. These include (next page):

- Solving problems peacefully, and increased independence to solve problems peacefully, especially during unstructured playtimes (e.g., recess and lunch)
 - Self-regulation and resilience
 - Continued focus on initiatives to support literacy growth, especially phonemic awareness (early grades) and reading comprehension/meaning-making (older grades)

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

The *student achievement* focus for the 2023/2024 school year was the promotion of students' literacy growth, with focus on phonemic awareness development and reading comprehension. This goal emerged from discussions with teachers about their awareness of the impact of COVID-19 on students' language and literacy growth, and the need to focus on core skills to promote reading and writing development.

Note: Student Learning (CSL) data from December 2023 (most recent available data) indicate that in English Language Arts, 60% of students were assessed at *Proficient* or *Extending* on the report card proficiency scale, and 40% at the *Developing* or *Emerging* level. This is like results from across the district. Continued monitoring of CSL data will help illuminate progress towards this goal.

Next Steps: Upon consultation, staff have decided to continue the goal of literacy with a focus on phonemic awareness and decoding skills (younger grades) and comprehension and meaning-making (older grades) into 2024–2025. This will allow staff time to continue to focus their practice and students time to develop focussed skills and new learning.

In addition, based on staff conversations, we will begin exploring the goals of mathematics and resiliency for the 2024–2025 school year, with the thinking that these will potentially serve as greater focus for the 2025–2026 year.

School-wide programs in place to support these goals included the following:

- Implementation of two core practices to support the development of phonemic awareness and structured literacy at the Kindergarten to Gr. 2 level: the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program, and the Spelfabet structured phonics program
- Participation in the 1/2/1 Reading Volunteer program
- Teacher professional learning through participation in the 8- week District Literacy Residency.
- Teacher participation in the two district-wide literacy focus days (Fall 2023 and Spring 2024)
- Novel studies and passion projects to promote critical thinking
 - Learning about and applying the I.C.E. Framework of questions to promote comprehension and meaning making in response to texts that were read. I.C.E. stands for **I**deas (facts about the text), **C**onnections (connections between the text and other understandings), and **E**xtensions (deeper analysis and reasoning about the text). (Fostaty Young & Troop, 2021, *Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Across the Disciplines: ICE Stories*).
- Whole staff participation in the Carol Fullerton Mathematics workshop in September 2024, in collaboration with Grandview and Queen Alexander staff.
- Whole staff participation in the Hannah Beach Social/Emotional learning workshop in January 2025, in company with Laura Secord staff.

Improve equity

QVA students are nested within layers of support that promote the improvement of equity. At the school level, students demonstrate a diverse range of lived experiences, including cultural diversity, learning styles, gender diversity, neurodiversity, and diverse perspectives and backgrounds. The QVA PAC hosts an Anti-Racism, Equity & Inclusion Committee (AREIC), led by a passionate group of parents and caregivers who strive to support students, families, and staff along their journey of equity. At the family and community level, the Commercial Drive neighborhood surrounding QVA is culturally vibrant and inclusive of diverse families and views. At the district level, the Vancouver School Board is leading the way with the priority of creating equitable learning environments where every child can experience belonging, success, and authentic learning.

Suitably, QVA staff are continuously looking for ways to support all students be successful and learn about each other, within a diverse community of learners. Initiatives in 2023–2024 included a lunch-and-learn professional learning series on Anti-racism for staff, in company with student workshops on Anti-racism led by district anti-racism teachers. Students took leadership throughout Black History Month, writing and reading a three-week series of announcements about Black Canadians and Vancouverites who have made a difference to their communities. Prior to this year, students also took leadership in writing and reading announcements about Asian Heritage month, and important days acknowledging Indigenous experiences. In addition, students and staff proudly sport pink shirts on Pink Shirt Day, not merely as an expression of support for anti-bullying but, more specifically, anti-homophobic bullying, which is the heart of Pink Shirt Day.

Further, our commitment to equity is reflected in the ways QVA staff works together to provide different pathways to support student learning. This includes a variety of strategies, including active use of the Ready Bodies Learning Minds (RBLM) room, quiet and alternate spaces for students to work, and whole-class lessons to raise awareness and understanding amongst the students of social/emotional learning, autism, ADHD, and perspective taking.

Next Steps: Next steps include (a) continued work to raise awareness of anti-racism and supporting students and staff develop the courage and skills to be anti-racist upstanders, (b) continuing to share resources that support student learning, and (c) the continued boosting of diversity in our library collection with the purchase of books so that students and families, alike, might see themselves reflected.

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

The QVA school community—students, staff, the PAC, and families—are on a pathway of Truth and Reconciliation. Students are keen to give the land acknowledgement at all gatherings and are learning to do so in a way that is both personal and respectful. As a community we gather to honour Orange Shirt Day and Indigenous Veterans Day, and we welcome and learn from Indigenous artists and performers. Performances have included performances offered by the multi-generational Sasquatch Dancers (Sts’ailes Nation), Peter White (traditional hoop dancer), Janelle Aledina (fancy dress and jingle dancer), and cedar mat weaving with Jessica Silvey.

A highlight of the 2023–2024 school year was the honour of a visit from Phyllis Webstad, founder of The Orange Shirt Society, author, and residential school survivor, who shared her story. This was a deeply moving and impactful visit.

As a commitment to our journey of reconciliation, learning, and unlearning, QVA staff engaged in and completed an eight-month course titled, “Four Seasons of Indigenous Learning (First Season: Foundations).” This was a course of ten modules plus ten video lectures focussing on foundations of knowledge, including terminology, colonialism, racism, treaties, Residential Schools, relationships, and reconciliation. Participation in this course, with regular gatherings, afforded staff the opportunity for safe and courageous conversations through which we have each grown on our personal and collective journey.

Next steps: For the 2024–2025, staff are keen to continue with the second season of the Four Seasons Indigenous Learning course (Second Season: Learning from the Land). We will continue to boost our library collection of Indigenous literature, books, stories, and information. We will continue to find creative and authentic ways to integrate Indigenous knowledge, knowing and perspectives into daily student learning and experiences. Further, staff will continue to provide students with opportunities for place-based and nature-based learning, including nature walks, cultivation of the school garden boxes, and field experiences.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE’RE ON TRACK?

The following strategies will help us know we are on track during the 2024–2025 school year:

- School-wide writes (Fall 2024 and Spring 2025).
 - Reading and literacy assessment appropriate to the grade, administered at key points of the year: CORE (Communication Regulation) phonics survey, DRA/F&P reading assessments, DIBLES assessments, VSB P3 assessment tools.
- Class reviews
- 2024 CSL proficiency scale data
- 2024 Student Learning Survey data
- Regular staff reflections during Staff Meetings focused on student learning

Most importantly, we will know we are on track by the ethos of a calm tone carried by students and staff in the classrooms, hallways, gym, office, and on the playground. Students will be able to solve small problems more peacefully and independently and will know when to seek adult support for larger, more complex problems. We will see an improvement in Student Learning Survey results, especially with questions related to student choice, autonomy, and agency. We are working together to create spaces and opportunities for learning to promote student flourishing and success.