

School Learning Plan 2023-2024

SCHOOL STORY

About this place:

Our school is located near the Fraser River on the south side of Vancouver, on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Our school property runs adjacent to the Langara Trail where students often walk and we often use the nearby green space, Winona Park where students take part in diverse, land based learning activities. The view to the south, seen from our second floor windows, includes YVR and students learn about nearby bike routes, as well as the Punjabi Market to the east. Our school is situated near the Sunset Community Centre and Gateway Skytrain Station.

About our learners:

There are 436 students at Sexsmith Elementary; a diverse group of kindergarten to grade 7 learners, from various socio-economic backgrounds and with a broad range of strengths and stretches make up our student body. Our learners are enthusiastic about their diverse cultural backgrounds and about celebrating each others' cultures at school. There are more than 21 language groups at Sexsmith, and many of our learners are new to Canada.

About our school program:

Our school program involves learners working with Sexsmith staff to meet their own personal learning goals through the [Core Competencies](#), and following the [BC Curriculum](#). We follow the VSB district calendar and offer a variety of programs to make our school the best it can be for students and over 45 regular staff members. We have many options for learners including athletics teams and a year-round Intramural program as well as a growing music program at Sexsmith. Students participate in service and volunteer roles, leadership training, student council, lunch clubs for chess, gardening, and other interests. Each term we work with community partners to offer a few recreational programs for students to register for, including areas such as STEM and coding, yoga and mindfulness, Punjabi Heritage Language classes, dance and music.

About our learning focus:

At Sexsmith, we strive to focus on individual student learning needs, especially with literacy and numeracy skills. To enhance our curriculum offerings, and to meet the social emotional learning needs of all students, we provide project-based learning opportunities that focus on creating a strong sense of belonging. We share and connect with our community through annual events stemming from staff passions and expertise including athletics, science celebrations, Heritage fair events, sustainability (TEGS Think and Eat Green School) programs, and Indigenous Principles of Learning. Our staff create a learning environment focused on collaboration, including buddy and partnership classes and the use of technology for communication and representation. We engage in programs and activities that celebrate student achievement, physical and mental well-being, belonging, equity and Reconciliation.

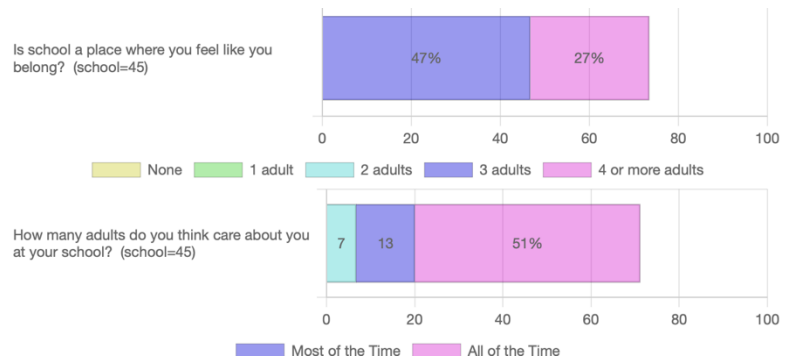
About our PAC and community network:

Our parent/guardian community is strong and supportive. Caring volunteers provide an annual calendar of cultural events at Sexsmith, including many former parents and caregivers who come back each year to support the extracurricular engagement at our school. Our PAC (parent advisory council) hosts fundraisers to enhance our learning program, especially working to develop funds for technology, fieldtrips and extracurricular activities. There is a long tradition at Sexsmith of PAC working with the Arbutus Rotary Club as well as community volunteers to host events for Diwali, Christmas, Lunar New Year and Filipino Fiesta each year. Students of every culture get involved with learning traditional dances, games and ceremonies. Parent volunteers created a weekly hot lunch program and we strive to ensure each class has representation on the Sexsmith PAC. We coordinate with Sunset Community Centre, Marpole Neighbourhood House and the Churchill Family of Schools to provide support for families and opportunities for extracurricular involvement.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

As with all Vancouver schools, JW Sexsmith Elementary has a diverse community of learners. Our school is inclusive of all learners, supporting each child to be successful in their own learning path. This includes a community of integrated special needs students as well as over 160 English Language Learners. We have 437 students from a wide variety of cultural groups, speaking over 20 different languages.

Due to these varied needs and perspectives, we have been working to create a cohesive approach to school expectations and towards learning goals for the past three years. Through anecdotal data collection and assessment, we know our students continue to need our support with problem solving skills, personal awareness and emotional regulation, as well as social media safety awareness. We want to increase opportunities for experiential learning and maintain/deepen connections to adults at school as shown in the graphs shared here. We want to support students through modeling and further development for their expression of identity and sense of belonging, as seen with this reflection for students in grade 7 (winter 2024):



Class review meeting data (Feb 2024), showed that 19% of our students continued to require interventions for social emotional learning (SEL). This has been a focus area for our school over the last few years, and to know that more than 80% of students demonstrate self and emotional regulation perhaps in part due to that work and focus on equity, belonging and SEL programs, is encouraging. Our students continue to participate in counselor and resource teacher-led friendship groups, social skill building groups, SEL programs such as the Zones of Regulation, MindUp, Open Parachute, Second Step, TAPS, Social Thinking Curriculum, and more.

Students with special needs at our school include many diverse learners in all classrooms, in addition to 9% of those with identified special needs. Each of these learners has an Individual Education Plan and several of our

students also have positive behaviour support plans in place. Although the community of Indigenous learners is very small at Sexsmith, we are committed to our path of Reconciliation and notion that non-Indigenous learners have much to learn and reflect upon when considering this Land and the stories that have built our communities in Vancouver.

Through anecdotal data and reflections from our annual grade 4 and 7 Student Learning Survey, we know our students continue to have supportive families and that the majority of students enjoy coming to school. Most students have trusted adults at school and they are working to demonstrate kindness and empathy to all peers and adults in our school community. Kindergarten and primary teachers report that students are engaged in classroom literacy programs including read-aloud stories, phonemic awareness lessons, reading, writing, listening, speaking, representing and viewing strands of English Language Arts.



AS A SCHOOL COMMUNITY, WE ARE WORKING ON THE FOLLOWING TO:

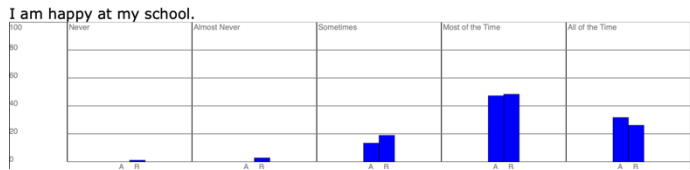
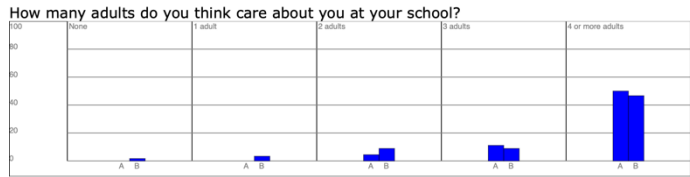
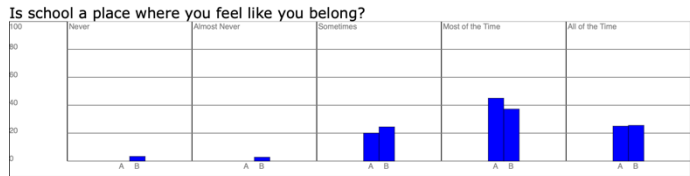
Improve student achievement in literacy and numeracy, physical and mental well-being, and belonging

We want to support students in learning through real-life, interactive and hands on learning opportunities about their identity, and about how to value themselves and others. Through STARS lessons and SEL focus in classrooms, students are focusing on the Core Competencies and about how to respect themselves and others; about how to encourage healthy habits and a mind/body connection.





Students show us through their everyday behaviours and challenges, that they need ongoing support for learning about their own social emotional learning journey and about their continued work with emotional regulation and sense of psychological safety. Our work in the area of SEL and creating a sense of belonging continued this year with Positive Behaviour Support Interventions and Supports giving us a framework for our new code of conduct language. This work reflects the above word cloud of values and conversations had with staff and students, resulting in our new school motto/acronym: We are Sexsmith STARS! S- safety; T-teamwork; A-acceptance; R-respect; S-sharing.



S- safety
T- teamwork
A- acceptance
R- respect
S- share



Through class meetings, individual interviews and conversations, surveys and general observations, our staff gain knowledge about student and family sense of Belonging at Sexsmith. The bar graphs here demonstrate grade 4 responses to the Student Learning Survey regarding their connections at Sexsmith. Students clearly indicate that they feel a sense of belonging and that adults care about them here. In this post-pandemic world, we strive to create and foster connections with students that support their social emotional development and their academic development. Through the last two years, we know that fewer students attended preschool and daycare programs likely due to pandemic restrictions and affecting their interactions and varied skill sets.

Brainstormed words to demonstrate a Sense of Belonging at Sexsmith (2023), which is reinforced with this year's student learning survey data. Students feel that the following traits of belonging are demonstrated at Sexsmith:



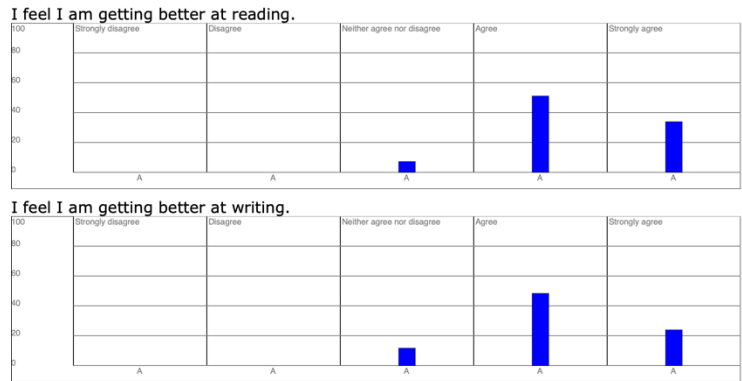
Teachers share that there has been a general improvement in social emotional learning and awareness overall in comparison to last year; however we continue to support students to apply the skills they have learned in daily situations with peers. Staff strive to connect first when working with learners to feel emotionally safe in the classroom and school community. Conversations with parents/guardians and staff teams are ongoing

in an effort to meet student needs and continue developing their 'stretch' areas too. In some cases, students have varied recreational, cultural and community activities outside of school, and some do not. At school, we work to bridge these gaps and support all learners to have positive academic, social and recreational learning opportunities and experiences.

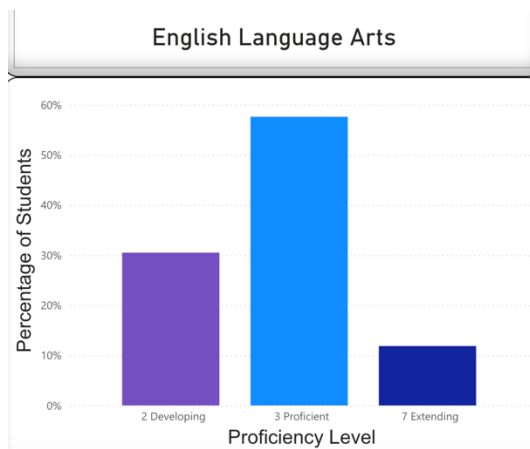
Helping students to reflect on their literacy skills is an area where we would like to continue to focus. Building student confidence with language to share about where they are at and where they are going to next is a key area for our staff to focus on. Supporting students to demonstrate reading comprehension and written output at grade level is something we are continuing to work on; however in the next school year we will also collect further data. In the spring of 2024, we began a renewed focus on writing and created a framework for assessing writing at each grade level across the school. The school wide write will occur twice annually now and we will use the data collected to support our planning for teaching, learning and assessment moving forward.

This spring, we learned that 26% of intermediate students and 10% of primary students were either minimally meeting or not yet meeting expectations for writing. We are hopeful that with using a common assessment tool, and through ongoing staff conversations about 'calibrating proficiency' to ensure a systematic approach to marking at our school. We want to ensure that our measurement of achievement in writing is standardized within our school, and comparable to that in the VSB. This will be a new area of focus for our teacher team.

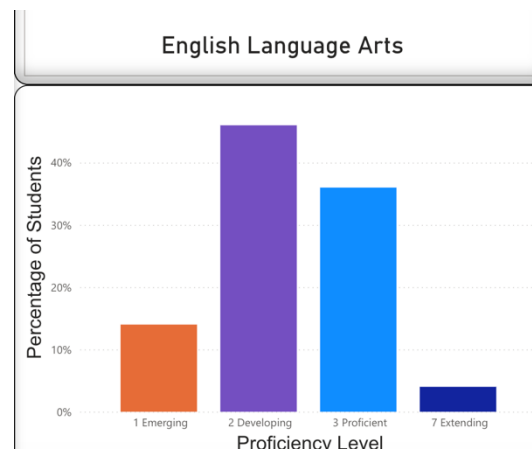
The following graphs show grade 4 and 7 results from our English Language Arts scores on Learning Updates (report cards) and as well from the primary and intermediate student School Wide Write data:

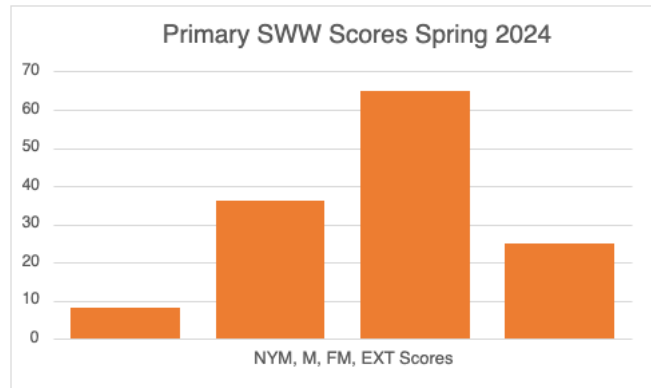
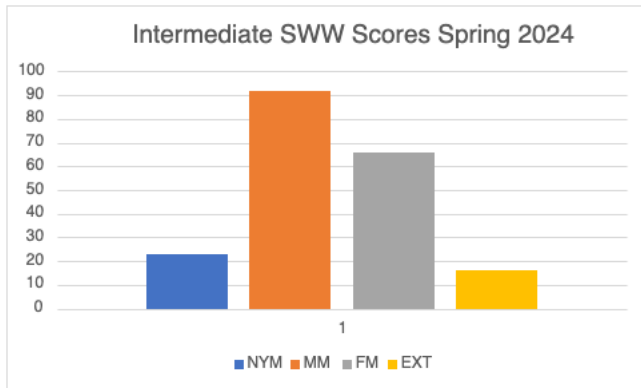


Gr. 4:



Gr. 7:





As shown in the tables above, our Intermediate (gr. 4-7) students and primary (gr. K-3) students are now participating in a School Wide Write each spring and fall. In May 2024, we began to collect data specific to literacy development and are learning more about our students have specific needs to do with written output. This will be a targeted area of intervention in the next year. We will continue to collect data in this area, and then look at those assessment patterns to find areas for literacy interventions.

Improve equity

At Sexsmith, we are committed to strive for equity amongst our learners. We want our school to be welcoming and supportive of those with diverse needs and we want to create programs and activities that make quality learning opportunities accessible to all.

As a staff, we emphasize differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning strategies in our classrooms. We aim to engage everyone, planning activities and lessons that keep our students focused on learning outcomes that celebrate identity and culture. We want students to participate fully, starting with SEL and general expectations for safety in the classroom and the school. Through teacher/staff modelling, we want the class to feel like a family and in a family we help each other and learn from one another. Students need to see this place, SXS, as their place. We need to cultivate a culture of belonging, of ownership, of pride so that they will take care of this place, each other, and most importantly themselves.



Through the Responsive Literacy Framework (shown by this infographic), we are refocusing our literacy programs to be culturally responsive and supportive of all learners. In particular, through writing, we want to develop our learners to have healthy expressive communication writing as a cathartic activity. We value reflection journal writing, supporting students with SEL lessons so they have space to learn academically, as well as the use of storytelling to help connect and deepen understanding.

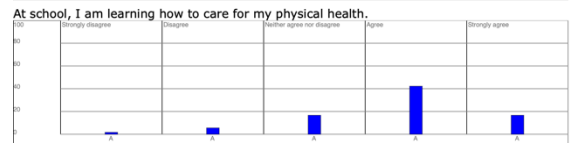
Through our work to deepen relationships within classes, between classes and with our school community as a whole, we want to create equitable opportunities and access for all learners. We bring in recreational programming and physical and health activities to augment our existing programs, such as with both field hockey and lacrosse this year, and cycling last school year. Students have access to these sports for multiple

lessons and this broadening of their experience is important to our team. We will continue to seek these unique opportunities that allow all students to experience something that could spark an area of passion for them. See here are members of the Vancouver Hawks field hockey team, teaching a primary class:



We also continue to develop our students as leaders and volunteers, providing opportunities for them to work on clubs and teams. These roles also help our students to build a sense of belonging and purpose. Teachers often work to create an equitable space, for example, offering soft starts in the morning to all students to begin the day with support or extension activities as they might need. Student voice in the student

learning survey tells us that they are often learning to take care of their mental health and that this can be a continued area of focus. In a recent anecdotal survey about “what part of Sexsmith STARS is hardest to show everyday?”, students told us that there was almost equal difficulty for each of the facets. Students expressed: “sometimes it is hard because some kids are not that respectful”; “it’s hard to accept others actions sometimes”; “sometimes I get excited and forget to respect others’ boundaries”; and, “teamwork is hardest because you

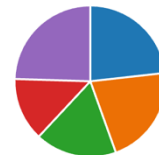


have to think about everyone’s feelings and ideas and that can be hard”. This sampling of reflections demonstrates the mature thinking and honesty our students have when considering the difficulty of following our code of conduct goals all the time. By focusing on this as our ‘northstar’ and goal each day, we know there will be challenges and failures, but we keep aiming for this way of being.

Which part of STARS is the hardest to do/show each day?

[More Details](#)

- Safety 36
- Teamwork 33
- Acceptance 27
- Respect 21
- Sharing 38

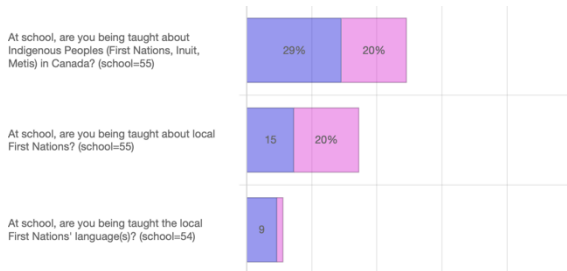


We will also continue and increase our use of Circle for Restorative Justice at school. When problems and conflicts arise, we will strive to use this model for problem-solving and restorative healing where possible. This work is increasing through class meetings and in our office where playground issues and peer-to-peer conflict can end up. We want students to have strong communication skills where they can express their own view point and yet also take the perspective of others. Equitable problem solving includes restorative justice at Sexsmith, as the First Peoples’ Principles of Learning includes the idea that “Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one’s actions”.

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

In our regular Sexsmith Sharing Assemblies, students have the opportunity to learn about and to share their learning, especially regarding each monthly theme to do with the 7 Grandfather's Teachings. Sexsmith's continued journey of Reconciliation has included learning about the 7 Grandfather's Teachings as a moral compass for our work with belonging and equity for all learners. We strive to integrate the First People's Principles of Learning in each classroom, although recent anecdotal data from our intermediate students shares that this can be increased. Student feedback about learning the 7 Grandfather Teachings has been positive, in one case a student noting that "if all of us learn this, we will have a more peaceful world."

Each division worked to create their own unique introduction to the Land Acknowledgement, to be read on our daily announcements as well as at our school wide assemblies. Students worked to learn the meaning of words like 'unceded' so they could develop meaningful words to speak about their gratitude and this Land. (Photo of a group presenting their Land Acknowledgement in particular at the time of Orange Shirt day, although this practice continued all year).



When we look at data from the Student Learning Survey, we can see that (in this grade 7 sample), students are learning about Indigenous Peoples either 'some' or 'all' of the time. Where we notice more work to be done is particularly around language and this will become a new focus for us in the coming year. We already have begun to support students and staff with learning respectful and appropriate pronunciation of the 3 Indigenous groups names but notice

that due to lack of confidence and knowledge as a staff, we have not continued this demonstration and teaching with other names and words. Our library collection is growing with books written in Cree, Anishinaabe, and Kwakwaka'wakw languages but our students do not speak these words.



Our staff continues to discuss and demonstrate "performative" acknowledgement of our Reconciliation journey through visual and library displays as well as ribbons on fences, etc; however, we understand the need to deepen our work. Our staff chose to engage with a lunch and learn activity throughout this year where we met as a bookclub reading "Wahi Wah!" by Jo Chrona. This allowed us to have professional conversations about bias and the way we as educators embed the First Peoples' Principles of Learning. We also met as a staff to discuss learnings from Len Pierre, exploring his website and videos as we discussed ways to provide further Indigenous Cultural Safety for students and families. This work will continue into the next school year.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

Understanding our work and the impact it has on our community is an every-day-process. At times, we are not able to truly measure the things that “count”, but through stories, anecdotal/qualitative assessments and data collection, as well as traditional data collection methods we can learn more about where students are currently at, and where they need to go next with their learning.

Student voice shares much with us. Next year, our vice principal and principal will continue to meet with students and request informal, in-house feedback survey responses in order to gain more understanding of student thinking. Staff will continue to engage in Circle for staff conversations as well, and will aim to include this practice in each staff meeting as well so to give an opportunity for everyone’s voice to be heard.

We want to seek new ways to engage parents and our school community with our learning goals and reflections. We are working with PAC to develop new ideas for engaging families and look forward to more opportunities for learning evenings online, social and cultural events with increased participation and more informal surveys/opportunities for feedback in general.

How students are doing with their Learning Update scores and comments, as well as formal data collection from the School Wide Write, reading and numeracy level scores, the Student Learning Survey (grade 4 and 7), the MDI and CHEQ surveys, will all provide important feedback for us as a staff.

Student participation and love for learning is always a key indicator that we look for when we want to know if we are ‘on track’; however, every learner is unique and we must continue to strive to find what makes them feel most passionate. As we continue foster a sense of belonging with our students, we are also committed to academic learning and growth as educators.

