

2023-2024 School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

University Hill Elementary School, located in Pacific Spirit Park near Acadia Beach and the University of British Columbia (UBC), is a Kindergarten to Grade 7 school with a population of 385 students. We are honoured to work, learn, and play on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam Nation.

The student population is composed of permanent residents in the catchment, as well as children of UBC employees, students, and visiting professors. It includes English Language Learners, as well as International and Indigenous students. Many of the students are multi-lingual and the school population has 33 different home languages. The cultural diversity of the school lends itself to meaningful, cultural learning.

Generally, the students have well developed background knowledge and are familiar with adult negotiated conversations and ask lots of questions. The parents are actively involved in the education of their children and have high expectations for academic achievement.

The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is very active with an elected executive that is committed to providing amazing opportunities for the students. The PAC holds parent education sessions on various pertinent topics and spearheads initiatives throughout the year to not only help support the learning of the students, but also the families in the school community. Volunteers are plentiful in the school and students benefit from the many learning opportunities and the sense of community.

The school offers unique learning spaces for students. Being in Pacific Spirit Park, University Hill Elementary School has direct access to a network of trails in the forest, a freshwater salmon stream, and Acadia Beach. We have two outdoor classrooms with large rocks arranged in a circle. These spaces are used to help facilitate class meetings, drama activities, cooperative games, and other activities. We have a Ready Bodies Learning Minds space, five small break out spaces, and a calming room. As a school we recognize that students learn differently and these spaces help provide students with the opportunity to regulate and be better prepared to learn.

The school also has an All Nations Room. This room is a breakout space for the Indigenous learners, a space for the Indigenous Education worker, and for Indigenous cultural teachings. Through the generous support of FuturePlay, we have redesigned the library into a modern learning space with flexible furniture, open space, large whiteboards for ideation, and technology to support inquiry-based learning. The diverse learning spaces are conducive to place-based learning, self-regulation, and implementation of an inquiry model of teaching and learning. Students are invited to ask curious

questions to drive their learning and understanding of the world. The teachers provide opportunities for students to refine their questions to engage students in making observations, predictions, creating and testing hypotheses, and using a variety of language skills to communicate understandings. They also provide opportunities for the students to participate in a variety of school programs, clubs and sports, such as cooking classes, Drama and Student Council, and Cross Country, Volleyball, Basketball, and Track and Field, for example.

The proximity of the school to UBC and downtown Vancouver provides easy access to extension opportunities at educational venues, as well as mentorship opportunities. This creates a multitude of unique conversations and learning opportunities. Mentors have included faculty from the Faculty of Education/Outdoor Education and Biodiversity Genetics Department at UBC, as well as a former Canadian World Cup Soccer player. Community partners include the Vancouver Public Library, Pacific Spirit Coastal Health, University Endowment Lands, and various organizations at UBC.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

The students at University Hill Elementary School are engaged with their learning and enjoy being at school. They eagerly participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities provided throughout the year, including Cross-Country, Volleyball, Basketball, Badminton, Track and Field, and the Drama Club. The students are also actively involved in taking on leadership opportunities and making positive contributions to our school (e.g. Library and Daily Announcements Monitors, Assembly Leaders, Student Council). Based on data obtained from the Student Learning Survey (SLS), they also believe our school is a welcoming and safe community.

Data from this year's Learning Updates also reveals students possess very strong numeracy skills (Term 1: 70% of school Proficient/Extending; Term 2: 77% of school Proficient/Extending). It also indicates a large number of students are on track with their literacy skills (Term 1: 43% of school Developing and 42% Proficient/Extending; Term 2: 40% of school Developing and 48% Proficient/Extending). This is further reflected in SLS responses, where students expressed that they are continuing to improve in math, reading, and writing (72% of Gr.4 and 72% of Gr. 7 students feel they continue to get better at math; 66% of Gr.4 and 77% of Gr. 7 students feel they continue to get better at reading; 68% of Gr.4 and 83% of Gr. 7 students feel they continue to get better at writing) . However, there are still some students who are not yet consistently proficient in English Language Arts so as a staff, our goal is to determine how we can best support these students to strengthen their literacy skills. The students and staff have also identified that learning can be impacted by social-emotional challenges.

In addition to literacy and numeracy, the students at University Hill Elementary School continue to engage in activities which foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of Indigenous knowledge, culture, and history. For example, students write their own land acknowledgments, explore place-based learning through regularly scheduled outdoor learning opportunities, and participate in Orange Shirt Day and Red Dress Day. Even though the students have shown growth in developing a deeper appreciation and understanding of Indigenous knowledge, culture, and history, feedback from the SLS suggests they may not always be aware when they are learning about Indigenous peoples so we need to make their learning more explicit.

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

Anecdotal data and information obtained from the SLS and teacher led surveys last year revealed the students needed to develop a deeper sense of belonging and their social-emotional skills. To develop their deeper sense of belonging, this year Student Council organized a variety of events to build a sense of community, and to create a positive, welcoming, and inclusive school environment (e.g. theme days, and movies, face painting, dance party, and sports activities during *Magic Mondays*). We also formed a Community and Belonging Committee, which coordinated a week-long series of activities connected to our Code of Conduct (Be Kind to Yourself, Be Kind to Each Other, Be Kind to This Place, Hold One Another Up). Student-led assemblies were also held every month to acknowledge and celebrate the wonderful learning and fantastic activities that took place at our school. During these assemblies, students shared, for example, projects they worked on, sports teams and field trips they participated in, and actions they took to follow our Code of Conduct. These initiatives were successful in developing a deeper sense of belonging for the students, which was reflected in SLS results where they expressed that they enjoy being at school and believe it is a welcoming and safe community. We will continue to implement these initiatives and look for further avenues to enhance the students' sense of belonging.

To develop their social-emotional skills, this year we incorporated our Code of Conduct into various facets of the school (e.g. daily morning announcements, school-wide assemblies and events, including *Be Kind to Each Other* and *Be Kind to This Place* week). The students were also provided the opportunity to refine their social-emotional skills through leadership opportunities, such as being Library and Daily Announcements Monitors, Assembly Leaders, and part of Student Council, for example. Most importantly, established social-emotional programs were explicitly taught to them and intertwined in activities throughout the curriculum, and they also received targeted lessons focusing on the big ideas and curricular competencies from the Physical and Health Education (PHE) curriculum. Although the students have shown some growth, they along with the staff have identified that learning can be impacted by social-emotional challenges. Therefore, in order to further expand their social-emotional skills, we will continue to implement the aforementioned practices with the addition of the staff exploring the use of a common and consistent social-emotional program at both the primary and intermediate levels, and providing more lessons focusing on the PHE curriculum.

Improve equity

Even though this year's Learning Updates indicate a large number of the students at University Hill Elementary School are on track with their literacy skills, they also show there are still some students who are not yet consistently proficient in English Language Arts. To determine how we can best support these students, we will collaborate and engage in professional development discussions about instructional and intervention strategies, and resources to enhance the students' literacy skills (e.g. assessment to inform and guide instruction; consistent and cohesive writing, and phonics and reading comprehension instruction at the primary and intermediate levels; intervention strategies/learning support).

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

We have done the following to support the students in developing a deeper appreciation and understanding of Indigenous knowledge, culture, and history:

- Embedded Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into all curricular areas
- Indigenous Land Acknowledgement at the beginning of daily morning announcements, assemblies, formal meetings, and other events
- Embedded Musqueam knowledge into our Code of Conduct and using it as a framework to guide our practice
- Explored place-based learning through regularly scheduled outdoor learning opportunities
- Created two outdoor learning spaces, which include a circle of 12 stones to provide seating for a class of students to explore the power of using a circle for sharing, medicine wheel teachings, and other aspects of Indigenous culture
- Planned field trips to The Museum of Anthropology and Reconciliation Pole
- Collaborated with our Indigenous Education Worker to develop learning opportunities for students and staff on Indigenous themes
- Participated in National Truth and Reconciliation Day, Orange Shirt Day, Red Dress Day, and National Indigenous Peoples Day
- Purchased books and resources with Indigenous authors, illustrators, and information to support teaching and learning

Embedding these initiatives and practices into the fabric of the school has contributed significantly to the growth of the students having a deeper appreciation and understanding of Indigenous knowledge, culture, and history. We will continue to implement them and look for other opportunities to enhance the students' learning, especially acknowledging more often and making it more explicit when they are learning about Indigenous peoples in order to strengthen their knowledge and understanding.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

We will know if the measures and practices we put in place have been successful if anecdotal data and results from the SLS suggest the students continue to feel safe, welcomed, and a sense of belonging at the school. This information will also indicate growth in the students developing social-emotional skills and a deeper awareness, appreciation, and understanding of Indigenous knowledge, culture, and history. In addition, Learning Updates results will reveal a larger number of students are on track with their literacy skills and consistently demonstrating proficiency in English Language Arts.