

2023-2024 School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

Sir William Van Horne Elementary School is located in a diverse neighborhood in the Oakridge - South Slope area of Vancouver. It is also on the ancestral and unceded lands of the x̣ṃəθḳẉəỵəm (Musqueam), Sḳwxẉú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation). and the Van Horne Community is grateful to be privileged to be learning and unlearning in this school on these lands.

It enrolls about 450 students across 19 divisions, ranging from kindergarten to grade seven. There are currently approximately 150 students who are designated as English Language Learners (ELL). Approximately 40 students have ministry designations for special needs.

Van Horne School is proud to work closely with our Van Horne Parent Advisory Council (PAC). We have a shared value focusing around building a thriving community. Over the last several years, the community has been working on: a growing recognition of our community's diversity, a commitment to tackling environmental issues and challenges (especially around the topic of transportation), and a working relationship between school and parents based on the values of transparency and cooperation. Additionally, parents are invited to become partners with the school through actions such as volunteering for PAC led initiatives like organizing and running hot lunches to becoming club leaders at school. Some of these include quiet lunch monitors, boardgame clubs, and tennis instructors. All these efforts are to make a difference in the lives of our students. [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Students are served by approximately 45 school-based staff ranging from teachers that work directly with students, resource and specialist teachers that support students and teachers, and School and Student Support Workers that support students with diverse learning needs. Administration, office staff and custodial staff support the smooth functioning of the school. The interests and skills of these individuals vary and this diversity benefits the student's education. Van Horne's diverse staff support a more holistic approach in the development of students, academic rigor, provide extra-curricular opportunities such as sports all motivated by moving students forward in their development of their core competencies. Students are challenged to become leaders and contributing members of society.

Staff work collaboratively to discuss students' needs, strengths, and how to best support students. Highly dedicated staff provide varied learning experiences, including project and inquiry-based learning to Van Horne students. During a typical school year, Van Horne Elementary School offers additional opportunities for students in arts, sports, and student leadership. Examples of this include student government, choir, cross country, volleyball, basketball, badminton, and track and field. Additionally, students can provide leadership through opportunities such as being PA announcers, library monitors, club leaders (origami club, Dungeons and Dragons club, Magic the Gathering club, and comic club), and big buddy/little buddy classes. The YMCA and Little Mountain Neighborhood House are typical partners of the school.

At Van Horne, “*Our school is a community*” is a phrase that is often used by PAC executives and school administration as a guiding value.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Students at Van Horne have strived to be productive members of society. Kids have historically been offered multiple avenues to contribute to the school community via leadership opportunities. The students are supported by active and caring families who place a high value on community building. Also, the students enjoy immense support from an organized and active Parent Advisory Committee who exercise a daily presence in the school. Students are aware of many of the members of the school PAC and approach them for support with ease. The students also have the support of caring adult staff, from teachers to school and support workers and this relationship is evident to them. Adults run after-school athletics, lunchtime clubs and other whole school activities that bring students together.

We recently worked on our new school code of conduct in which students had the opportunity to provide input which became reflected in our school’s values. The values that emerged are:

- Kindness
- Responsible behavior
- Hard work and effort
- Caring and empathy
- Fairness

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

This year our staff were interested in monitoring literacy data to see how our students were performing in the area of literacy. Around the middle of the fall term, teachers and students evaluated each of their students’ progress in literacy and assigned a level based on our current reporting language.

Students were either:

- a) Emerging
- b) Developing
- c) Proficient
- d) Extending

The staff researched and discussed how assessment practices can play a role in improving student learning. Most teachers were interested in developing a further understanding around how (and if) self-assessment as a practice can improve literacy for our students.

There was a strong desire among teachers to improve literacy skills as a pathway towards equity. Literacy is a top priority skill that employers are looking for in their hiring and staff felt this was the best way to help students

have the best chance in their future for success. The use of self-assessment gives agency to each student to use their own voice and decision making to monitor their own progress in learning. Furthermore, the use of self-assessment is a lifelong skill; one that will serve them as they continue their learning journey.

The staff developed a procedure that all teachers would follow in which each student would create a book review. Throughout the process students would continually evaluate where they were in relation to the class developed assessment rubric. Teachers would monitor their work and create mini-lessons that were asked for/needed by students. A continuous cycle of work and self-assessment would be followed until completion, at which point the student would give a final assessment, one in which the teacher would guide the student through.

Reflecting on the results, we noticed overall that over half of the students showed growth. When looking at just intermediate and primary groups, intermediates showed more success. This can possibly be attributed to older students being more cognitively ready to self-assess than younger students.

Showing growth is determined by comparing the initial level (represented by the teacher and student determining whether a student was emerging, developing, proficient, or exceeding) to the final achieved level of learning. Each step of the way students worked with their teacher to learn, unlearn, and relearn towards their own learning target.

Despite there being less success with younger students, the results with older students are promising. The belief is that teaching self-assessment at all levels should yield success for all students as students get used to the process and teachers become more comfortable teaching the process.

Improve equity

To improve equity, Van Horne conducted several actions:

- self-assessment
- parent access and involvement at school
- student involvement and increased opportunities

Self-assessment, which ties in with our literacy goal is not only an assessment practice, but an equity one as well. In a classroom where self-assessment is practiced, the active nature of this type of assessment practice is equity. Students are involved not only in their learning, but the active monitoring of their learning and the creation of their own learning targets means students are learning at a pace that is suitable for them.

Parents were actively offered opportunities to participate in the daily life of the school and the students. They were asked to either come up with activities/ideas they wanted to share with students and to create a club that can be run at lunchtime or they were provided with a list of activities that could be run as clubs and asked if they would participate in a supervisory position. While not all parents can participate as most parents work during school hours, some were able to as they did not work at all, did not work on some school days, or even took time off from work to participate or used their own lunch breaks to come over to the school to run activities. In addition to typical opportunities such as coaching, playing musical instruments for concerts, and helping with hot lunch, parent participation this year included quiet lunch club and Boardgame club.

Students were also offered more opportunities and choices this year. This is consistent with our previous school plans in which we pursued student choice as a means to improve student learning and experiences at school. This started out with our biggest initiative which is a revamp of our student council model to become student government. Membership and participation in student government was significantly expanded. Any student in

grades 3-7 that wanted to participate was automatically a member and participated actively in all meetings and student government events and initiatives. From these members, a democratic student election was run to find executive members who would have specific responsibilities. Student ideas were invited and enacted upon such as a request by some of our students to open up an alternative lunch area that was focused on noise level. They had recognized they were much happier, regulated, comfortable in a quiet environment and as such we were able to open up two locations to facilitate these kids that self-identified as needing a quiet space for eating. A group of students, some of which are identified as special needs and some with behaviour challenges, also requested an alternative space, for which we were able to accommodate, and they have had great success with no incidents over the course of the year compared to if they were not accommodated and expected to have lunch in our typical set-up.

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

A few years ago, at Van Horne, we initiated a Legacy Project with the help of our grade 7 students. This entailed each student participating in painting a mural painted on an inside wall of the school. This year, with the encouragement of our grade 7 parent committee, we approached this from an equity lens and chose to honour our the land we are on through our Reconciliation commitments by having an Indigenous artist work with our grade 7 students to create this piece. Over the course of 2 weeks, our artist engaged in a myriad of small group and large group activities, where he gave valuable knowledge, insight, and history to the students around meaningful context in the Indigenous culture. His passion for understanding the relationship with animals and Indigenous People gave purpose and clarity to the students. The result was a thoughtful and creative mural on the main wall as one enters the gym's main entrance. Every grade 7 student took part in learning the techniques of form and design. Our artist gave them meaningful feedback and anecdotal stories along the way. Once the animals were drawn, the students painted them in. The students and staff at Van Horne are extremely humbled and have gratitude for this experience that will forever remain in the hearts of all at Van Horne.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

The process of self-assessment was taught to students and included developing an assessment rubric together, using various pieces of literacy and matching/analyzing/discussing what each level looks like so student have a clear understanding of what the learning targets are, having multiple attempts to achieve the learning target.

The results of this are summarized in the table below.

	# of students that showed growth (max. 405)	% of students that showed growth
Primary Students	98	43%
Intermediate Students	122	69%
All Students	220	54%

54% of the students showed growth. While we can attribute this to other factors possibly, anecdotal evidence from staff suggests that many/most students showed growth due to this process and self-assessment.

Other actions, such as a new student government model, resulted in a great increase in student government participation by those students interested in this leadership opportunity. As a result, all interested students were given the opportunity to participate.



Considering increased student choice and voice resulted in implementing quiet and silent lunch areas, a student request. Each day, about 70 students sat in the silent zone or the designated quiet zone (whispering allowed) to eat lunch. A great number of students were much more regulated during and after lunchtimes.

Finally, a small group of students requested their own space separate from the mainstream population for recess and lunch each day. This group was granted this exception and as a result were very successful in regulating themselves throughout the school year.

As we reflect upon these practices throughout the year, we have noticed more harmony during unstructured times in the day, with a specific focus on recess and lunch time, when problems can occur. The staff in the office along with classroom teachers have also noticed that general problems that typically occur during unstructured time have gone down quite drastically. Weaving the autonomy of the student body in general has shown great improvement at Van Horne and the students should be proud for their efforts in making the space fair, equitable and engaging for everyone.

These stories of success were part of the story of Van Horne this year.