

2023-2024 School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

Dr. George M. Weir Elementary School is situated on 44th Street East between Killarney and Rupert Streets. This site enjoys close proximity to the Killarney Community Centre which includes the recently added Champlain Seniors Centre, as well as Killarney Secondary School. Many of our families have always been very involved in activities offered at the Community Centre.

Many of our students complete their entire elementary school years at Weir, as did their older siblings, and even some of their parents. Most grade seven students attend Killarney Secondary when they graduate from Weir. It is very typical for these graduates to regularly return to Weir to visit staff, volunteer for school functions, or play basketball. Additionally, many of the grandparents of our students participate in morning exercise programs on the Weir site under our covered area including Tai Chi, aerobics, and Hackey Sac. Generational connections at Weir are deeply rooted within our larger community.

The home languages represented are predominantly English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Tagalog, with Spanish, Russian, Portuguese, and Punjabi also represented. Many of these students receive ELL support. Students with a Ministry Designation who have an IEP are fully integrated at all grade levels, some with support from SSA staff. We continuously seek opportunities to welcome these rich home cultures into our school.

Weir is committed to both the academic and holistic, socio-emotional development of all students. We strive to provide a supportive learning environment where students demonstrate social, emotional and academic growth. We value student agency and enjoy creating opportunities for school-wide leadership. We also recognize that school is an important part of a larger community that nurtures and supports our learners as they grow. Our aim is for the entire Weir community to feel connected to our school and feel that they can participate and contribute in ways that highlight and nurture their unique identities and strengths.

Since our return to Weir last fall, we have adopted the learning community model. Our school is divided into learning communities by similar grade groupings. The staff within each community is provided with weekly release time to collaborate. A large part of this collaborative time is dedicated to our school goals. This model is guided by research that consistently shows the most significant impact on student achievement at school is through staff collaboration.

Weir is a digitally enhanced school, allowing students to thrive in this digital age. Grades K to 3 have access to school iPads. Grades 4 to 7 not only have access to school iPads but can bring their own mobile devices to school. Students are provided opportunities to engage with the B.C. Curriculum by designing and creating projects of their own. Weir has developed an inclusive program that allows students to engage in personalized inquiry-based learning. Each year, online curriculum opportunities for students to access at school and home (e.g. Mathletics, Raz Kids) have been available, which many parents have come to appreciate.

Typically, our parent community has been active and present in the daily happenings at Weir. Since last fall when we returned to our newly rebuilt school, we have made great efforts to revive many of the past activities and practices with our parents through our PAC council. Their ongoing, meaningful support contributes greatly to the positive school climate and enriches the school experience for all students and their families, and staff members. Their dedication is appreciated and their participation plays an important role in the cultural fabric of our community.

Further, we have brought some practices back from the past that supported our students and families including:

- Morning homework club where students are provided a quiet space and supervision to work on their assignments.
- Family reading mornings in our library commons.
- Chess club where intermediate students gather to play chess over several lunch times per week.

It can truly be said that the uniqueness of this time with all the challenges of being spread among three sites, as well as the implications and restrictions brought about by the pandemic, have been a catalyst for positive change. This has been an opportunity to reflect on what we value most – to see things with a new perspective. We look forward to this coming school year with renewed appreciation for being together as part of such a strong and positive school community.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

Weir historically has had learners that love to learn and are curious about the world around them. They show excitement for new concepts and opportunities, show care and attention for learning, and are motivated by growth and accomplishment. They are supported by families who place high value on education both in and out of school. Our teachers have high expectations for our students as readers and writers and in turn, the literacy experiences in our classrooms are comprehensive, responsive, and dynamic. This spring we conducted a literacy survey of our students which provided some insightful results. Over 75% of our students expressed a wish to read even more. When asked what they wanted their teachers to know about them as readers, responses included many comments acknowledging the value of reading (e.g. “I like reading because you get smart”) as well as comments indicating that skills are important to help you to make meaning (e.g. “sometimes I skip words but I still understand”). Alongside this interest in reading for meaning, our fall assessments (conducted by classroom and resource teachers) show that some of our young readers are still at early stages of learning skills that support their ability to read words. Both this culture of reading and supporting our early learners in developing greater skill are goals that we will continue to work on.

Weir benefits from having a wonderfully diverse school community. Our students come from a range of backgrounds and speak many home languages. Each year, we welcome a growing number of families who have recently immigrated to Canada from many places around the world including Vietnam, the Philippines, Ukraine, and many South American countries. As a school, we place high value on including the home cultures of our students in our school activities. We often find that students and families come forward to volunteer for events that represent their culture including the Lion Dance during Lunar New Year and our recent Vaisakhi celebration. In addition, we have noticed more grade seven students request to have their cultural names included on their elementary school leaving certificates.

Our students, particularly in intermediate grades, show a strong sense of student agency. This agency can be shown through volunteer work in and out of our classrooms including assembly crews, morning announcement

hosts, and hall, lunch, and equipment monitors. Our students are also strong social advocates and allies. In recent years, we have held many student run fundraisers to support the victims of natural disasters and international conflicts. Also important to note is a growing interest in Indigenous education and Pride month.

Our staff place a high value on connecting with all our students as individuals. When asked how many trusted adults our students have at school who care about them and believe in their ability to succeed, Weir regularly shows results significantly above the district average each year across many different metrics. What is interesting; however, is that in a recent student learning survey of grade four and seven students, students at Weir showed significantly lower results when asked what is expected of them at school. Although staff anecdotally observe that our students are typically polite and well-behaved, it is interesting to note that clarifying expectations will be an area of focus for us.

Our students continue to walk alongside us as school staff on our reconciliation journey. Together, we have learned how to correctly pronounce the names of the three host nations. Students and staff both take opportunities to acknowledge the land and share their personal connections and understandings. We look forward to creating personalized land acknowledgements this fall. Many students are passionate about undoing past wrongs in relation to residential schools in Canada. Our students take turns using our Indigenous drums appropriately when we open our monthly assemblies. We learn Indigenous songs both publicly shared and personally gifted to us through ceremony. Indigenous knowledge and world views are woven throughout our curriculum and can be seen in every classroom.

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 will continue to focus on developing student agency, responsibility, and growth through creating and monitoring Core Competency goals. We will continue collaborating on effective ways to unpack vocabulary, structures and activities for establishing goals, and effective ways to celebrate growth at the end of each term. We will weave these goals into our everyday life and routines at Weir including displays, announcements, assemblies, staff meetings and parent communications.

Our literacy work will focus on two specific areas: targeted skills and establishing a culture of reading. Our targeted skill work will focus on early intervention using data-driven assessments to determine supports for both small groups and whole classes. Our resource team and primary classroom teachers will continue to explore and implement literacy programs that provide essential early literacy skills to striving readers and writers. To nurture a rich culture of reading, we will establish weekly and monthly school-wide literacy routines (e.g. Drop Everything and Read, school-wide reading and writing activities). We will carefully select texts and prompts that represent diverse issues and our diverse community.

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Improve equity

We will continue to use narratives, stories, and cultural events to highlight diversity as a strength within our community. As a school, we want to include the home cultures of our families by seeking and supporting opportunities for authentic sharing and learning (e.g. Vaisakhi, Lunar New Year). We will continue to hold school-wide read alouds at our monthly assemblies selected from timely and authentic sources related to diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. Supplemental literacy activities will be provided for all classes. In our classrooms, we will continue to expand our toolkit of Universal Design for Learning strategies to ensure all students can access the learning in their classrooms.

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

We will continue this important work both with our students and amongst ourselves as professionals. Staff will continue to volunteer to explore one of the specific 94 Calls to Action at each staff meeting. We will also focus on opportunities to reflect appropriate Indigenous culture and ceremony including the use of our Indigenous drums to open our monthly assemblies and ensure that we follow appropriate protocols this fall when unveiling our cedar Wolf panels from our Indigenous carver in residence. We will also continue to deepen our circle work to both nurture community and restore relationships when harm has been caused. We will ensure that we seek authentic sources for our work.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

We will use both satellite data (district and provincially gathered) and street data (anecdotal and conversationally gathered through student interaction) to monitor our progress with a particular emphasis on structures that highlight the voices of Weir students including school-wide writing, student focus groups, and surveys. We will hold data in shared documents and pay careful attention that the accurate and full picture of our progress can only be learned through understanding the qualitative stories behind the data collected.