

2024-2025

School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

Charles Dickens Elementary School is located in East Vancouver. With deep gratitude and respect, we are honoured to be learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).

Dickens has a population of about 446 students. The staff, both long-time and newcomers, have come to Dickens because of a strong desire to join and be part of this unique community. We embrace a philosophy where multi-age classes, team-teaching practice, and project-based learning are common throughout the school. The main tenets of our child-centered program are that the child is the focus of education; that social responsibility and decision-making must be fostered; that learning is continuous; and that the purpose of evaluation is to promote further authentic learning.

Most classes are organized with two grade levels and taught with a multi-age philosophy. Dickens is a caring, child-centered school where student leadership is nurtured. The staff is committed to collaborative decision-making and work as a Professional Learning Community. We are a Collaborative Early Literacy CELI School and offer Reading Recovery for Grade One students. In addition to the mainstream school community, Dickens is home to a District Elementary Learning Support Program (ELSP) class supporting students with unique learning needs. Dickens has an active and supportive Parent Advisory Council (PAC) with high parent involvement throughout the school. PAC fundraising events help connect the community to Dickens.

The physical space of our school building is well utilized. With its wide corridors, sliding glass garage-style doorways in our multi-purpose room, and adjoining classroom spaces, it is conducive to the child-centered, group learning philosophy that the community has embraced for many years. The multipurpose room and gym are additional community spaces that reinforce the multi-age group experiences such as the student-led Monday morning assemblies. Dickens offers a variety of extracurricular activities, sponsoring cross-country, volleyball, basketball, ultimate, and track & field teams for our students. Students also have opportunities to participate in other physical activities that may be offered throughout the year, as well as school-wide programs and presentations. Student leadership is supported and shared through various school opportunities such as Daily Announcers, Student-led assemblies, Peer Helpers, Buddy Reading, Library Monitors, Student Council, Green Team, Lunch Monitors, ASL club, Best Buddies, Chess Club, Diversity Club, and Coding Club. Students come together to celebrate one another and the unique gifts we all bring by participating in Winter and Spring concerts and the Talent Show.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

As with any group of learners, Dickens students demonstrate diverse interests, strengths and needs. Our school population includes approximately 13% of students with diverse needs and 8% who are English Language Learners (ELL). Our student population is diverse and while most families speak English at home, approximately 20% of our families have a different first language. The students and staff are curious about continual learning around issues such as social justice, anti-racism, SOGI, and truth and reconciliation. Our staff and students continue to learn about and strengthen individual self-regulation strategies. By working on this together, we are developing common understanding and language that we use consistently throughout the school.

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

Through our continued school goal of collaboration, our intentional focus is on improving students' writing and reading skills. This goal was determined by reviewing data. The written output needs were observed across grade levels by our resource teachers and classroom teachers working together.

Our goal is connected to the VSB Education Plan Goals of student achievement, specifically in written output in Language Arts and in all subject areas where written communication is required. We continue to focus on growing collaboration and teaming which supports mental well-being and belonging of students and staff. Equity in terms of consistency across grade levels in different classes is enhanced with teaming and common practice and expectations among teachers. School Wide Writes, Learning Update data, and FSA data help guide our awareness about how our students are doing.

From fall 2024 to spring 2025, our literacy data reflected strong performance and steady growth across the grades. In Kindergarten, most students remained at the Proficient level, and over half were meeting or exceeding expectations in writing. Primary classes showed consistent improvement, with Grade 2 standing out as more students moved from Developing into Proficient. This growth was evident in classrooms, where students were writing more, creating coherent short stories, and building a solid foundation in literacy.

In Grades 1 and 2 Writing, there was clear and significant growth in student achievement over the school year. In Grade 1, the percentage of students performing at the Proficient or Extending levels increased from approximately 34% in Fall 2024 to 63% in Spring 2025. Similarly, in Grade 2, that percentage rose from 43% to nearly 74%.

Intermediate students also made impressive improvements in writing. Grade 5 rose by 17%, Grade 6 jumped by 32%, and in Grade 7, the percentage of students at the Proficient or Extending levels increased from 14% to 69%. These results reflect a very positive trend and show that focused instruction and support had a meaningful impact on student success in writing.

In reading, the primary grades again showed strong progress. Grade 1 led with a 28% increase in students reading at the Proficient or Extending level. On average, primary grades improved by 16%, which speaks to the strength of early literacy instruction. Intermediate students continued to perform well overall in reading, with most maintaining levels in the Proficient and Extending range, demonstrating a solid foundation.

This literacy growth is a direct result of intentional teaching strategies across classrooms. Teachers used differentiated instruction, consistent guided reading groups, literature circles, and decodable texts to support early reading development. Structured routines, along with evidence-based programs such as the UFLI Foundations Toolbox, Heggerty, and dedicated spelling programs, played a key role in supporting solid literacy growth across classrooms. One-on-one reading support and targeted interventions, including the Reading Recovery program, provided additional layers of support. As a CELI school, we remain committed to research-based literacy instruction, and the positive results reflect that work.

We also saw encouraging growth in numeracy. In the primary grades, students made strong gains, with Grades 1 and 2 showing significant increases in the number of students achieving Proficient or Extending. On average, primary numeracy achievement rose by 12%. In the intermediate grades, progress was also positive. Grades 6 and 7 showed the most growth, and on average, intermediate numeracy improved by 9.8%. These gains reflect growing student confidence and deeper mathematical understanding.

Classroom instruction played a key role in this progress. Teachers used number talks to build fluency, manipulatives and hands-on activities to support conceptual understanding, and open-ended problems to develop flexible thinking. Math games, subitizing routines, and resources like Power of Ten and Math Antics helped make learning engaging and accessible. Instruction was delivered through a combination of whole-class lessons and small group work, allowing for both targeted support and enrichment.

Throughout the year, we used a variety of assessment tools to inform instruction. CSL grades provided a broad picture of progress in literacy and numeracy. School-wide Writes offered insight into student growth in writing, while reading levels were assessed using tools such as DRA, Fountas & Pinnell, and DIBELS. These multiple measures helped us understand where students were and what they needed next.

In regards to mental well-being and belonging, the MDI reports that 41% of our students feel that highly belong and 54% highly believe the school climate is a positive one. Through the Student Learning Surveys, our students report their resiliency mindset is 54%. This year we have actively worked on increasing these scores. We have brought in several programs to work with our intermediate students such as Watari, PLEA, and VCH. We have brought in our District Diversity teacher to work with our upper intermediate teachers as well as our Anti-Racism and Diversity Teacher to work with staff on a monthly basis. We now start our days with student announcers which always end in "Remember, together is better." For this school year, we also had our first

Indigenous Peoples Day Assembly in June as well as our first Diversity Walk in which the entire school participated.

Improving equity

Dickens School is committed to nurturing a well-rounded educational environment. By offering a variety of extracurricular and intramural sports, students have the opportunity to engage in physical activity, learn teamwork, and develop sportsmanship. The school's clubs are designed to enrich learning and cultivate leadership skills, providing students with a platform to explore their interests and talents. We work on increasing student voice and a sense of belonging by providing evidence instrumental in informing us about all our learners. Universal Design of Learning consistently drives our work. The MDI, EDI, and Student Satisfaction Surveys provide valuable information about our learners. Academically, Dickens takes a proactive approach by identifying students in need of additional support and implementing targeted secondary interventions. One such initiative is the Reading Recovery program, which is specifically tailored to enhance the reading abilities of early learners, ensuring they have the foundational skills necessary for academic success. Using the CELI data, we are able to identify areas of need for our priority learners and target our learners. In the beginning of the upcoming 2025 – 2026 school year, we will be using a schoolwide literacy screener to further identify and focus on our priority learners from Kindergarten to Grade 7.

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

The commitment to reconciliation through education is a powerful step towards building a more inclusive and aware community. By acknowledging the land at our weekly student-led assemblies and sharing the Coast Salish Anthem, the community honors the traditional custodians of the land and their enduring connection to it. Through the many resources and stories supported by our library, written by Canadian Indigenous authors, students are exposed to diverse perspectives and histories. We are building upon work experienced last Spring, when some of our upper intermediate students were able to work with Aboriginal Enhancement Worker Brandon Peters.

Through the Student Learning Surveys, students reported that 12.5% participate in Indigenous celebrations and activities, 41.5% are learning about Indigenous peoples and 32.5% feel they are being taught about local First Nations. We have acted on this feedback and this baseline data will be referred to going forward.

Our music teachers taught all our students the Coast Salish Welcome Song and we are at the beginning stages of bringing in restorative Circle Practice into our school and classrooms. This year, we have had an Indigenous Peoples Day Assembly where Mary Point came to perform a greeting for our school.

To incorporate Indigenous culture and learning into daily practice, student leaders created personalized land acknowledgements and shared them during the student morning PA announcements. They were thoughtfully guided to use the respectful language requested by the Host Nations and encouraged to form meaningful connections to the land. Students reflected on what they love about the land, their responsibilities as learners, and the promises they can make

to protect and care for it. This process deepened their understanding and fostered a sense of respect, gratitude, and stewardship.

Furthermore, the study of Indigenous plants and their relation to seasonal cycles offers a holistic approach to education, blending natural science with cultural wisdom. Integrating Indigenous knowledge and the First People's Principles of Learning into educational curricula enriches learning by incorporating diverse perspectives and practices that have been honed over millennia. This integration not only broadens students' understanding of the world but also instills a deep respect for the profound contributions of Indigenous cultures. We have been learning about place-based and land-based learning.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

To ensure we are on track, we are working toward greater consistency in how we assess and monitor student progress in literacy and numeracy. To support a more aligned approach, we will implement a universal literacy screener assessment tool, DIBELS, across all classrooms starting next year. This will help us collect reliable, school-wide literacy and numeracy data. We will be looking at wellbeing, belonging, and growth in Indigenous learning through surveys and the previously mentioned assessment tools. Staff have scheduled a school staff (Main and Annex) professional day to focus on Indigenous learning working with staff from VSB's Indigenous Department during the next school year. With shared tools and aligned practices, we will be well-positioned to track progress, guide instruction, and ensure all learners continue to grow.