

2024-2025 School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

With deep gratitude and respect, we are honoured to be learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).

Nootka Elementary School is positioned within the residential Renfrew-Collingwood district on the east side of Vancouver. The school, bordered by Renfrew Community Centre, Still Creek, and the Renfrew Ravine, integrates a commitment to place-based learning, and surrounds the school with accessible recreational opportunities and green spaces for learning.

The student body at Nootka reflects the rich cultural diversity of our community, comprising families identifying with Indigenous and settler cultures, both from within Canada and globally. Enthusiastic students, from diverse cultural backgrounds, arrive at school eager to learn. Students reside in neighborhoods throughout the city, bringing a diverse array of experiences and needs to school every day. In the academic year 2024-2025, we are serving nearly 400 students across 18 divisions.

Nootka offers three distinct educational programs: the Classic Program, a K-7 catchment program; the District Fine Arts Program, a K-7 program emphasizing Fine Arts; and the District Elementary Learning Support Program (ELSP), designed for students in grades 4-7. At Nootka, all students receive music education under the guidance of two specialized music teachers. The dedicated staff of approximately 60 individuals collaboratively work under the leadership of a principal and a vice principal to provide a supportive, inclusive, and equitable learning environment for every student. Staff regularly participate in various Professional Development opportunities, recently centered around Indigenous Education and anti-racism.

The Nootka Fine Arts Program (K-7) is a district choice program offered by the Vancouver School District. This program places an emphasis on the four Fine Arts domains: Visual Arts, Dance, Drama, and Music. The program focuses on fostering skill development through the arts, encouraging collaboration, problem-solving, and communication among students. Further enriching the curriculum, Nootka offers electives for students in grades 4-7, providing them with a comprehensive and immersive fine arts education experience. Last year, intermediate students and staff put out a musical theatre production of Matilda that ran sold out shows and a student written and directed comedic play.

Nootka students and staff have the assistance of a shared Youth and Family worker and an Area Counsellor. These individuals enhance the social and emotional well-being of students by

orchestrating extracurricular activities, fostering social-emotional learning in classrooms and small group environments, and liaising with our Windermere Community Schools Team Coordinator. Nootka also houses a before and after school care program through Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House and the new Out of School Care from Renfrew Community Centre. They offer programming for students between 7:30 and 9:00 am, and 3:00 and 5:30 pm. This provides childcare support for working families and caregivers in the school community.

Nootka's unique architectural design, shaped like a horseshoe, encloses a central courtyard and playground. The school's single-level design ensures comprehensive accessibility, accommodating all mobility requirements. Our premises boast a Library Learning Commons, a dance/activity studio, a drama room, a FuturePLAY room, and a gym with a stage. The outdoor spaces include playing fields, raised garden beds, playground equipment, a rock garden exploration area, and musical instruments, fostering a diverse range of indoor and outdoor inquiry experiences that enhance learning and cultivate opportunities for success.

In alignment with the district's Indigenous Enhancement Agreement, we aim to infuse Indigenous content into all curriculum areas across all grades. High expectations are set for students, and teaching teams employ many different strategies to help foster a growth mindset to ensure student success. Teachers participate in an Equity & Access through Story Workshop inquiry project, and many teachers explore Universal Designs for Learning using centres and stations available in the dedicated Inquiry Space. Our comprehensive Student Code of Conduct outlines behaviour expectations and emphasizes the school philosophy of restorative action to repair harm resulting from behaviour contrary to the code.

Nootka highly values student advocacy, promoting participation in various leadership initiatives, including Library Monitors, Crossing Guards, Rainbow Club, Peer Helpers, Nootka BRAVE Committee, and Lunch Monitors. We also offer Textiles Club, Games Club, Scrapbooking Club and multiple team sports throughout the year. The school mission is to foster a community of engaged, enthusiastic learners, ready to work with others to contribute positively to the world.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

Nootka Elementary is a vibrant learning hub, hosting a diverse group of learners. The school community is enriched by a significant representation of English Language Learners (ELL) and families new to the area, reflecting the cultural and linguistic diversity of Vancouver. This diversity is further amplified by the district's Fine Arts choice program, attracting learners from all corners of the city.

The students at Nootka are as diverse in their interests as they are in their backgrounds. Some are drawn towards the arts, expressing themselves through visual art, dance, music, or drama. Others showcase their skills in various athletic activities, while academically-oriented students excel in intellectual pursuits. Nootka is also a safe and welcoming space for students who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, and those who proudly represent their unique cultural identities.

Given this wide array of interests, the academic, social, and emotional needs of the students are equally diverse. This aligns with the first goal of the VSB Education Plan, which emphasizes personalized learning for every student. This past year we had 74% of students in grade 4 proficient or developing in Language arts and 26% of our grade 4 students were emerging

according to Communicating Student Learning (CSL) data. Our grade 4 Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA) data was similar in that 76% of students who took the assessment were "On Track" or "Extending" and 24% were emerging. 100% of grade 7 students who wrote the FSA were "On Track". The CSL results for grade 7s indicated that 71% were proficient or extending and 97% were proficient, extending or developing. The school's educators are committed to providing a learning environment that meets these varied requirements, ranging from personalized academic support, to emotional counseling, to fostering social relationships.

To ensure that the needs of students are being met, and their voices are being heard, the school uses student learning surveys, MDI, anecdotal and observational data. These sources provide invaluable insights into the learning experience from the students' perspective, helping educators and administrators tailor their strategies to improve educational outcomes. This approach also aligns with the first goal of the Ed Plan to improve school environments to ensure they are safe, caring, welcoming and inclusive places for students and families.

Our families come from a diverse array of backgrounds. This diversity provides an opportunity for learning and understanding different perspectives, fostering a rich educational environment. However, it also poses a challenge to ensure equitable access to learning resources and opportunities, aligning with the second goal of the VSB Education Plan, which is to create a balanced, sustainable, and equitable learning environment. The staff at Nootka are committed to promoting equity for priority learners through professional development, inclusive instruction, and instructional resources. They also provide extension opportunities to highlight diverse voices and experiences within the community. Staff have engaged PAC in discussions about promoting equity for all learners at Nootka.

At Nootka Elementary, symmetrical learning in social and emotional learning is evident through co-created classroom norms where teachers and students collaboratively establish classroom norms, fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment. Teachers also use emotion check-ins where daily check-ins promote self-awareness, empathy, and open communication among all participants. A final example of symmetrical learning is collaborative problem-solving where teachers facilitate class discussions and students actively contribute perspectives and propose solutions, nurturing problem-solving skills and interpersonal relationships.

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

At Nootka, we're committed to helping every student grow in reading, writing, and math. Here are some of the ways we're supporting learning across the school:

- Early Reading Support: We use a tool called DIBELS to help identify young students who may need extra help with reading. This allows teachers to adjust instruction and monitor progress early on.
- Science of Reading Instruction: Teachers are implementing a phonics-based reading program called UFLI (University of Florida Literacy Institute). Staff are receiving professional development to strengthen this approach.
- Buddy Reading Program: Students who are developing their reading skills are paired with a volunteer reading mentor 1 to 2 times per week.
- Mentorship Across Grades: We encourage students from different grade levels to work together, helping build leadership, empathy, and collaboration.
- Inquiry & Collaboration Projects: Grade 6 and 7 students work in interest-based groups to explore big questions. These projects promote critical thinking, teamwork, and allow students to show their learning in different ways.
- Project-Based Learning: Across the school, students engage in hands-on projects that connect learning to real-world ideas and encourage creativity.
- Math Week at Nootka: A fun and engaging week where students explore math through games and activities, and families are invited to participate at home.
- Targeted Student Support: Support staff work in classrooms to assist students who have been identified through assessments and teacher observations as needing extra help.
- Streamlined Resource Support: We're working to align goals and organize support more effectively so students get the help they need, when they need it

Improve equity

We believe every student deserves access to meaningful learning experiences, regardless of background or ability. Here are some of the ways we're working to promote equity across our school:

- Inclusive Teaching Practices: Teachers are using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies to make lessons accessible to all learners, offering multiple ways to engage with content and show understanding.
- Targeted Literacy Support: We're using the Science of Reading approach, including the UFLI phonics program, to help close literacy gaps while continuing to offer a balanced literacy experience.
- Open Library Access: Our school library is open three days a week for dedicated student time, helping all students access books that interest and inspire them.

- Ongoing Teacher Learning: Staff continue to participate in professional development focused on literacy and math, ensuring we're using the most effective and inclusive teaching strategies.
- Food Security Committee: We support families and students with food and nutrition needs through our school-based committee, helping ensure no child is hungry at school.

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

At our school, we are deeply committed to honouring and integrating Indigenous perspectives and practices into our teaching and learning. Several classes begin each week by singing the Cherokee morning song every Monday, and we come together as a whole school to learn and sing the Coast Salish song during gatherings. Meaningful Land Acknowledgements are a regular part of assemblies, student announcements, and all meetings, reflecting our ongoing efforts to decolonize our practices by fostering a strong connection to the land. Staff and students consistently engage in this work, supported by a review of the 94 Calls to Action and a focus on applying these goals in meaningful, everyday ways. We prioritize supporting Indigenous businesses and artists whenever possible. This past year a mural by an Indigenous artist was commissioned and is prominently on display in our courtyard. We have planted a garden with Indigenous plants. Our administrative team has adopted circle structures for meetings, and we welcome visits from Elders—such as Randy Tait—who are honoured with proper protocol. All staff participate in Indigenous Education in-service days, and Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being, along with the First Peoples Principles of Learning, are visibly embedded in both school-wide and classroom practices. Our curriculum includes specific books, stories, and novel sets by Indigenous authors, and we emphasise celebrating positive events and contributions rather than focusing solely on historical injustices. Additionally, our book club features works like *Who We Are* by Murray Sinclair, further enriching our collective understanding and commitment to reconciliation.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

To guide our next steps in literacy development, we will analyze data from these key sources:

- Communicating Student Learning (CSL) reports
- Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA) results
- Student Learning Survey responses
- Referrals to the School-Based Team
- School-wide writing assessments conducted twice annually
- Results from the DIBELS

To guide our next steps in our equity goal we will look at...

- **Literacy and Math Assessment Results**
Track improvements in foundational skills assessments, UFLI progress monitoring, school-wide writes, and the DIBELS assessment.
- **Library Usage Data**
Monitor how often students access the open library and check out books.
- **Referral and Support Data**
Track the number of students accessing food support, classroom interventions, and/or school-based team referrals.
- **Attendance and Engagement**
Look for improvements in attendance rates and participation in classroom activities, especially among priority learners.
- **Survey Results**
Use student, family and staff surveys to gather feedback on inclusion, belonging, and access to learning.