



# District Plan *for* Student Learning 2010/2011

Learning Engaged Active Relationship Needs Safe





# Core Purpose

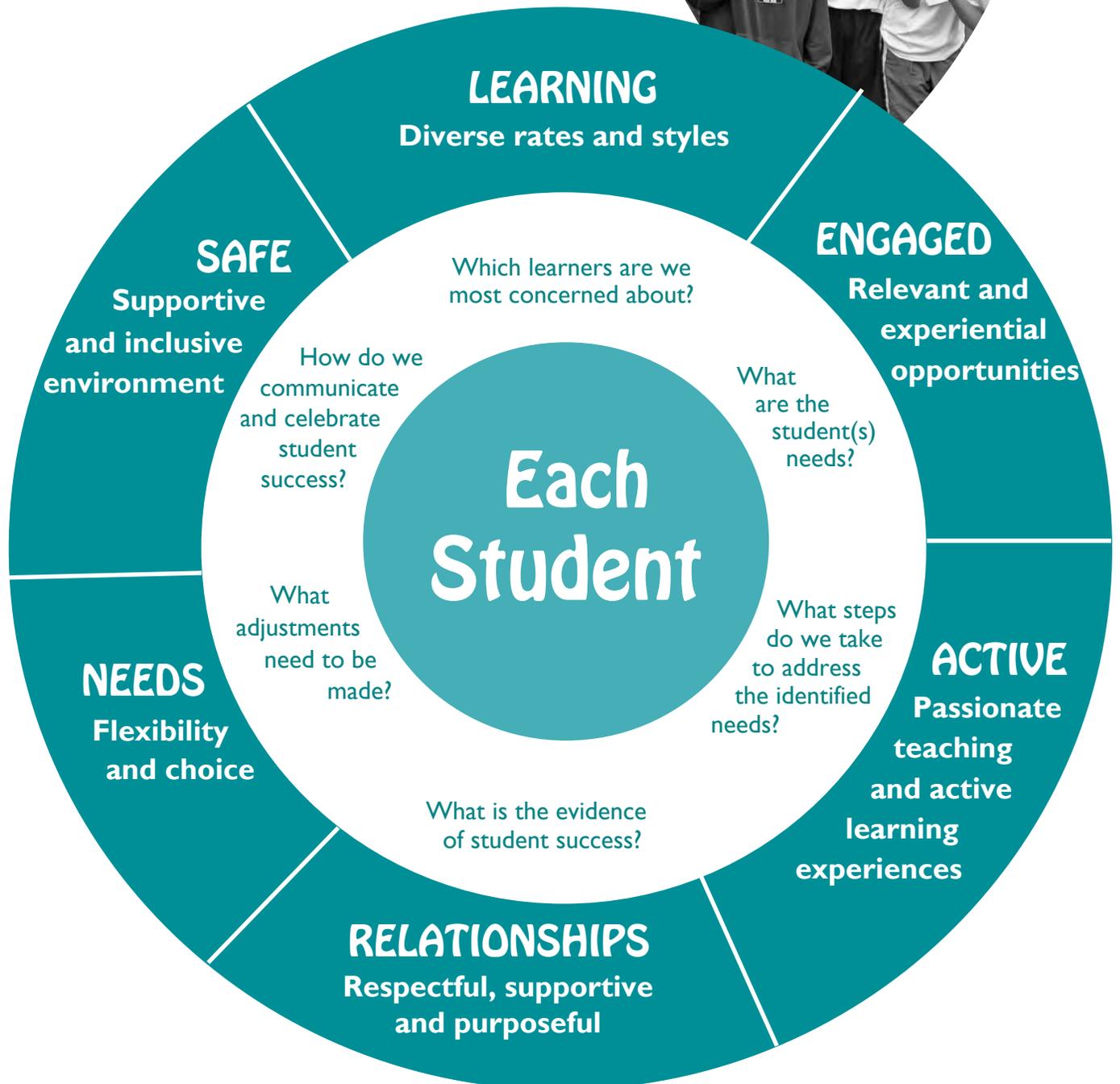
It is our collective responsibility as a school district to ensure the highest quality of learning experiences for all students, with a focus on student engagement, learning and development in a safe, inclusive environment.





# Assessment for Learning

Success for each student





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## Our Mission

To enable students to reach their intellectual, social, aesthetic and physical potential in challenging and stimulating settings which reflect the worth of each individual and promote mutual respect, cooperation and social responsibility.



# District Context

We value childhood as a unique and special time.

## Our Students

### Enrollment

31,000	elementary students
25,000	secondary students
3,000	(FTE) adult education students
48,000	students in continuing education programs
3,000	students in distributed learning programs

### Diversity

- 25% of K-Grade 12 students are designated ESL
- 60% speak a language other than English at home
- 126 languages have been identified in our schools
- 7% of elementary and secondary students are special education learners
- 9% of elementary students are French Immersion learners
- 4% of secondary students are French Immersion learners
- 16% of students participate in a school meal program
- 2,000 students attend full day kindergarten
- 4% of students are Aboriginal (First Nations, Metis & Inuit)
- attend Vancouver schools

### Our Schools

- Our schools reside on Musqueam and Coast Salish Traditional Territory
- 74 elementary schools and 17 elementary annexes
- 18 secondary schools
- 7 adult education centres
- 1 Distance Education School at 2 locations  
1 elementary and 1 secondary
- district programs include early and late French Immersion (18), Mandarin bilingual, Fine Arts, Gifted and Montessori
- 56 district programs connected to our secondary schools addressing a wide range of needs from remedial to enrichment
- 12 Community School Teams
- 3 Junior Kindergarten classes

The Vancouver School District is a large, urban and multicultural school district that includes some of the most affluent and impoverished urban neighbourhoods in the country. This setting provides wonderful opportunities as well as serious challenges. The Vancouver School District is among the most diverse of public school systems in Canada, with an annual enrolment of approximately 56,000 students in Kindergarten to Grade 12. In addition, the Vancouver School District provides educational programs and services to full-time Adult Education and Continuing Education students. Our programs and services address extraordinary combinations of challenge, need, opportunity and potential that exist in every student we serve.

On the one hand, many children, due to poverty and other inhibitors, are excluded from the choices and opportunities that a city the size of Vancouver can offer. On the other hand, many students living in this urban environment are able to take advantage of opportunities to experience and learn from diverse cultures and reap the benefits of involvement with highly sophisticated and experienced arts and recreational groups that you would expect to find in a world-class city. Vancouver schools are involved in a wide range of partnerships with cultural, arts and service organizations. The district also offers a multitude of services and program options to meet student interests and needs.



“A safe and caring school is one in which there is a deep personal commitment to the core social values of justice, respect and compassion. Students must be able to observe and encounter these values in action in their daily lives, especially in the school setting.”

BC Ministry of Education. (2008, November). Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework

# The District Plan for Student Learning

**We believe in the provision of a wide range of programs, services and resources to meet the needs, interests and abilities of all learners.**

As indicated by the District Review Team, School District No.39 (Vancouver) has many excellent programs and initiatives either in place or underway. One of its challenges is to coordinate, connect and sustain these promising projects - to incorporate them into the culture of the district to enhance the success of each student.

Specifically, the Review Team recommended that the district articulate long term strategic directions to guide district work to improve student success. They noted that coherence and alignment with district directions and expectations were not clearly understood at all levels in the system. The Team recognized the strong focus on individual students in schools and observed that many schools are using formative assessment to inform decisions, actions and planning to support students. It was recommended that the district establish a consistent way to assess, monitor, and communicate the progress of all students and use formative and summative assessments combined with professional judgement to establish baselines for each student and school.

To this end, the district has refined the School Plan template to focus on success for each student and incorporate assessment for learning and the conditions for learning (LEARNs) as revealed in the district's Appreciative Inquiries. To align the goal setting and planning in schools with that of the district, the District Plan was reformatted in 2009/2010 to follow the same template.

The focus on success for each student encompasses the district's diverse student population, inclusive of English Second Language, Special Needs and Aboriginal learners. This expectation of success for each learner is a collective responsibility and is integral to the core purpose of the District Plan. With a shared commitment in closing the gap in student achievement, increasing literacy for all students, the district will enhance the learning experiences for those whom the school system has been less effective.

Overwhelmingly students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members repeatedly told us that optimal learning takes place when the following conditions are in place:

**L**earning

**E**ngaging, Experiential

**A**ctive, Passionate Teaching

**R**elationships

**N**eed for Flexibility & Choice

**S**afety



## We value the diverse and evolving multicultural nature of Vancouver.

**We believe**  
that schools should  
provide a safe, secure  
and hunger-free  
environment.

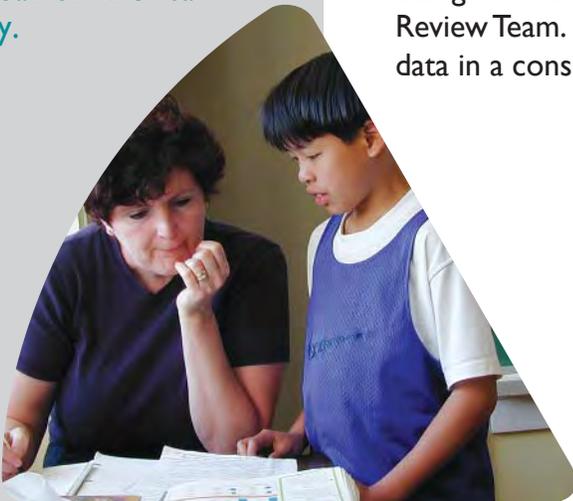
**We believe**  
that children should  
be empowered to  
recognize and exercise  
their rights.

**We believe**  
in equitable treatment  
for all individuals  
regardless of race,  
culture, gender, religion,  
socio-economic status,  
sexual orientation or  
physical or mental  
ability.

The district recognizes the achievement for many Aboriginal students is not at an acceptable level and is addressing this with a shared responsibility of commitment outlined in the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. The goals and strategies of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement are applicable and beneficial for all learners.

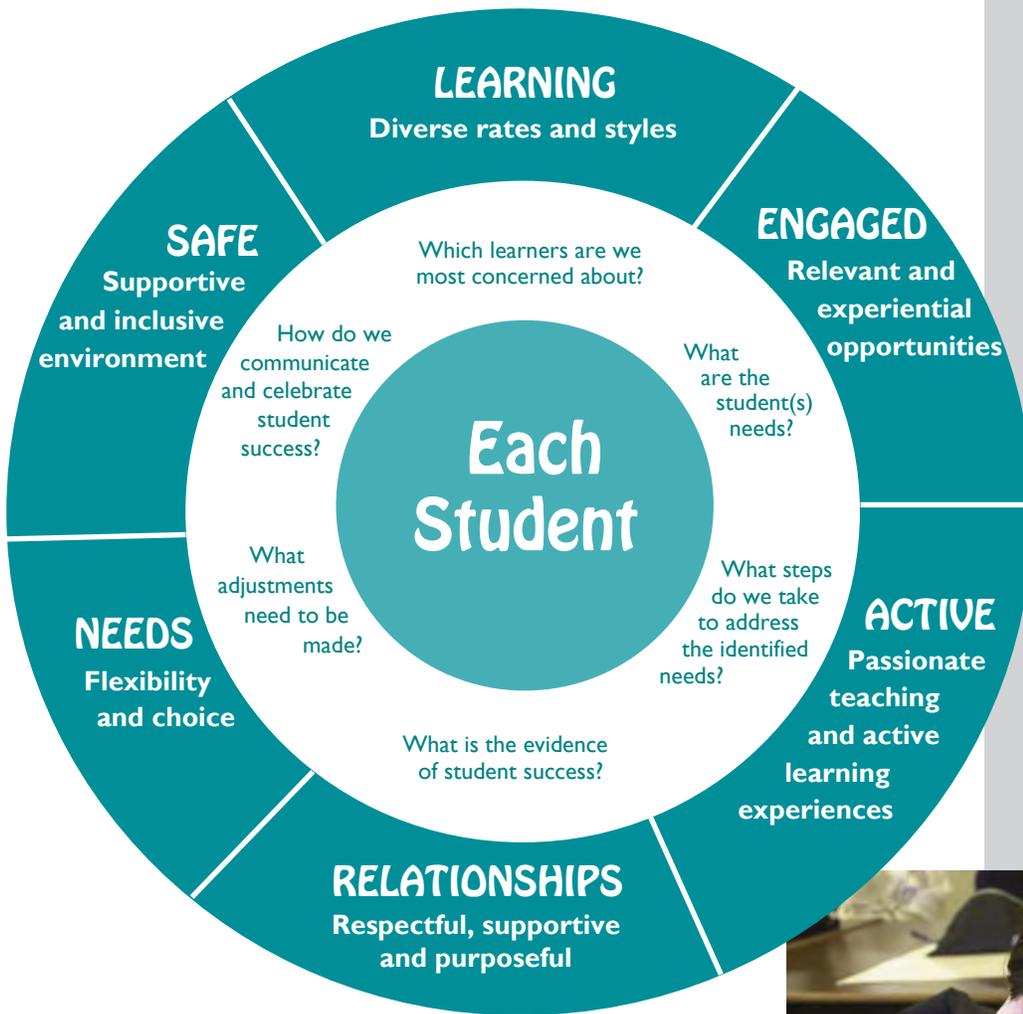
The District Plan identifies the district's expectation that strategies to support social-emotional learning and the maintenance of a safe, inclusive, socially responsible school climate be in place for all learners. As noted by the Review Team, Social Responsibility has been embedded in the culture of the district and is recognized by all partner groups as an area of strength. Social/ emotional learning, promotion of the mental health of our students and school climates that support social responsibility and diversity are recognized as being foundational to student success, rather than a stand alone goal. Focus on these areas is integral to student success in the district literacy goal. Data will continue to be collected through such strategies as school-based assessments, surveys and Ministry Satisfaction Surveys.

In the 2010/2011 District Plan, Literacy remains our primary goal. We have chosen literacy for two reasons. The first is that it relates to our moral purpose. A persistent 15 to 20 % of our students are not yet meeting expectations in reading and writing. This is an area of significant concern as we know that the life chances of our students are seriously limited if they do not have Literacy skills. Our emphasis on Literacy is intended to increase the number of students who are able to meet and exceed expectations. The second reason we have chosen literacy as our goal is that it builds on a strength in the District as noted by the Review Team. In our District Plan we will deepen our focus and collect data in a consistent way in order to more effectively track students.



**We believe in equal opportunity and equal access to the best possible education in a supportive, positive and challenging environment.**

The major strategy we are going to emphasize is *assessment for learning*. We know that good classroom assessment practices have shown to be one of the most effective ways to improve achievement of all learners – and particularly those who are most at risk for not succeeding. Our intention is to provide support for schools in a sustained plan for in-service and professional development.



We value the contribution of each individual.

## What is Our Vision of Success for Learning for Each Student?

Our vision of success for each student, illustrated in the *Success for Each Student* graphic, is based on two complementary conceptual frameworks: Response to Intervention and Effective Behaviour Support. Each tier of this model represents increasingly intense services that are associated with increasing levels of learner needs. Interventions at all three levels are aimed at improving student response to instruction and improving student outcomes.

At the **Universal Intervention** level, each student refers to every student enrolled in a regular classroom. Assessment for learning, as well as summative assessments are components of teaching practice. Tier one represents high quality instruction and monitoring of student success to support social emotional functioning and cultural learning to enrich or extend learning experiences.

**Targeted Group Interventions** are determined by a collaborative School Based Team process. The assessment focus is increasingly narrow to determine the specific areas that are interfering with a student's ability to learn or demonstrate learning. Instruction is designed to increase success. Small group instruction may support learning, support social emotional functioning, enrich or restore cultural learning, and enrich or extend learning experiences.

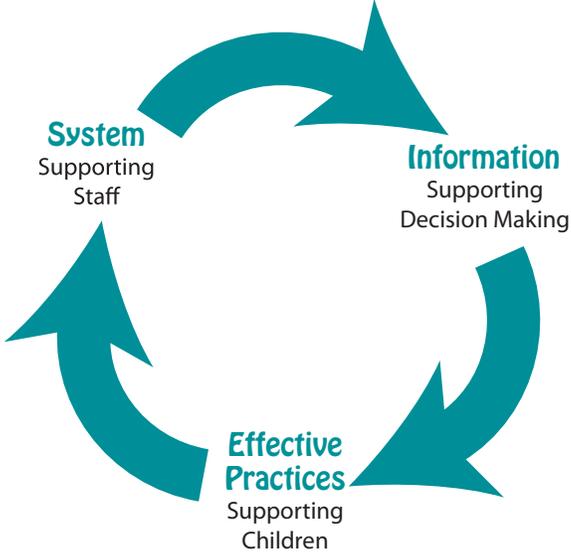
The *Success for Each Student* graphic represents an engagement of the entire system on the purpose of student success. Each tier represents the ways in which we organise our assessment and instruction cycles to monitor for student success.

**Intensive, Individual Intervention** refers to the set of services, supports, strategies and instructional approaches that are required to create conditions of success for students whose needs are highly defined. At this level, a highly individualised approach is taken to both assessment and instruction. Each intervention is carefully monitored for its effectiveness.

Children and youth need a wide variety of positive, engaging experiences and opportunities in order to learn and develop to their full potential.



# Success for Each Student



## Learning Systems

## Social - Emotional, Behavioural Systems



**Intensive, Individual Intervention**

- Individual Students
- Assessment-based
- High Intensity
- May include a District class placement

**Targeted Group Interventions**

- School Based Team processes
- Some students
- Rapid response
- Learning Assistance,
- English Language Learner Support
- Aboriginal Education
- Gifted
- Early Intervention in Literacy

**Universal Interventions**

- All settings, All students
- Preventive, proactive
- Whole class assessment for learning
- Universal design for Learning/ Differential Instruction

**Intensive, Individual Intervention**

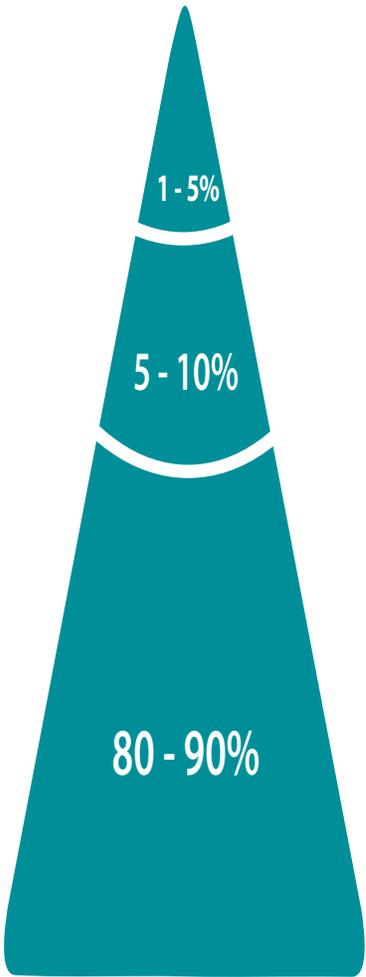
- Individual Students
- Assessment-based
- Intensive, durable procedures
- Wrap around
- May include a District class placement
- Support from Behaviour Strategies
- Consultant and/or STIBS workers

**Targeted Group Interventions**

- School Based Team processes
- Some students
- Rapid response
- Social Emotional Learning
- Restorative practices
- Social Skills instruction
- Functional Behaviour Assessment

**Universal Interventions**

- All Settings, All Students
- Preventive, proactive
- EBS school wide systems
- Positive Behaviour Support
- Social Emotional Learning
- Conflict resolution – Second Step
- Classroom Management – Alert Program





# Foundations for Success for each Student

We believe in a commitment to excellence.

**Social Responsibility**

**Aboriginal Learners**

**Literacy**





# Social Responsibility

**We believe in cooperation, respect for others and development of social responsibility.**

Our district remains focused on improving students' sense of safety and belonging, increasing students' active participation in their school communities, and improving the social/emotional development of all students, particularly those identified as vulnerable.

The District Review Team's recognition that social responsibility was successfully embedded in our school cultures, along with the outcomes of our Appreciative Inquiry Process, confirmed that attention to the social/emotional needs of students and the maintenance of socially responsible school climates should no longer be a discrete district goal, but rather a district expectation for each school to maintain as it is so fundamentally important to success for each student.

On-going district support and school-based initiatives continue to address student safety and sense of belonging; assist schools in addressing the social/emotional and mental health needs of our students; and ensure that diversity is embraced and celebrated. Evidence gathered through our Safe School and Social Responsibility Survey of over 16,000 secondary students demonstrates that we have established increasingly positive school climates, increased adult responsiveness and increased student sense of safety and engagement; however, we must attend to students' skill development in key areas of respectful relationships and resisting risk behaviours. Through Ministry Satisfaction Surveys and various measures at the elementary level we have better understood the interrelationship between school climate and student development of social responsibility (see Appendix 1 and 2). Our success in these areas will be reflected in the achievements our students make in literacy and other areas of their learning, as well as in our school-based assessments of student social responsibility.

This school year, the District participated in an innovative research project called MDI (Middle Years Development Inventory) involving Grade 4 students. (See page 37 and Appendix 6 for more details.)

A recent analysis of more than 300 research studies on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) revealed that students enrolled in an SEL program ranked at least 10 percentile points higher on achievement tests than students not participating in SEL programs. Furthermore, students in these programs had significantly better attendance records, displayed more constructive and less disruptive classroom behaviour, liked school better, had better grade point averages, and were less likely to be suspended or otherwise disciplined.

*Weissberg & Durlak, 2005.*

“According to a growing body of research, addressing the social and emotional needs of youth not only prepares students to learn, but also increases their capacity to learn.”

*Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2003).*



We believe in the dignity of the individual and development of self-esteem.

## Social Responsibility as a District Expectation for All Learners

Research indicates that there are two interrelated core elements which, when intentionally addressed, strengthen students' long term academic, social and vocational outcomes. The first element is creating and maintaining safe, positive and inclusive learning environments. The second is ensuring that direct instruction supports each student's development of social/emotional skills in the five key competencies which underlie socially responsible behaviour.

### Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

SEL is the process whereby children and adults develop essential social and emotional skills, knowledge, and attitudes related to:



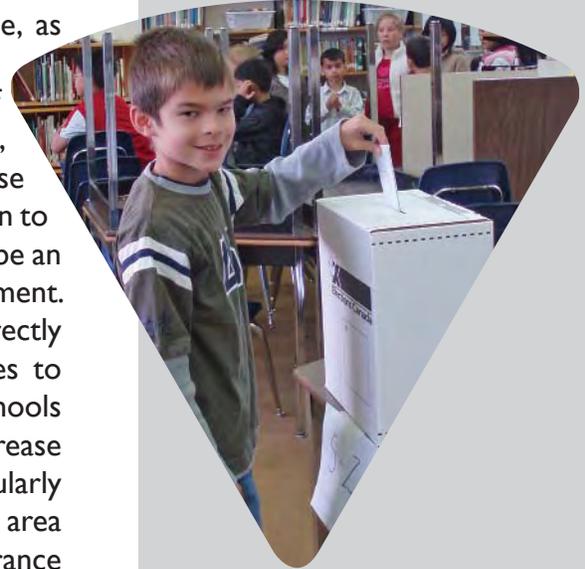
Research clearly demonstrates the significant role of SEL in promoting the healthy development and academic achievement of all students.

## We believe in fostering a sense of community

In our district, social responsibility has long been a core value, as reflected in the District Mission Statement. For five years social responsibility was a district goal, and for the vast majority of schools, also a school goal. Schools focus on creating inclusive, socially responsible learning communities while aiming to increase each student's sense of belonging and safety, paying special attention to the needs of vulnerable students. Student belonging continues to be an important goal of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. School communities emphasize a positive school climate, directly teach social/emotional skills, and provide students opportunities to apply those skills throughout the school and in the community. Schools establish strategies to address the needs of vulnerable students, increase equity and inclusion, and support successful transitions, particularly the transition between elementary and secondary school. In the area of diversity education, schools continue to move beyond tolerance and toward celebrating differences, such that students value diversity and appreciate their own unique qualities. Learning provides both a "window" to see other's lives and a "mirror" to reflect one's own culture and environment. This year (2009/2010) there has been much activity at the district level in mental health promotion and mental illness prevention with connections made to provincial and federal initiatives, training for staff in various roles, and implementation of key multisector projects. Increased awareness and training has improved school capacity to respond to student needs.

As a result of the initiative in social responsibility, we learned that the healthy development of students is best addressed through a continuum of promotion, prevention and intervention strategies, which are appropriate to each student's current level of development. Activities focus on building students' strengths while promoting resiliency and addressing issues of concern as they arise. School-based strategies aim to build students' sense of personal and social responsibility and engage students in contributing to their school, their neighbourhood and the broader community. Consistent with the BC Human Rights Code and district policies, schools and classrooms are inclusive environments which value all students and families regardless of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex or sexual orientation. Classroom programs and individual interventions are planned, both at the classroom level and as necessary for individual students, in collaboration with school, district and community resources.

In fact, key outcomes of the district-wide learning inquiries, as communicated in the acronym LEARNS reflect the widely held



Please see Appendix 1 and 2 for key social responsibility district initiative findings at the elementary and secondary level.

**We value the strong commitment of staff and believe in their participation in all facets of the school system.**

*“Whether examining academic performance or involvement in a range of health behaviours, young people who feel connected to school, that they belong, and that teachers are supportive and treat them fairly, do better”*

*Libbey 2004, Journal of School Health*

commitment to social responsibility. The learning inquiries confirmed that a key condition of learning is “strong relationships and a sense of belonging”. Relationships are at the core of a socially responsible learning community. As described in the final report of the Learning Inquiries, the relationships between staff and students are “inclusive, non-judgemental, respectful, encouraging, caring and compassionate, and trusting”. These relationships contribute directly to safe, supportive and responsive learning environments. In fact, the kind of school environment expressed in the acronym LEARNS supports the “process of social/emotional learning (SEL) through the creation of a safe, caring, and highly participatory learning environment where the SEL competencies are modeled, taught, and reinforced. SEL is based on an understanding that learning is a social process; therefore, relationships and emotions are central to the learning process. SEL is also based on the realization that feelings, thoughts, and actions are interrelated. For learning to be effective, the needs of the whole child must be addressed.” (Research Brief for Schools, University of Illinois, 2008)



# Aboriginal Education Enhancement

We believe in being strong advocates for the rights of children.

2008/2009 was a transition year for the district, moving away from a 'stand alone' goal for Aboriginal learners to a shared responsibility for all learners. With a district focus on success for each student, the district commits to enhancing the academic success and ensures an inclusive and respectful environment for all Aboriginal learners. Therefore, the district's goals for literacy, social and emotional learning conditions and assessments of learning are inclusive for all learners.

The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (AEEA) is an agreement between the Aboriginal Communities, the Vancouver Board of Education, and the Ministry of Education with a commitment to enhance the overall school experience for Aboriginal learners. The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement will provide the direction for the district, focusing on three main goal areas: Belonging, Mastery, and Culture and Community.

The current data collected by the district indicates minimal academic success, low levels of participation and low graduation rate of Aboriginal learners compared to those of non-Aboriginal students. However, these data do not reflect the stories of hope, and belief in their children and the desire for change expressed by the Aboriginal community. Through the strength of the AEEA commitment, the district will commit to improve the educational system, enhance the community partnerships, engage community leader thus enhancing the experience for all learners within the Vancouver. Please see Appendix 3 for the complete AEEA.

"Parents must have a vested interest in their children's education in order to foster success"... "Students should be taught tools for choice so that each student can find success in his or her own way. Schooling should not be one dimensional but rather should offer many skill sets that kids can acquire".

*Musqueam elder, 2006*



# Literacy

**We value the role of the teacher as central in the provision of the learning program.**

*Literacy has traditionally been viewed as basic reading and writing, but this definition has evolved to reflect the many life skills required for achieving personal goals. Literacy is now viewed as a set of skills that enable people to participate more fully in social, economic, family and community life.*

*Read Now BC: District Literacy Planning Guide (2006)*

*The International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (IALLS 2005) has defined literacy as “the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community – to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” This means literacy can include social, emotional, and interpersonal communication skills, the use of technology, and arts and creative expression.*

*Read Now BC: District Literacy Planning Guide (2006)*

Literacy has been a key area of focus for the Vancouver district over a number of years and has been identified as our primary focus. Since 2009/2010, a range of programs has been put in place to address the literacy needs of different learning cohorts. A majority of district elementary and secondary schools had selected Literacy as a school goal, and a few schools are now approaching the district Literacy goal of having no more than 10 per cent of students ‘Not Yet Meeting’ in reading and writing.

## Early Learners

The District works in partnership with community organizations to support early learning initiatives, such as:

- All elementary schools offer Ready Set Learn events for pre-schoolers in the community,
- 18 Strong Start Centres have been established in partnership with the community,
- The District continues to work with the Early Childhood Development Committee with Vancouver Public Partners to enhance integrated planning and service delivery,

## Kindergarten Through To Grade 12

The Literacy Team continued to support Elementary Teachers K – 7 within our new support model first piloted in 2008-2009. There were 23 new schools and 20 continuing schools in the project this year. Schools made a commitment to be part of the project in late May of 2009 and then were assigned a member of the team to work with them in early September. Each school in the project selected one of three strands: (Building Content, Working Together or Breaking Through) and a literacy focus: (Reading, Writing or Oral Language). Each teacher or team of teachers selected a Literacy Goal/Question that would form the basis of their focus and were supported by regular visits from the Literacy Guide who had been assigned specifically to their school. The new model promoted teacher collaboration through using action research and inquiry. District support from the literacy team included demonstration lessons on current instructional methods, sharing current professional resources and materials, attending meetings with teacher learning teams and helping teachers refine their assessment

## We believe learning is enhanced by learner involvement and commitment.

and instructional practice.

Twice during the year, two teachers and their administrator attended meetings held at the district. These meetings focused on sharing successes, ideas and challenges, making connections with other schools who had similar goals or inquiry questions and hearing about useful resources that might support Literacy goals at each school. As a final culminating event, the district hosted a Literacy Celebration in mid-May to allow schools to share their journey in literacy and to see ideas and learn from the journeys of other schools. There were representatives from all 43 schools as well as district staff in attendance at this exciting event.

Many schools throughout the district expressed a desire to join or continue to be part of the Literacy Project for the 2010-2011 school year. However due to massive budget cuts within Learning Services, this project will not be able to continue next year. Six mentor and consultant positions were eliminated from the Literacy team and there will be no way to support schools and their literacy work in such a deep and personal way with the few remaining members of the Literacy team. It is hoped that we will be able to offer some summer, after school and district day professional development opportunities for teachers and schools wanting to pursue Literacy inquiry, but at this point it is uncertain what this will look like given the already large workload being carried by the remaining staff.

The District continued to support the needs of our Early Learners. Early Intervention targets the youngest and most vulnerable learners because the research supports that intervention in Literacy has the most positive benefits when given in the early primary grades. Early Intervention uses a three pillar approach: Strong classroom instruction for all students, small pullout resource support for students at risk and intensive daily one to one support (Reading Recovery) for our most vulnerable learners. The full Early Intervention model was in place at 20 school sites during the 2009-2010 school year and Reading Recovery alone was offered in 7 additional schools. Due to limited staffing in the 2010-2011 the focus will be primarily on supporting our early learners. However it is not known yet if there will be funds to support schools currently in the project to the same level as the 2009-2010.

In 2009 a second high school mentor with a background in Science was hired to work with a continuing mentor who had a background in

We value the active participation of parents in the education of their children.



## We believe in fair and equitable distribution of resources

Science. Together they held four High School Literacy Coordinators meetings this year in school time and have had regular attendance from 12 of the 18 secondary schools. The focus has been on developing disciplinary literacy (the teaching of content specific reading strategies by content area teachers). In addition teachers focused on making learning intentions based on Ministry PLOs clear to students and supporting informed assessment strategies. Presentations this year included:

- From Theory to Practice: Mapping Your Curriculum
- Using Picture Books to Teach Six Trait Writing: Integrating Enduring Understandings and Essential Skills
- Historical Thinking
- Effects of Grading on Learning
- Marzano's 4-point Scale in Science and English: Theory and Practice
- The Rockridge Model: Peer-developed rubrics and peer assessment
- Evolution of a Unit Plan: Novel Study and Shakespeare Units with Specific Learning Targets
- Discover Reading/Discover Science: Integrating student inquiry and library resources
- Network of Performance-Based Schools
- Live Ink with a digital kit from Pearson rep
- Enhancing Student Learning Using Moodle (in late June, no TOCs required)

For the coming year, 2010-2011, the high school mentors plan to work with teams of teachers from schools, preferably who have an administrator who also regularly attends the quarterly meetings. This will build on the model that has developed during the 2009 – 2010 year. There are plans to continue the afternoon meetings, combining the presentation of new material with time for teachers to share what they have been doing in their schools. We will continue to support teachers in their schools, particularly with disciplinary literacy as it applies to reading assessment and instruction in the content areas.

Work has been done to move the instruction of literacy beyond the English department and into the content areas. Ongoing Professional Development at various schools has included How to Enhance Vocabulary Development and using Non-Fiction Reading Assessment

**We believe in being accountable to the community and we value and promote open communication.**

and Strategies. The literacy team has worked in classrooms with Social Studies teachers to introduce them to the idea of using Non-Fiction literature circles with their students and with Science teachers on how to use assessment to guide instruction.

## Adults

The Vancouver School Board operates six Adult Learning Centres in Vancouver providing adult students with educational opportunities from the literacy level to secondary school completion.

The Adult Education system is very successful and continues to grow. In fact, we serve as many students as some of the largest high schools in the province and last year graduated approximately 500 students. Students at the Centres come from a diversity of language and cultural backgrounds and range in age from 16 to seniors. Each of the Centres responds to the specific needs of its community, and program offerings reflect student course requests and enrolment patterns in each Centre. Some of the Centres also offer out reach programs at off-site locations. These out reach programs cater to a specific student population with specialized educational needs.

A unique Adult Education Program is the Elementary Outreach program operated in a number of elementary schools in our District. The students are parents/caregivers of the elementary school attendees and have not yet achieved BC High School Graduation. Parents/caregivers attend a class during the school day and follow a specific Graduation Plan designed by an Adult Education Advisor. One of the objectives of this program is to promote a Family Literacy Model.

## English as a Second Language

Vancouver has a diverse multilingual and multicultural student population. 126 different languages other than English are spoken in the homes of 60% of our student population.



## We believe in educating the whole person.

A number of initiatives and programs have been developed to provide greater support for our ESL learners and their teachers. These include:

- District ESL consultants who provide professional development and ongoing support to elementary and secondary teachers,
- Multicultural Liaison Workers who provide outreach, cross-cultural education and individual and group support,
- ESL Mentorship Program to provide additional support for teachers and their ESL learners,
- Assessment Teacher who provides information to schools based on language and math assessment results, the child's educational history and other relevant details,
- District Placement Administrator who makes recommendations regarding equivalency credits, math placement and appropriate elective courses,
- Area ESL classes,
- Secondary/Adult Education program to support ESL learners at all ability levels,
- Intensive secondary ESL program for older newly arrived ESL learners (17-19 year olds), which includes language contact experiences, work experiences, and volunteer opportunities,
- Secondary ESL Literacy class for students who have little or no formal schooling in their countries of origin, and
- Settlement Workers in School Program to support newly arrived youths and their families cope with settlement issues. This program compliments the work of the Multicultural Liaison Workers.

The District Placement and Reception Centre serves as a hub for activities that assist in the continued development of new initiatives to support ESL learners.



**We believe in lifelong learning.**

## Reflections on Literacy Data

Various assessment tools are used to gauge performance, including the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) administered by the Ministry and district tools, such as the Development Reading Assessment (DRA) and the Reading Assessment District (RAD).

Data is collected for the Early Intervention project from both Kindergarten and Grade One students. Grade One students are assessed using the DRA or Benchmarks assessment in September and June. Kindergarten students are given an assessment in January and again in June that looks at the students' phonological awareness, letter/sound identification and concepts of print and oral language. The data gleaned from these assessments are used at the school level to inform classroom practice and to decide which students need small group instruction and which students will receive Reading Recovery one to one support. The data are also used to decide which interventions would best suit the needs of these struggling readers.

At the district level, members of the Literacy team use the data to track students' progress. They work with teachers (both classroom and resource) at each school, to help them become more precise with their teaching in both whole class and small group instruction. They also facilitate meetings of these teachers at the VSB and give professional development on topics relating to Early Intervention. In addition, students who have been part of the Early Intervention project are tracked until the end of Grade three so that the Literacy team can see if this intensive intervention results in a reduction in the number of students who are Not Yet Meeting expectations in Reading. Data from the schools involved in the project are displayed in Appendix 5.

The most recent Foundation Skills Assessment results, based on 2008 scores, show that a persistent 15 per cent of all district students in grade 4 are 'Not Yet Meeting' expectations for reading skill; for students in grade 7, this is 18 per cent. For writing, 13 per cent of grade 4 students tested are 'Not Yet Meeting' expectations, compared with 14 per cent of grade 7 students tested. Numeracy scores show that 19 per cent of grade 4 and 12 per cent of grade 7 students are 'Not Yet Meeting' expectations.



While the scores for the District point to areas where improvements are needed, they nonetheless compare favourably with those of all students in the province (Public and Independent schools). Among the province-wide population of students, 17 per cent of grade 4 and 22 per cent of grade 7 students had FSA scores of “Not Yet Meeting”. For writing, those ‘Not Yet Meeting’ represented 18 per cent of Grade 4 and 14 per cent of Grade 7; for numeracy, 21 per cent of both Grade 4 and Grade 7 students are in this range.



# Literacy Goal

Each student will read, write, speak and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.





# Literacy Goal

**Each student will read, write, speak and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.**

## Objectives

1. To improve student reading comprehension
2. To improve student written expression
3. To improve oral communication skills

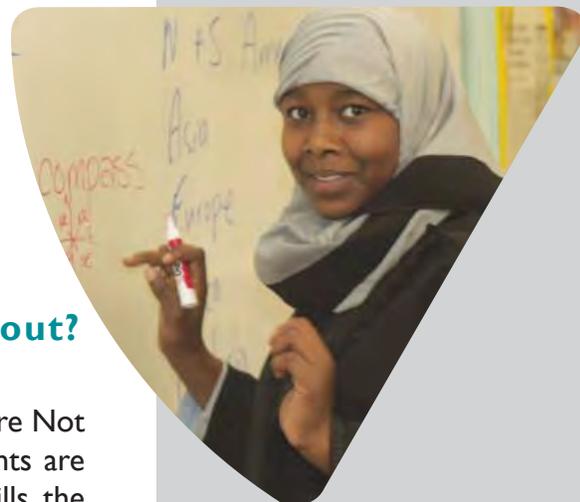
## Which learners are we most concerned about?

In our district there is a persistent 15 – 20 % of students who are Not Yet Meeting Expectations in reading and writing. These students are our greatest concern. We know that without strong literacy skills, the opportunities available to them are severely limited. We believe that it is our moral imperative to make sure that each student that we teach reaches his or her full potential. Our goal is that when they leave our schools, they are ready to fully participate in society.

Although 80% of our students are making successful progress in Literacy, we continue to strive for greater proficiency. We have identified numerous factors that contribute a student's lack of success. These include:

- English as a Second Language students whose language proficiency is an obstacle to learning
- English as a Second Dialect students whose language proficiency is an obstacle to learning
- Some students who are indentified in Ministry Special Education categories
- Students who are considered “at risk” according to the Early Developmental Index (EDI)
- Students who have Social and Emotional learning challenges
- Students who perform poorly when assessed using a variety of assessment tools

It is important to emphasize that not all learners in the above categories struggle with literacy.



**Each student will read, write, speak and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.**

### **What are the student's needs?**



The students we teach live in a world that is ever changing, digital, fast paced and visual. They need to be able to access information from traditional texts, newspapers, websites, blogs and a multitude of other formats in this multi-media society. We need to empower each of our students by making them more aware of the purpose of developing strong Literacy skills. They need to see that literacy is fundamental to living in the world and not just something we do in school. Literacy instruction needs to be a part of all teaching, not just the Language Arts period or the English block. Literacy instruction needs to be relevant to our learners but it also must give them the specific tools necessary to be able to successfully read and comprehend any text that they encounter.

All students need to develop strong reading skills. At the early primary level, this includes developing phonological awareness, concepts of print, decoding skills as well as the ability to read fluently and learn how to use comprehension strategies to deepen understanding of what they read. At the intermediate and high school level, students continue to develop their fluency and ability to use various comprehension strategies. At all levels students also need ongoing support to develop their vocabulary. They need the content specific vocabulary of subjects including Math, Science, and Social Studies, the vocabulary used in instructions and explanations as well as the vocabulary of academic language. Academic Language is found throughout all subjects and used to describe complexity, to be able to describe ideas in an abstract manner and for higher-order thinking.

All students need to develop strong writing skills. Within the writing process, students work on strengthening their writing skills when they pre-write, draft, revise, edit and publish pieces of writing. During this process students need modeling and experience with using the Writing Traits to make their writing stronger. They need opportunities to write in different genres and to write technical and content specific writing in all subject areas.

All students need strong oral communication skills. Peer discussions help support students' learning and give them the opportunity to develop oral vocabulary skills as well as improve their grammar. They need to learn how to use oral language as a thinking tool across the curriculum.

## Each student will read, write, speak and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.

In addition to these specific literacy skills, students have other needs that must be met in order for them to be successful in Literacy. All students need to feel safe at school. They need to work in compassionate, caring schools and classrooms and feel a sense of belonging and attachment to the people and the environment in which they spend their school days. Teachers need to continue to value the diversity of each student in their classrooms and explore ways to acknowledge and teach about the diverse cultures represented in their classrooms, including the availability of culturally relevant and accurate learning materials. Each student needs the choice to show their learning in multiple ways. They also need to feel that their teachers believe they can be successful; that their strengths and differences are recognized and valued. Meeting the Social and Emotional needs of each student is a major key to their progress in Literacy.

### What steps do we take to address the identified needs?

To begin to address the varying student needs in our classrooms teachers must assess each student to obtain information that will support their precise teaching. Assessments in reading and writing will give information about students' literacy levels. Social Responsibility Performance Standards and checklists as well as observations will help teachers determine students' social and emotional level.

It is important that the assessment tool selected for reading measures concepts of print and oral language, phonological awareness and letter-sound correspondence at the kindergarten level; decoding skills, fluency and reading comprehension strategy use at the Grade 1 – 3 level and fluency and comprehension strategy use at the 4 – 8 level. DRA and PM Benchmarks are common primary assessment tools and the RAD and Whole Class Reading Assessment; Grades 3 – 8 (Vernon Assessment) are used in most intermediate classrooms to assess student reading skills. For Writing assessment teachers generally use the Provincial Performance standards at each grade level to assess School Wide Write samples. Once teachers have a clear picture of each student's literacy levels, they provide explicit instruction to move the

### Arising question:

How can we include more Aboriginal content in our literacy programs to benefit all students?

“Good literacy instruction is vital for vulnerable students but valuable for all.”

*Vancouver Elementary  
Administrator*



## Each student will read, write, speak and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.

*“Classroom assessment can fundamentally transform the way a teacher teaches.”*

W. James Popham

students along in their learning using the Gradual Release Model.

For our youngest learners who are not yet part of the school system, there needs to be access to programs for children aged 0 – 5. Current programming includes: Ready, Set, Learn, Welcome to Kindergarten, Strong Start Centers and Family Literacy Initiatives.

### What is the evidence of student success?

Student success will be evident in multiple ways. There will be an increased number of students meeting or exceeding grade level expectations in reading and writing. They will be using various reading strategies to tackle print in a variety of formats and writing to show their understanding throughout the day. Student work will reflect the choices they have been given. Students will show their learning using many different modes of communication. Visual, digital, blogs, websites and multi-media work will exist along side more traditional reports and presentations. Library circulation will grow as students increase the amount of time they spend reading. Additionally, as students gain skills and see improvement in their literacy levels, their self confidence will improve. Research shows that students who feel successful have increased engagement levels and a more positive attitude towards school. Indirectly this should diminish behaviour problems that arise in our classrooms and out on the playground and community.

In January of 2009, the Board passed a motion requesting the District Assessment Committee to develop a long range plan for supporting schools to engage in meaningful assessment practices and to develop tools for use in teaching and learning, and for reporting student achievement broadly.

Over the 2009/2010 year we developed systems to support all schools in collecting information from formative assessments that will both inform the teachers and students and provide system wide information that is meaningful. Please refer to Appendix 4 for critical evidence and multiple measures used to analyze student success in literacy.

**Each student will read, write, speak and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.**

## **What adjustments need to be made?**

To meet the needs of each student and help them develop strong literacy skills, we are continuing to monitor and adjust in five key areas.

First, we need to make sure that all our classrooms and schools are safe and supportive environments for children to work in. School staff must work with students to develop a sense of community within the school that makes everyone feel welcome. Differences must be celebrated and everyone's contribution must be valued. Students must be given a voice within the school and in their individual classrooms and know that their ideas are valued. When students feel safe they are open to learning; they thrive, they take risks and they are able to realize their full potential.

Second Assessment for Learning needs to be a part of each classroom. Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how to get there" (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). As teachers and administrators, we will need to increase our understanding of the best way to use this type of assessment and work towards full implementation in our classrooms and schools.

The 5 big principles of Assessment for Learning include:

1. The provision of effective feedback to students
2. The active involvement of students in their own learning
3. The adjustment of teaching to take into account the results of assessment
4. The recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of students, both of which are critical influences on learning.
5. The acknowledgement of the need for students to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve. (Assessment Reform Group, 1999).

### **Arising question:**

*How can we expand a systematic early intervention model across the district?*

### **Arising question:**

*How successful are we at using assessment to guide literacy instruction?*



**Each student will read, write, speak and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.**



*“Enough already! Reading, writing, speaking, listening – they’re all connected. We teach them like they’re separate and then wonder why our kids aren’t learning.”*

*teacher at a literacy forum*

*“The real work of knowledge building happens on site, day by day and week by week, thoughtfully, over time.”*

*Regie Routman*

Third, we need to provide Early Intervention for our most vulnerable learners. Early Intervention targets the youngest students in our school system. Research has shown us that if we are able to close the gap at this early stage, the need for intervention at later stages is dramatically decreased. Early Intervention uses a three pillar approach: Strong classroom instruction for all students, small pullout resource support for students at risk and intensive daily one to one support (Reading Recovery) for our most vulnerable learners. Currently (2009-2010) there are 21 schools that are offering the full model of Early Intervention and an additional 6 schools who are offering only Reading Recovery. Many schools have requested to join the Early Intervention model but due to budget cutbacks most schools currently in the project have seen their funding reduced and there is no additional money to increase the number of schools offering EI.

Finally, we need to continue to build strong relationships with the parents/caregivers of the students we teach. Research consistently shows us that when parents/caregivers are involved with their children’s education and learning, both at home and at the school, their children do better and achieve more. These benefits can be long-lasting and extend to better health, relationships and improved employment opportunities. Schools and parents/caregivers both benefit when they have relationships of mutual respect and trust.

The more clearly schools can communicate with parents/caregivers about the progress that their children are making, the better parents/caregivers are able to support their children’s learning at home. Information that parents/caregivers share with teachers can assist them in adapting and targeting their teaching to suit the learning styles of each student.

The adjustments that need to be made can be summarized in the acronym LEARNS. Learning Diversity must be recognized, Engagement of students, especially using the framework of Assessment for Learning, Active learning experiences, Relationships between students and staff that are supportive and respectful, Need for choice and flexibility is accommodated and Safe and supportive schools and classrooms exist in each school.

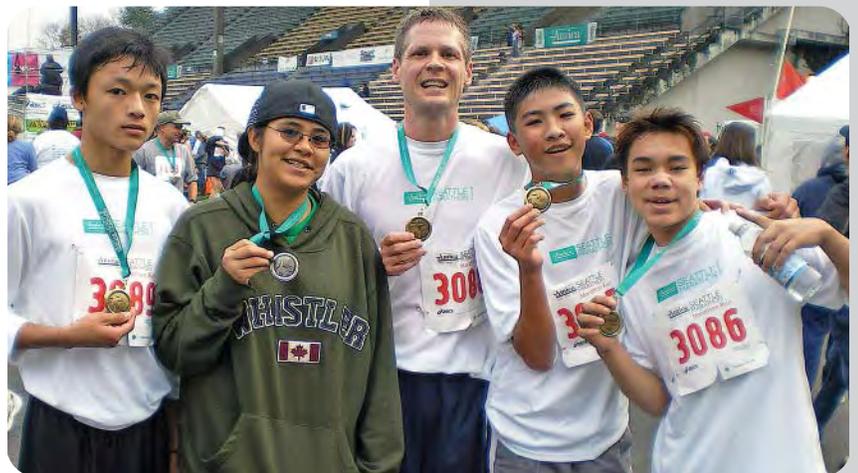
**Each student will read, write, speak and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.**

## **How do we communicate and celebrate student success?**

In classrooms and schools that are following the principles of Assessment for Learning, students are receiving daily feedback on their progress. They know what they have mastered and where they need to go next and what skills they need to be successful. Ongoing informal communication helps keep parents informed about the progress their children are making at school. This communication occurs when teachers encounter parents at classroom doors, on the playground and from conversations between children and their parents at the end of each day.

Schools celebrate successes with both students and parents when the post student work in their hallways and on bulletin boards and also when they include student writing in monthly newsletters sent home to each family. Some schools also celebrate and share student learning by inviting parents and the community to cross-curricular events such as Writer's Festivals, Cultural Celebrations, Student Performances and Science Fairs. In addition to informal sharing of student success, schools formally let parents know about the progress their children are making. This occurs five times a year during parent teacher conferences and on the three report cards that are sent home.

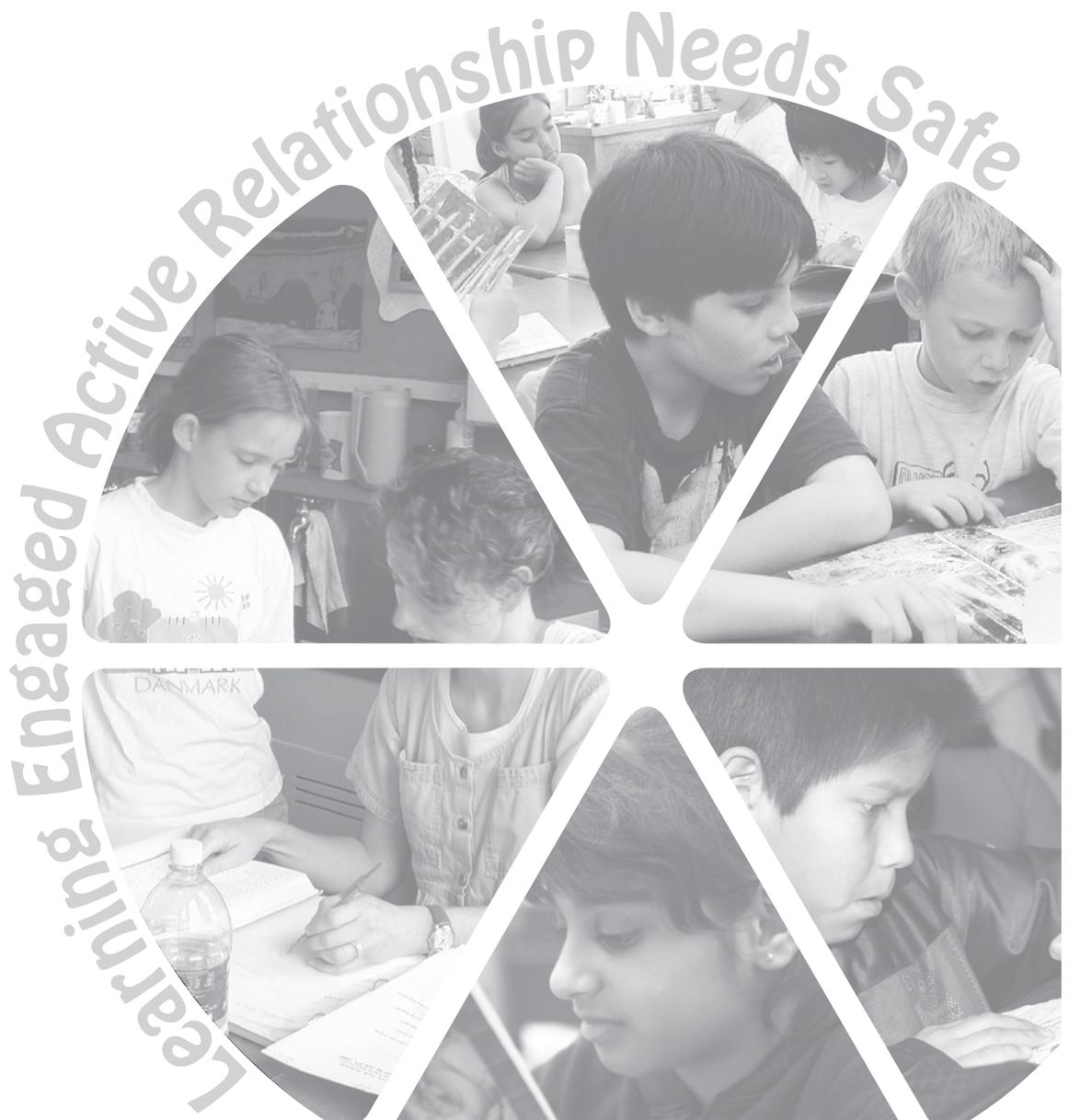
At the district level this year we celebrated the success in Literacy when we brought together representatives and administrators from schools in the Literacy project. Three times this year, these teams shared their ongoing learning. At our final celebration in May teachers shared student samples, professional resources, videos and power points highlighting their journeys in Literacy. District staff, board members, Teachers on Call, and staff from all schools were invited to attend. It was a wonderful culmination of hard work by many dedicated teachers. Unfortunately due to budget cuts and loss of district staff, this project will be unable to continue into the 2010-2011 school year and schools will have to continue their work in Literacy individually without support from literacy mentors and consultants.





# Literacy Actions

Each student will read, write, speak and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.





# Summary of Progress 2009/2010

Our overall goal is success for each student, and we are focusing on literacy. Five specific areas of ongoing adjustments were identified as important to supporting success in the classroom and hence success for each student in literacy:

- early intervention
- safe and supportive environments for children to work in
- strong relationships with parents and caregivers
- differentiating instruction for all students according to their learning and behaviour needs and;
- making assessment for learning part of each classroom



## Highlights: Early Intervention

Four years ago Vancouver implemented early intervention to target the youngest and most vulnerable students in our school system. At risk grade one students needing support are identified using the Observation Survey in early September and all Kindergarten students are assessed in January using the Kindergarten Screening Tool. The district's full early intervention model uses a three pillar approach:

1. Strong classroom instruction for all students;
2. Small group pullout resource support for students at-risk; and
3. Intensive daily one to one support (Reading Recovery) for our most vulnerable learners.

Currently (2009-2010) there are 21 schools that are offering the full model of Early Intervention and 6 additional schools who offer only Reading Recovery.

In 2009/2010 the district made concentrated efforts to support early intervention through a focus on Reading Recovery. This year was a transition year for the Reading Recovery Leadership in Vancouver. Two new Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders were trained for the district (one in English and one in French Immersion). There were also 11 new Reading Recovery teachers trained this year. They will join the 23 continuing Reading Recovery teachers and all 44 will receive support and professional development from the newly trained Teacher Leaders in the Fall of 2010.

To support best practice within the classroom, teachers in Kindergarten and Grade 1 from defined early intervention schools received 4 professional development sessions from the Early Intervention Mentor. These sessions focused on strategies and ideas to support strong reading and writing instruction for all students (Pillar 1 of the model). Resource teachers were also offered 6 afterschool professional development opportunities to discuss and learn about effective ways to support the at-risk students within the small group (Pillar 2). One goal at the district for the second pillar of early intervention is to align the instruction practices within the small group pullout sessions with the instructional approach used in Reading Recovery and the classroom so that there is a consistency of instruction in all three pillars. In 2010-2011, the district hopes to pilot Leveled Literacy Kits by Pearson in three to four schools who are currently part of the Early Intervention Project. These materials will be used in the small group sessions at each of the pilot schools. The district will monitor the results with hopes of expanding this pilot to additional schools in the future.

There continues to be interest from additional schools within the district to be part of the Early Intervention Model for the 2010-2011 school year. Due to budget cutbacks we will maintain support, somewhat reduced, for the schools already committed to the model within upcoming year and add new schools that had been training over this year. Unfortunately, the funding will be spread more thinly. We will invite schools to train for the Reading recovery component at their own expense so that the program can potentially grow when funds become available.

Another area of focus in early intervention was the introduction of the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society's 'Moe the Mouse' Kit by the Aboriginal Education Department. 'Moe the Mouse' is an innovative early speech and language curriculum resource that uses Aboriginal designed toys and stories to enhance language development in children ages 3 – 6. The activities and materials are designed to help families and educators provide opportunities for children to practice language skills in a natural setting.

'Moe the Mouse' Kit and resource training was provided to the staff within 18 Strong Start Programs, 22 kindergarten classes, school based resource teachers, the Speech and Language Pathology team, ESL Resource, Aboriginal Education Resource Teachers, Consultant and Enhancement Workers. To date more than 900 children have had the opportunity to learn with Moe and his friends.



The implementation and effectiveness of the resource is being monitored by a research team from the University of British Columbia. Together we have undertaken a year long study exploring the gains in language development and early literacy skills. The study groups include a 'Control' group school, a 'Regular Moe' school group and an enhanced resource 'Super Moe' school group. As well, over 180 children have been exposed to the project. Even though the results have yet to be finalized, we have received positive feedback from many teachers and students. We are presently planning a sharing opportunity of the research and future training session for the fall of 2010.



The school library continues to be an important resource for all learners, including those in primary grades. New materials that include Canadian authors, models for inquiry that support literacy, materials to extend understanding of Aboriginal culture and new digital resources are among the strategies and resources employed.

## Highlights: Safe and Supportive Learning Environments for Children to Work In

Current research confirms the link between social responsibility, diversity, and social and emotional learning and the importance of safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments to student success. To this end, Aboriginal Education's initiatives focused on infusing culture knowledge, language and skill development through a number of rich classroom and school experiences, supporting inclusion and belonging of Aboriginal students.

Numerous cultural based novels, children's books and literacy bins were supplied to district and school libraries, classrooms, resource centers, alternative programs often accompanied by learning packages and Aboriginal author visits. These materials not only have the potential to support the development of literacy skills but strength the student's personal connection and relationship to school experiences.

The importance of safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments to student success was further supported this year through the Vancouver School District's participation in a collaborative research project involving the United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM)



and the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of British Columbia, to administer the newly designed Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) to Grade 4 students.

While not intended to collect children's perceptions solely of their school experiences, the purpose of the MDI is to give voice to children about their psychological and social experiences both in and out of school. The MDI gives children a chance to provide the adult community with critical information about their current life experiences which, in turn, helps us to better understand how we can foster children's strengths and well-being during the middle childhood years, both in school and out, so they can

reach their fullest potential. The resulting data sets provide us with valuable information about connectedness with adults in school, neighbourhood and at home; social and emotional development; health and well-being; school experiences (including victimization); and constructive use of after school time. Attachment 6 provides an excerpt from the Middle Years Development Instrument report, including data on connectedness from January 2010 survey results. The complete MDI report will be accessible on the Vancouver Board of Education website in the Fall of 2010.

### **Highlights: Strong Relationships Between Parents and Caregivers**

Learning happens within the context of relationships; learning is in many ways a social undertaking. In addition to the importance of strong relationships between school and home, we also know that supportive relationships between teachers and students contribute to both academic and social-emotional development (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Connection to family and connection to school are key protective factors for children and youth (protective factors are those which help to reduce vulnerability or risk). The fundamental importance of supportive relationships is recognized in the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement goal of increasing students' sense of belonging to school.

On June 25th, 2009 the Vancouver Board of Education, Aboriginal Communities, the Ministry of Education officially signed the *Aboriginal*

*Education Enhancement Agreement.* In doing so, the VSB committed their focus on success for Aboriginal students, enhancing academic opportunities and ensuring an inclusive and respectful environment for all learners.

In September 2009, each school was presented with copies of the official AEEA document, AEEA School Community pamphlets, and an AEEA Commitment Posters. Many schools held AEEA assemblies honoring their commitment to the goals of the Agreement by signing and displaying the AEEA poster. To acknowledge the district commitment, the signed AEEA Agreement is hung in the Board Room, and a Cedar replica of Aboriginal Education logo designed by Musqueam artist Susan Point is proudly displayed in the VSB main foyer.

The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (AEEA) now provides direction for the district focusing on three main goal areas: *Belonging, Mastery, Culture and Community.* The AEEA goals align with district initiatives strengthening literacy skills, social and emotional learning conditions and using assessment for learning to ensure positive educational experiences for all learners.

In order to ensure the successful implementation of the AEEA, structures and processes have been put in place to increase opportunities for meaningful participation, representation and influence in the governance of the school system for members of the Aboriginal communities.

To date, there have been two Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Action Plans; *AEEA Implementation – Year One Action Plan, AEEA Terminology Action Plan*, that have been developed through consultation. The Action Plans use the AEEA Performance Indicators and Actions as the framework to guide our shared responsibility in strengthening relationships, enhancing successful educational experiences, and increasing knowledge, acceptance and appreciation of Aboriginal histories and culture. The implementations of these Action Plans are in progress.

The district also conducted the first phase of an Aboriginal Education Program Review. During this phase the Task Force acknowledged the numerous AEEA current initiative and implementation efforts. In support of the AEEA, the Task Force identified three key areas



for exploration and further development to be undertaken in phase two:

- Universal engagement of all stakeholders to support the implementation of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement
- Continues success of each Aboriginal student
- Increased knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal histories, traditions, and culture to support success for all students.

### **Highlights: Differentiating instruction for all students according to their learning and behaviour needs and Making Assessment for Learning Part of Each Classroom**

As Literacy remains our primary goal for 2010/2011, we believe that by focusing our efforts on assessments that inform teaching and learning, we will find ways to support every learner in their goals for success in reading and assessment. As such, we have developed a three year implementation plan focused on assessment for learning to achieve this aim.



# Supporting Success for Each Student: Assessment for Learning Three Year Implementation Plan

## Summary of Progress - Year 1 (2009-2010)

**Focus:** The focus for the current 2009/2010 school year has been on assessment for learning as a means to improve student learning in literacy in all schools. Professional development opportunities, such as those outlined below are focused on sound strategies to be successful.

**Expectation:** At the end of the year we expected schools to be in a position to create an action plan for addressing their own responses to the focus. This plan would include ongoing professional development plans for assessment for learning, and the use of a variety of assessment strategies and tools identified by the school to inform teaching and learning. Emphasis should be on teachers working together to choose assessment strategies carefully and to be clear about what is being measured. The strategy should be consistent with what the teachers value for student learning and with the curriculum. We would also encourage schools to participate in a variety of opportunities to learn more about assessment for learning. We believe from anecdotal reports, that many schools are on their way to fulfilling this expectation.



## Activities Offered in Year 1

- A three part series on assessment for learning for school teams (November 4, February 3 and April 21) with Linda Kaser and Judy Halbert was offered in 2009/2010. Thirty-seven schools participated in the three sessions.
- A one-day session for schools with Damian Cooper on Assessment for Learning was offered on December 11, 2009. Close to 600 teachers, principals and vice principals participated.
- A three-part session for principals and vice principals was offered on October 5, November 2 and November 3. More than twenty principals and vice principals came to the sessions.
- Ongoing support to schools from the Literacy Team in their literacy work was provided, with assessment for learning as a focused approach, including support for action research and a workshop series.
- Ongoing support from other areas of Learning Services on assessment for learning in specific areas was offered,

including: School Team Assessment for Learning Planning, Secondary Teachers Touch Back Series, Elementary and Secondary Teachers Book Club, Exploring Assessment and Student Engagement: A Social Responsibility Perspective, Assessment for Learning in Math, Big Idea # 3 for Students with Designations, and Designing Learning: Student Inquiry and Assessment for Learning.



- School teams were provided with the opportunity to join the Network of Performance Based Schools. Several schools have joined the Network in the areas of literacy and healthy schools.
- Learning Services provided an opportunity for school inquiry teams join a inquiry about assessment, and 16 teams engaged in focused inquiry over the year.
- A second Assessment Focus Day was held at on February 15, 2010 with Colleen Politano. Over 100 teachers attended.
- Speakers addressed assessment for learning at Area Meetings, the Literacy Conference on Assessment for Learning, the French Immersion Teachers Conference, and other events throughout the year.
- An Assessment Bulletin from Learning Services, entitled *Assessment for Learning in Your Classroom*, outlining professional development opportunities, helpful tips, and success stories in our schools was produced.
- Consolidation of the three-year plan for implementing assessment for learning as a strategy to improve student achievement began, with ongoing discussions in the District Assessment Program.

## A Parallel Process

In response to concerns about the validity and usefulness of the FSA, in 2009, the Board passed a motion that:

*The Assessment Committee, working with others as appropriate, be asked to develop and present to the Education and Student Services Committee a long range plan for supporting schools to engage in meaningful assessment practices and to develop tools*

*for use in teaching and learning, and for reporting student achievement broadly. The plan should include strategies and actions, a timeline, and resources required.*

So, in addition to supporting teachers in their classroom assessments, the District supported schools in adopting, adapting or developing their own assessment criteria and tools, to be used to provide information at the District level “for reporting student achievement broadly” uniformly, as well as to inform teaching and learning.

The focus for the collection of information was achievement levels in reading. Although the District Plan has a goal for literacy more broadly, we believe that if we collect information specifically about reading achievement in the district, we will have a very good indication of the success of each student generally. We choose reading for two reasons. First, many schools are already using assessment strategies for reading at the classroom level that inform their teaching as evidenced by the charts below. Secondly, reading achievement is a good indicator of success at school generally.

Many teachers already use assessment tools that serve the purpose of informing teaching and learning in reading (e.g. the DRA, Benchmarks, the RAD, the Vernon Assessment). Some teachers have adopted tools already used frequently across the district. Some teachers have adopted different tools or adapted tools that are being used in other school districts. Some teachers have developed their own tools for their purposes. The important part of the process is for teachers in each school to work together to develop criteria for the assessments. Recent research has shown that teachers’ professional judgment is more reliable than external measures when the teachers have been engaged in constructing criteria and tasks and are provided with ongoing professional development opportunities (Anne Davies, 2009).

A set of guidelines and accompanying reporting tool were used this school year to collect information to inform planning at the District level.



# Assessment Information – District Process – Guidelines

## Introduction and Rationale

### In the District

It is important for the District to have information about student progress in our goals – especially information about progress in our goal to have all students successful in reading. The Board has asked that assessment tools be developed that can inform the district broadly about the success of our students. Such information can inform decisions about resource allocation and our plans for supporting schools in our focus on assessment for learning. We have a commitment, and a moral responsibility, to reduce the numbers of students not meeting expectations in reading. We need to monitor our system and its progress towards that commitment.

### In the School

Plans are developed in schools to assess and monitor students. The information gathered in schools provides a basis for planning support for vulnerable students, for planning professional development, and for refining goals in the school growth plan.

### In the Classroom

Teachers are informed by the assessments they undertake in their classrooms and they use this information to guide instruction. The assessments teachers use also provide the basis for important feedback for students.

The information being requested in this process is summative, but it will be based on a variety of sources, including formative assessments that inform teaching and learning. According to recent research, teachers' professional judgement in the summative evaluation process is more reliable and more valid than external tests if they are based on criteria describing levels of progress in various aspects of assessment, supported with opportunities to collaborate with colleagues about student learning and the criteria, and provided with opportunities for ongoing professional development (Anne Davies Newsletter, October 27, 2009).

## Process

1. Criteria will be established by teachers in a collaborative process at the school. The conversations about criteria may be informed by currently used assessment tools, performance standards, rubrics developed in the school, rubrics available in professional resources, the ESL matrices, etc. Building on current successful practice, these conversations can take place at regular meetings of primary and intermediate literacy teams, during lunch hours, in time already set aside for collaboration, or in time created for this purpose at the school. The intent is not to add to the workload of teachers, nor to disregard individual professional judgement.

2. Teachers will be asked to use their professional judgement, in relation to agreed upon criteria, to report on the progress of the students in their class. This will be a process of ongoing refinement and growth. Conversations and other ongoing collegial activities such as networking across classrooms and schools are important in informing teachers' ongoing development of criteria. In the beginning, the conversations at the school are most important and common understandings about criteria will follow.
3. Teachers' professional judgement, based on common criteria, would be informed through:
  - Assessment tools currently used in schools (DRA, PM Benchmarks, RAD, Vernon Assessment, etc.)
  - Student work/products
  - Teacher observations of classroom activities
  - Student self-assessments
  - Performance standards
  - Conversations or interviews
  - Demonstrations
  - portfolios
  - quizzes,
  - etc.
4. Timing for the collection of this information would coincide with second term report cards, when teachers are already making decisions about summative assessments. Teachers would submit this information about numbers of students not yet meeting, minimally meeting, fully meeting, or exceeding expectations in reading to the principal – either as part of the report card comment, or on a separate document.
5. Schools may collect information from each grade level for their own monitoring of student progress. A method to submit the information will be developed and schools will then be able to use their own data for their own purposes. The District will only report information from grades: 1, 3, 5, 8, and 9.
6. Schools would be asked to submit information on the database created for this purpose.

**Assessment Information Gathering District Plan**

**Literacy Goal:** Each student will read, write, speak, and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.

**Reading Progress at School**  
Assessments used are based on clear criteria and describe levels of progress in reading.

School Code: 392918  
David Thompson Secondary  
Reporting Period: April 2010

Grade	Not Yet Meeting Expectations			Minimally Meeting Expectations			Fully Meeting Expectations			Exceeding Expectations		
	Total	ESL	Aboriginal	Total	ESL	Aboriginal	Total	ESL	Aboriginal	Total	ESL	Aboriginal
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3												
5												
9	10	1	0	22	5	2	28	6	5	12	2	3

## Expectations and Results at the End of Year 1:



At the end of the year, all schools reported to the district on the results of their classroom assessments using the Assessment Information Gathering tool.

By developing an electronic means for capturing the information, the District aims to use the data meaningfully at the district level and in schools and classrooms. The results will then be used for informing the District plan, consistent with the trustee's request for reporting student achievement broadly.

## Next Steps - Year 2 (2010-2011)

**Focus:** The focus for this year will be to support all schools to implement their plans for assessment for learning and to continue to address the need for the district to collect information about student achievement in a way that is supportive of classroom assessment.

**Expectation:** at the end of the school year all teachers will be aware of the six strategies for assessment for learning and will have selected one or two to focus on for the year. Every school will consistently be using appropriate assessment measures and criteria to inform teaching and learning and to provide to the district information about student achievement. Schools will submit information from their classroom assessments to the District. The District will be supporting this collection of information to make it both meaningful and relatively easy for teachers to provide.

## Planned Activities for Year 2

- On going professional development opportunities, including the three part series by Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser for an additional thirty schools.
- Opportunities for teachers to share with each other what the AFL strategies look like in their classrooms with colleagues at school-base and District networking meetings.

- Teachers will select one or two new strategies to add to their instructional practice and will be provided ongoing support in their AFL work.
- Assessment Focus Day with follow-up sessions will be offered with Faye Brownlie as Key presenter.
- The District will refine a systematic method for collecting information about student success that will inform ongoing implementation and support.

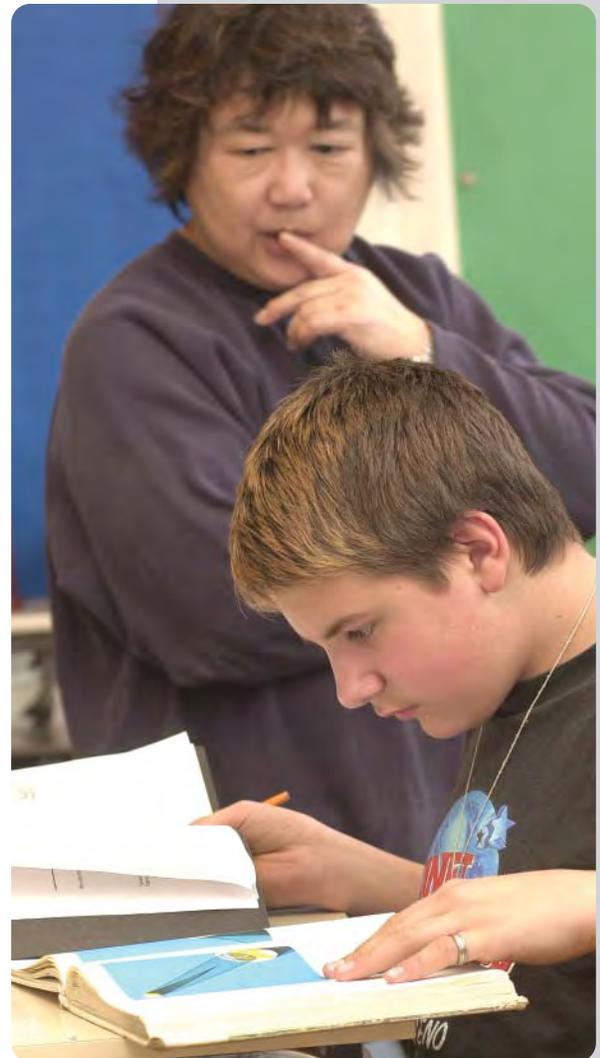
### Plans for Year 3 (2011-2012)

**Focus:** The focus for this year will be on consolidating our efforts and continuing to provide professional development for assessment for learning.

**Expectation:** At the end of this year all schools will be identifying students about whom they are most concerned regarding their progress in reading and will be able to plan appropriate instruction based on the information.

### Proposed Activities for Year 3

- On-going professional development opportunities, including the three part series by Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser for an additional thirty schools.
- School plans will reflect planning based on the information generated from the assessments.
- Schools will send to the District information about the student achievement in reading using criteria that are clear and explicit.
- The District consistently will use the information received from schools to monitor the effectiveness of the Literacy Plan, to adjust as necessary, and to allocate resources to schools.



## How Are We Doing?



For the first year we have asked all schools to provide data for reading using clear criteria for their assessments. This approach is meant to support the work we are doing in assessment for learning. It is part of a three year plan, so we know that the first two years will not be as reliable and valid as the third and subsequent years. In particular, the secondary schools are not as far along in the process and so we have fewer data to report on and must be cautious about what they are telling us. Nonetheless, these data provide an initial baseline from which we can draw some tentative conclusions and set further direction.

### Some observations:

- Over the nine year span, the numbers of students not yet meeting expectations declines, but there is slightly higher number for the grade fives this year than there is for the grade three's. There is a considerable decline from grade one to grade 3 (18% to 12 %). It is important to look at the cohorts over time in order to draw any conclusions, however, as this could simply be a matter of developmental growth.
- We continue to be concerned that by grade nine 11% of the students are not yet meeting expectations. Given that an additional 21% are only minimally meeting, we need to be careful to follow the cohort, identify the individual students about whom we are concerned, and plan effective interventions.
- Over the nine years the number of ESL students not yet meeting expectations declines. This makes sense in that as students become more proficient in the language, they become more successful readers. One other possible reason is that after students have five years of ESL support, they no longer are designated ESL and so would not show up in these numbers, but rather in the "other" category. We need to look carefully at the numbers of students who are Aboriginal and are ESD and further disaggregate these data.
- The number of Aboriginal students who are not yet meeting expectations declines over the nine years. We

need to follow this information over cohorts to ensure that it is not a reflection of numbers of students still attending school.

- Over the nine years, the number of students meeting and exceeding expectations increases. There is a considerable increase between grade one and three. Until we can follow the cohort we cannot draw solid conclusions, but our data in the Early Intervention project supports this increase in success in the early years.

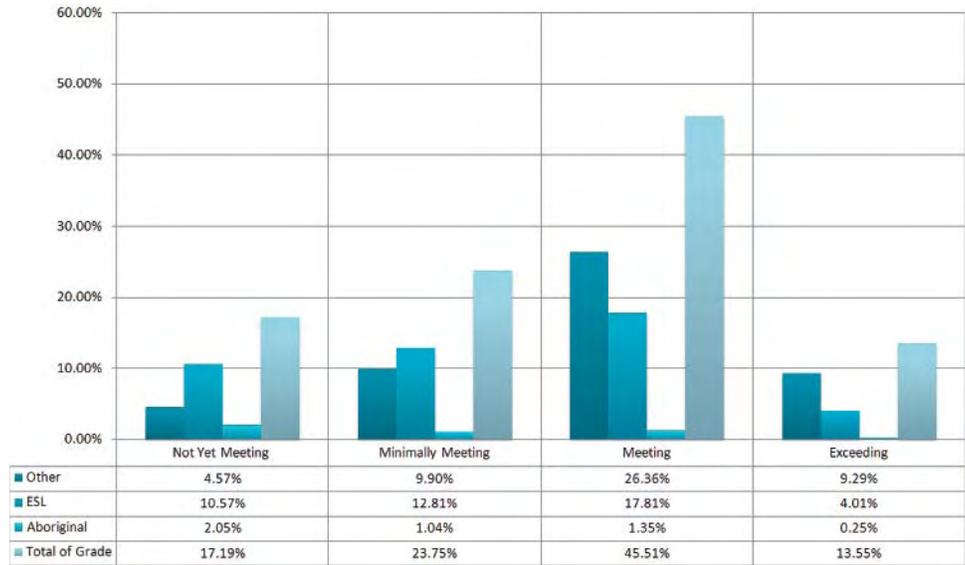
### Further questions and directions:

- As we follow the cohorts over the next three to five years, we would expect that given the focus of resources on assessment for learning, early intervention, safe supportive environments and strong relationships with parents and caregivers, we would see fewer students not yet meeting expectations – more meeting. If we don't, we need to look at our implementation of the strategies, the data collection methods, and the support being provided to schools.

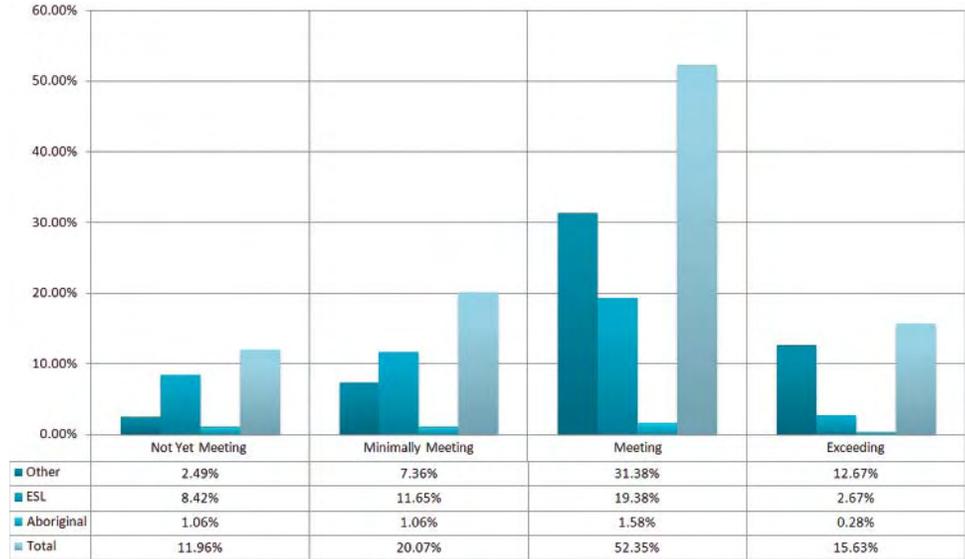


# Literacy Results by Percentage

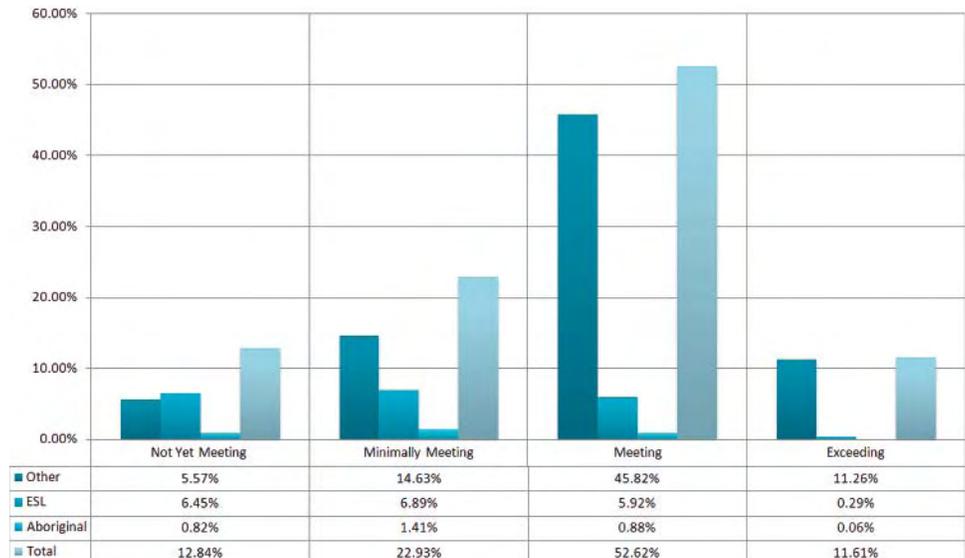
## Grade One



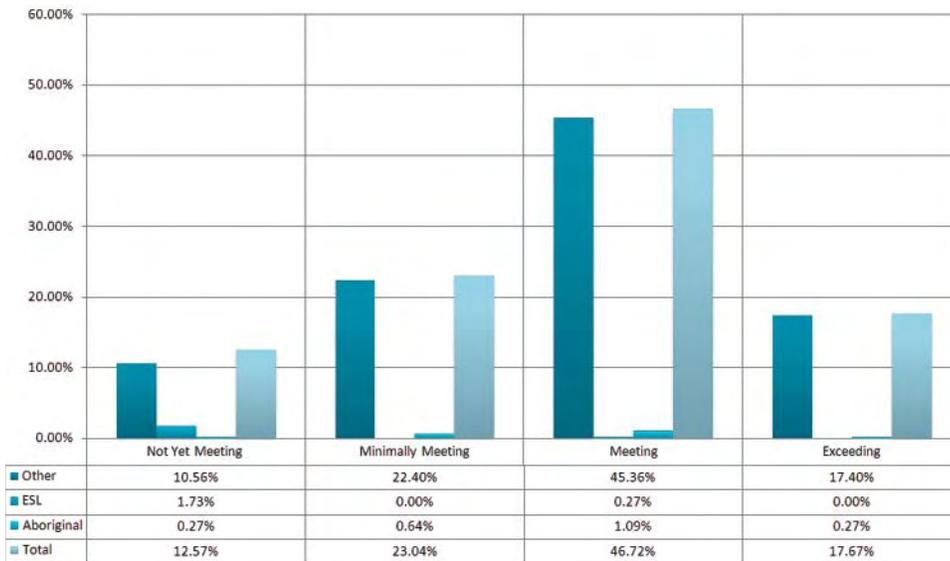
## Grade Three



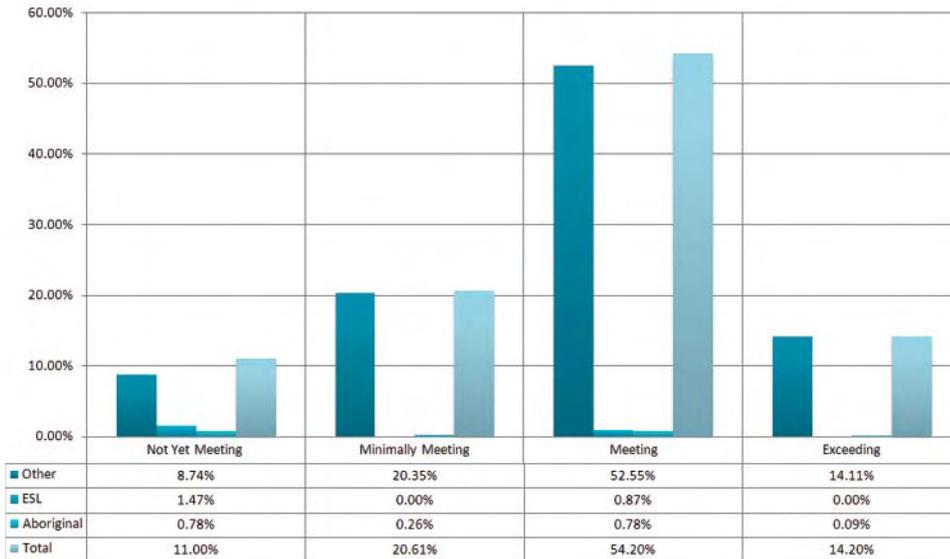
## Grade Five



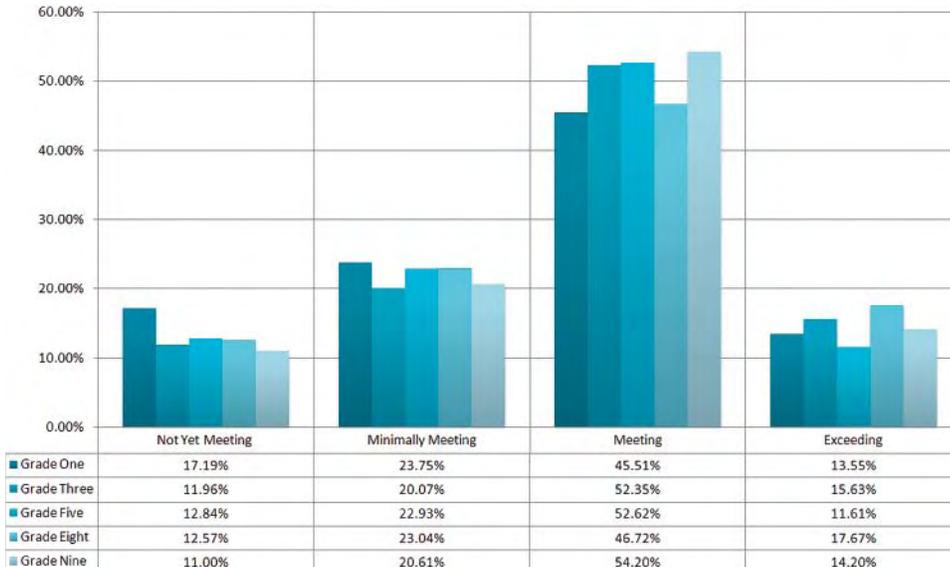
## Grade Eight



## Grade Nine



## All Grades





# Appendix

- Appendix 1 – Elementary Social Responsibility Report
- Appendix 2 – Secondary Social Responsibility Report
- Appendix 3 – Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement
- Appendix 4 – Critical Evidence
- Appendix 5 – Early Intervention Schools
- Appendix 6 – Middle Years Development Instrument





# Appendix I

## Social Responsibility and Connectedness Links among Social Responsibility, Social Emotional Learning, and Belonging

### What we know

Vancouver schools are at the forefront of a global movement towards educating “the whole child” – fostering students’ social responsibility and social and emotional development and well-being alongside promoting their academic achievement. In 1997, British Columbia was the first province to adopt social responsibility as one of its core performance standards, of equal importance to reading, writing, and numeracy.

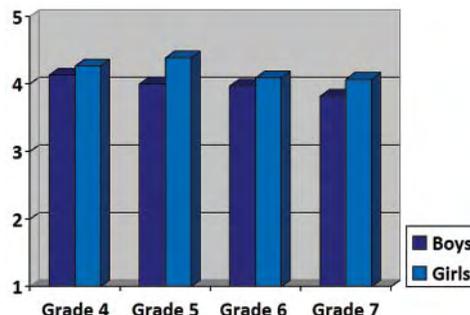
Since 2001, the Vancouver School Board and the University of British Columbia have been partners in researching best practices in schools for promoting students’ social emotional competence, social responsibility, and school motivation. These are the key findings.

### 4 Key Findings

1. Dramatic changes occur between grade 4 and grade 7 in children’s social emotional well-being, social responsibility, and motivation.
2. Children’s school experiences differ by grade level and gender.
3. The majority of children identify at least one significant school adult; and they can easily describe what makes that adult important to them.
4. Those students with one or more adults at school whom they identify as important to them have higher social responsibility and better school adjustment than those students who say that there are no adults at their school who are important to them.

Figure 1. Self-reported Social Responsibility across Gender and Grade Level

Generally, girls are more concerned with social responsibility than boys. Yet among both boys and girls, social responsibility tends to decrease as children reach the intermediate grades. Evidence across multiple local studies, however, indicates that prevention programs can significantly ameliorate this trend.<sup>1</sup>



### How do we foster social responsibility?

Empathy, Perspective-taking, Prosocial Goals, and Social Responsibility Goals were all found to be positively (and statistically significantly) related to students’

- Classroom Autonomy (“a voice in the classroom”)
- Classroom Supportiveness (“feeling supported by peers and teachers in the classroom”)
- School Belonging (“feeling connected to the larger school community”)

### Social Responsibility

The term socially responsible behaviour highlights the importance of internalization... taking over the values and attitudes of society as one’s own so that socially acceptable behavior is motivated not by anticipation of external consequences but by intrinsic or internal factors...

Grusec & Goodnow

### Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

SEL is the process of acquiring the competencies to:

- Recognize and manage emotions,
- Develop caring and concern for others,
- Establish positive relationships,
- Make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations effectively.

### What do students like best about their teachers?

“I can go to her when I am upset and have a problem”

“Makes me feel confident in myself”

“She makes me forget all the bad stuff in my life”

“Teaches me what is friendly and fair”

“Encourages me to do my best”

“Cares about my education”



<sup>1</sup> Baseline data obtained from the United Way study (Schonert-Reichl, 2007), and evaluations of the Roots of Empathy (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2009) and Second Step (Grossman et al., 1997) programs have shown that aggression increases and prosocial behaviour decreases over the course of the school year. These studies have also shown that prevention programs can successfully ameliorate this trend.

## Protective factors for students

### Individual Assets

- Positive peer group
- Problem solving skills
- Communication skills
- Positive conflict resolution skills
- Positive sense of self
- Takes responsibility for own behaviours
- Empathy and sensitivity towards others

### Family Assets

- Positive adult role models
- Positive communication within the family
- Parental involvement in child's life
- Clear rules and consequences within the family
- Time with family

### School Assets

- Connectedness to school
- Supportive school environment
- Participation in after school activities
- Effective involvement in the school
- Relationship with one significant adult

### Community Assets

- Connectedness to community
- Positive and clear community norms and values
- Effective prevention policies

## Advice from the experts

### Students in Grades 4-7 express what they like about school...

- “It’s clean and tidy”
- “There is diversity of after school activities”
- “There are lots of kids in the school to hang out with”
- “There are lots of funny teachers”
- “Lots of people who care about me”
- “You can learn a lot”

## Know the ABC’s of Social Responsibility

Classrooms that best fulfill students’ psychological needs are those that allow them opportunities for:

### Autonomy Belonging Competence\*

\*Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. New York: Plenum.

Figure 2. Perceived classroom environment of students and teachers

Overall, teachers overestimated how well their classroom environments met their students’ needs for autonomy, classroom support, and school belonging.

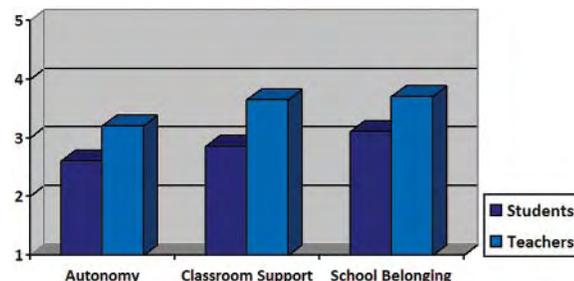


Figure 3. Impact of the number of significant adults on students’ school adjustment

Previous research has linked significant adults to fostering resilience in children and adolescents. Students in Grades 3-7 who reported having significant adults in their lives felt more confident in their abilities in school, and scored higher on measures of prosocial behaviour and social responsibility. Having the support of only one adult was enough to make a difference. Confidence increased with the number of significant adults they could think of.

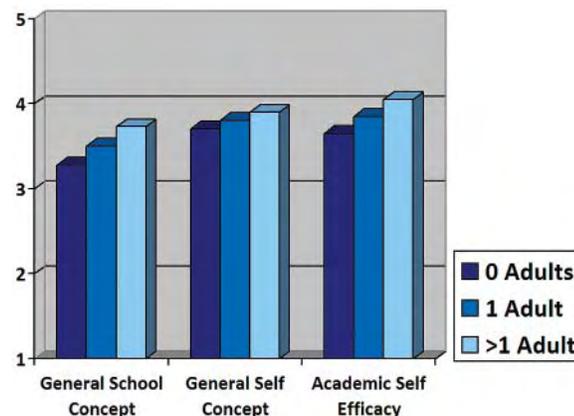
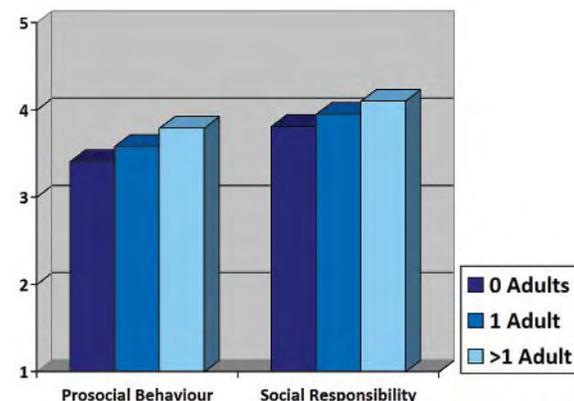


Figure 4. Impact of the number of adults on students’ social adjustment



“...the research evidence is astoundingly clear – fostering students’ social emotional skills not only helps them to develop the skills necessary for success in schools, such skills assist them to become more caring, responsible, and concerned citizens.” Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, PhD

2 Scores presented are averages out of 5, with higher scores indicating more desirable outcomes (e.g., greater social responsibility (Figure 1), more positive perceptions of classroom environment (Figure 2), more positive self-concept and greater self-efficacy (Figure 3), and better social adjustment (Figure 4).

# Safe Schools and Social Responsibility (SSSR) Survey Results 2008

## Overview

The Social Responsibility Safe School (SSSR) Survey for Secondary Students is an extensive survey completed anonymously in the spring of 2006 and in 2008 by students from all Vancouver secondary schools.

The survey addresses students' feelings of safety, interpersonal behaviour, substance use, sexual and racial discrimination and harassment, bullying, school community and social responsibility. It was developed following significant consultation and input from VBE district and school-based staff. The co-researchers on this project are Dr. Terry Waterhouse and Amy Prevost from the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) and Dr. Shelley Hymel from the University of British Columbia (UBC).

Results of the survey are used by District staff, VBE Advisory Committees and the schools to develop plans responsive to the identified needs of students.

## Comparison of 2006 Results to 2008 Results

### Student Belonging to School

Student sense of belonging has shown small gains in grades 9 and 11, and for boys in gr. 8.



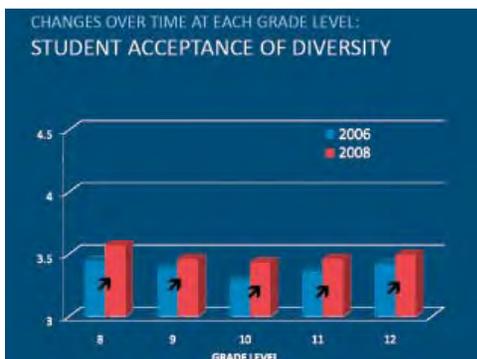
### Student Safety

Feelings of safety continue to rise incrementally, with only grade 10 girls feeling slightly less safe.



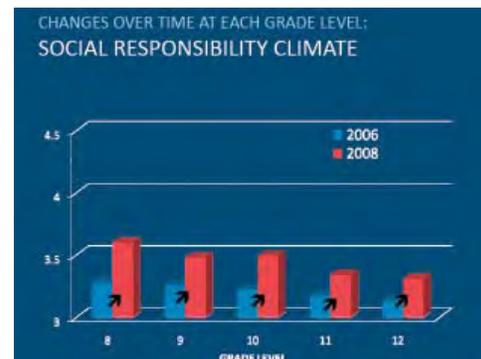
### Acceptance of Diversity

More students report that they “accept all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity or culture” most of the time or all of the time.



### Social Responsibility Climate

More students report that both students and adults speak positively about diversity and adults speak out against stereotyping others.



## Comparisons to Other School Districts

The SSSR survey was administered in 12 other districts located in all regions of the province, in addition to within the Vancouver School District.

Selected findings from the 2008 survey when compared to the provincial sample:

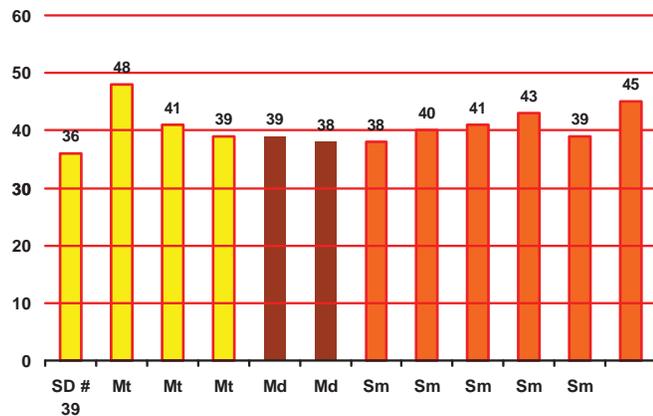
### Student Safety

On questions related to sense of safety Vancouver students' responses were lower than the average responses in all other districts, however, it must be noted that Vancouver is the largest of the urban districts surveyed.

For example:

- On the question, "I feel safe at school" 36% of VSB students reported ALWAYS feeling safe at school; this compares to of 41% students in the rest of the province.
- On the question, "I feel safe in the community" 37% of VSB students reported ALWAYS feeling safe in the community: this compares to 47% of students in the rest of the province.

### Safe at School by District and Location (n = 50,334) % Always Feel Safe

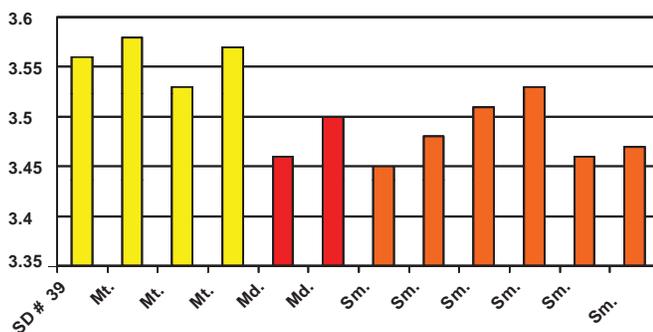


School District 39 results (far left) are shown in comparison to results from other school districts. The urban school districts appear in yellow, with suburban districts shown in red and rural districts shown in orange.

### Social Responsibility

- On questions related to the culture of the school, Vancouver students report higher than average levels of belongingness, engagement and the important role of adults in the school. When compared to the other districts in the survey Vancouver students reported higher than average levels of the above items.
- In addition, a sense of belonging to the school is highest among Vancouver students in grade 8 (mean response 3.7/5); and lowest among students in grade 10 (mean response 3.55/5). This pattern also holds true for students' reported level of engagement in school activity and for reported levels of adult respect and recognition.

### Belonging By District and Location



School District 39 results (far left) are shown in comparison to results from other school districts.

# Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement

Our song  
spirits  
are here



School District #39 - Vancouver



## This Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement is intended to include the following:

Coast Salish Nations,

Musqueam Nation,

First Nations, Métis and Inuit

And the Urban Aboriginal Peoples

Served by the Vancouver Board of Education (#39)

and supported by the British Columbia Ministry of Education.



### Acknowledgment:

Aboriginal Education Logo designed by Susan Point, member of the Musqueam Nation

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement layout designed by The Information Refinery

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## Acknowledgments

This agreement honours and acknowledges the people, traditional territory and teachings of the Musqueam and those students, families and community members who are of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Nations.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> cultures have a continuous and proud history of their own educational practices and the residential school system interrupted this cultural legacy. The partners to this Agreement collectively value all voices and cultures that have now contributed to create this document which seeks to enhance the educational future of all Aboriginal learners.

We would like to recognize the many Aboriginal students, families and individuals who so willingly shared their stories and experiences, and provided significant and powerful ideas for this Agreement<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the students, Aboriginal Education Department Staff, Teachers, Support Staff, Administrators, District Management Team, the Superintendent, the Trustees, the various committee members and members of the many Aboriginal Community stakeholders who have graciously agreed to participate and provide leadership, direction, and support in the development of this Agreement.

*"Musqueam culture today is a blend of the traditional and the modern. We are not a people living out of time, nor a relic of the past encapsulated in history. Like any other Nation, we are a living, breathing people whose culture continues to adapt and grow; we bring forth a proud heritage as we navigate the changes to our surrounding. The values of our ancestors are still our values today. ... And we value education as a means to a brighter future for our young people."*

*Quote from "Musqueam A Living Culture, Copyright 2006"*



1. Aboriginal: refers to the descendants of indigenous people of the region that is now called Canada, including First Nations, status and non-status, Métis, and Inuit persons as recognized by the Canadian Constitution.
2. Agreement means this document with respect to Aboriginal Education Enhancement, and all of its attached amendments and schedules; and, provides a framework for monitoring the continuing evolution of Aboriginal education within the Vancouver Board of Education.

## Words from the Musqueam Band Council

ni? ct kʷə ʔəw məkʷ wet tə xʷməθkʷəyəm Band Council xʷtəlqən kʷs niʔs ʔəw sθəθəy tə Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement ʔi? ʔəw sθəθəy kʷs haʔkʷəxs ʔewəʔ ʔə ʔ Vancouver Board of Education tə sʔa:nʔ syəθəs kʷs θəyts kʷə programs kʷs maʔəyts χʷteʔ ʔə kʷə xʷəlməxʷ steʔəxʷəʔ səsəw cewətəm ceʔ kʷə ʔi ʔə tə ʔa tə sʔa:nʔ sxʷəlməxʷəʔ təməxʷ.

ni? q̄pətəlxʷəs tə xʷməθkʷəyəm Band Council ʔəw ʔniməʔəs tə xʷməθkʷəyəm Education Committee sətəw s̄qəq̄ip kʷs ya:ys ct ʔiʔ tə Vancouver Board of Education, nəcawməxʷ xʷəxʷilməxʷ ʔiʔ tə BC Ministry of Education. ʔa ceʔ kʷə səw ʔəyatəʔ ct ʔəw niʔət ceʔ wəʔ ya:ys səw s̄qəq̄ip ct kʷs cewət ct tə steʔəxʷəʔ, səw m̄is ʔi:wəstəm tə steʔəxʷəʔ tə sya:yss səw yəsθəθəyts tə snəwəyʔs ʔə kʷə skʷul ʔiʔ kʷəs əw ʔamət.

s̄xiʔ ct kʷs q̄əq̄əp ct ʔiʔ tə skʷulkʷəlstənəq ʔiʔ məkʷ siyéyə kʷs χteʔəʔct ct ceʔ kʷə programs ʔə kʷə xʷəlməxʷəʔ təstəhim̄. haʔ ct ceʔ xiləs səsəw xʷə ʔəy tə šxʷqʷeləwəns tə steʔəxʷəʔ ʔiʔ θinamət kʷə χəχi:ls ʔəw niʔəs ʔə kʷə skʷul. sʔa:nʔ niʔ χcət kʷə sya:ys ct: ʔəq̄əlləxʷəs tə ʔθələq tə šxʷtəʔesəʔs tə sxʷəlməxʷəʔ. ʔa ceʔ təwʔaləm kʷs ʔəχəst kʷə syəθəs səw m̄is xʷə təʔnamət kʷə steʔəxʷəʔ kʷə sweʔs syəθəs, ʔiʔ ʔəw ʔiʔtəs kʷə nec̄ məsteyəxʷ kʷə sxʷəlməxʷəʔ syəθəs.

The Musqueam Band Council supports the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement between Musqueam Indian Band and the Vancouver Board of Education to promote the use of Musqueam history and culture in developing school programs targeting Aboriginal learners within Musqueam traditional territory.

On behalf of the Musqueam Band Council, the Musqueam Education Committee has entered into a collective partnership with Vancouver Board of Education, other Aboriginal communities who have representation within School District 39, and the BC Ministry of Education. This partnership is based on a foundation of mutual respect and will focus on setting goals and developing strategies that will foster both academic and personal success for Aboriginal learners in the district.

Our goal is to collaborate with educators and families to develop and support programs that facilitate academic success and positive self-esteem through cultural awareness for Aboriginal learners. To achieve this, we will draw on the resources of individuals who carry the traditional values of their First Nations, Métis or Inuit ancestors and are willing to share their knowledge with us. This way, children from those Aboriginal communities who are enrolled in School District 39 will benefit from learning more about themselves and as well, witnessing the respect given to their own valuable heritage.

Presented by the Musqueam Band Council

## Words from the Métis Nation British Columbia

Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) supports the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement between the Métis community, and the Vancouver Board of Education to recognize and respect all Aboriginal learners and promote Métis culture and history in all learning.

Métis Nation British Columbia has entered into a collective partnership with the Musqueam Band Council, the Vancouver Board of Education, other Aboriginal communities who have representation within the Vancouver school district and the provincial Ministry of Education. Métis Nation British Columbia is committed to collaboration, consensus building, effective communication and ongoing consultation with all partners.

Our goal is for Aboriginal learners to develop a strong sense of belonging and confidence through pride in their cultural heritage and connection with their community. Métis, First Nations and Inuit learners will benefit from enhancing the learning environment so that all learners feel safe and respected and have a positive sense of place. Métis Nation British Columbia will work with traditional Knowledge Keepers to ensure that all learners have academic and social success.

Presented by

Dave Hodgson, Métis Nation British Columbia, Minister Responsible for Education

## Words from the United Native Nations Society

The United Native Nations Society (UNNS) supports the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement between the Vancouver Aboriginal community and the Vancouver Board of Education as a key component in furthering educational opportunities for all aboriginal community members.

It is through initiatives such as this that our community will continue to grow and prosper and help ensure that all youth both native and non-native have an education that is far more relevant to the history of this continent.

Presented by

David Johnson, Executive Director, United Native Nations Society (UNNS)

## Words from Urban Native Youth Association

The Urban Native Youth Association supports the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement between the Vancouver Aboriginal community and the Vancouver Board of Education as a key component in ensuring the learning experience of young Aboriginal learners is a positive one. We believe that the willingness to work in collaboration with the Aboriginal community and develop accountability measurements will help to make this new plan a success for Aboriginal learners.

In particular we are heartened that the new plan recognizes the importance of Aboriginal learners needing positive experiences both academically and socially, that the recognition and inclusion of the true history and strengths of First Nations people must be reflected in the curriculum, and that there are clear quantifiable goals that must be achieved. The timely and full implementation of this plan can help to ensure that Aboriginal youth develop a strong sense of belonging within schools that will contribute to their academic success.

The Urban Native Youth Association is committed to continued collaboration, with the Vancouver Aboriginal community, the Vancouver Board of Education, and the BC Ministry of Education to develop ongoing strategies to build upon past and future best practices in educating urban Aboriginal youth.

Presented by

Lynda Gray, Executive Director, Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA)

## Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement: History and Development

The Vancouver Board of Education's Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement launch was held the evening of January 13th, 2005 at the Chief Dan George Centre in Vancouver. The launch formally marked the date the VSB publicly declared its intention to complete the agreement in partnership with district employees, Aboriginal students, families, community members, the Musqueam Nation and Aboriginal organizations to create a living document to support Aboriginal student achievement. The agreement will provide a road map for the development of positive relationships and collaboration in Aboriginal student success.

The Enhancement Agreement became a vital priority for the district that year. The VSB had an Aboriginal strategic plan in place prior to the development of the Enhancement Agreement. This plan formed a framework for discussion concerning the elements and processes for the Vancouver Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. Numerous meetings, community forums, on-line surveys and in-school discussions were undertaken in extensive consultation with community and schools in the development of this document.

The Vancouver School District also initiated an appreciative inquiry to create a dialogue among educators, parents, students and other stakeholders about how to create schools that best support the success of Aboriginal learners. The findings of the Aboriginal Learners' Inquiry (ALI) indicated there are a number of examples of ways to support Aboriginal learners taking place in the district. The voices of the Aboriginal students and community members captured throughout the ALI forums guided the development of the Aboriginal Educational Enhancement Agreements' goals and actions.

The Vancouver Board of Education, Aboriginal Communities, the Musqueam Nation and the Ministry of Education have worked together to build an agreement embodying the shared vision and commitment of all participating parties to improve the success for Aboriginal learners.



## Purpose

*"Walk beside me, I have something to teach you".  
Shane Point, Musqueam Elder 2007*

The Vancouver Board of Education, the Aboriginal Communities and the Ministry of Education continue to work together to build this agreement to improve educational experiences and results for Aboriginal students.

The purpose of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement is to create a living document that embodies the shared vision and commitment of all participating parties to the success of Aboriginal students. The intent of the Agreement is to invite all school district employees and students, families and community members to be accountable for the support of Aboriginal students' holistic success. The Agreement also provides a road map for the development of future relationships and collaborative efforts to ensure the continuous success of Aboriginal students from kindergarten through grade 12 and beyond.

### The document recognizes two important ideas:

1. Each Aboriginal learner and family must experience a sense of belonging and place within educational settings, where their voices are heard, where they have choice and influence in decision making, and where their cultures, histories and contributions are respected and reflected.
2. The Vancouver Board of Education will provide equity<sup>3</sup> of opportunity for Aboriginal students, and be committed to the ongoing development of best-practice strategies for instruction, improvement and inclusion.



3. Equity: That which is just, impartial and fair.

## Guiding Principles

*"Our children speak our truth. They represent to us the successes and failures of previous generations. They are our teachers."*

*Aboriginal Learners' Inquiry Summit Participant*

The parties to this Agreement commit<sup>4</sup> to developing shared ownership and mutual respect through ongoing dialogue and strong relationships that recognize the cultural differences and diverse needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.

The parties agree to create a learning environment where First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students are safe and respected, have a positive sense of self, place and belonging, and are able to achieve academic success.

The parties agree to honour and acknowledge the people, traditional territory and teachings of the Musqueam, and those students, families and community members who are of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Nations.

The parties agree to acknowledge the traditional teachings of the Elders and the intrinsic value of Aboriginal cultures, histories and beliefs.



4. Commit: To give in trust or charge, to pledge (oneself) to a position on an issue.

# Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Goals

*"Respect is utmost. It is the highest of the laws."  
Tupper Aboriginal Community Member*

*"I am First Nations ... no longer burdened with weakness,  
from grief and pain of humiliation. I now stand with dignity  
and strength within my Native spirit for I am free."  
-Shirley Kiju Kawi, "I Am First Nations"*



# Belonging

To increase Aboriginal students' sense of pride, self-esteem, belonging<sup>5</sup>, place, acceptance and caring in their schools.

## Performance Indicators<sup>6</sup>

The outcomes for the Goal<sup>7</sup> will be evidenced by:

- Improved attendance and participation in all facets of school life as indicated by the 'Connections Tool'.
- Students reporting a feeling of safety and an increased sense of belonging and comfort in school using the Safe School & Social Responsibility Survey.
- Increased numbers of all students successfully completing B.C. First Nations Studies 12 and English 12- First Peoples.
- Increased recognition of Aboriginal students in leadership, fine arts, academics, gifted and/or other experiences.

*"When I was in middle school I really struggled and did not get much respect. When I went to high school I joined a native studies group. There I gained more knowledge about heritage. That made a huge difference to my self esteem and personal drive for success. I eventually graduated and went on to university and completed a Bachelor of Education. I know now that empowerment comes from knowledge and respect and that is what I teach."  
Sheryl Bird, Aboriginal Educator*



5. Belonging: a sense of strong ties and bonding with family, school and the larger community; a sharing of mutual acceptance and mutual concern.

6. Performance Indicators: Performance indicators are measures used to indicate progress towards attainment of goals and objectives.

7. Goal: Goal statements help to focus priorities for improving student learning.

## Belonging

### Targets:

- Establish baseline data for Aboriginal student attendance and participation within the first year of the Agreement.
- Increase composite measure of perceived level of safety and sense of belonging reported in the Safe School and Social Responsibility Survey for secondary students by a minimum of one composite level.
- Increase numbers of all students successfully completing B.C. First Nations Studies 12 and English 12 - First People by a minimum of 10% in the first year of implementation.
- Establish baseline data indicating the number of Aboriginal students participating in leadership opportunities, fine arts, academics, or gifted programs.



# Belonging

## Actions<sup>8</sup>

Parties commit<sup>9</sup> to implement actions that lead to the achievement of the goal.

- Include specific goals and objectives for Aboriginal learners in annual school plans and AEEA plans to support this goal.
- Develop classrooms that increase the students' sense of belonging by encouraging the sharing of their lived experience, and by using empathy-building and cultural awareness activities.
- Collaboratively develop and provide instructional materials, professional and or staff development on the impact of colonization, social discrimination and media on indigenous societies.
- Provide opportunities for student leadership within the school, and encourage students to take socially responsible action locally and globally.
- Provide anti-racism education, which will include giving students and staff the tools to respond effectively to discrimination.
- Create a district Elders Program, and provide opportunities for parents and family members to be welcomed into the schools.
- Ensure that Aboriginal students and their families are involved in assessment and appropriate placement decisions in the full range of VSB specialized programs from gifted to supportive, which includes remedial and behavioral.
- Develop a tool that will allow the school and district to know and monitor the stories of Aboriginal students and their sense of belonging and connectedness.

*"Who am I?" Somehow I forgot or was it driven out of me during my early years at the residential school. Maybe, but today, I found out "Who am I!"*  
- Debbie Paul-C. Residential School Survivor



8. Actions: Clearly articulated strategies connecting district efforts and activities with desired student results.
9. Commit: to give in trust or charge; to pledge (oneself) to a position on an issue; to bind or obligate.

# Mastery<sup>10</sup>

To ensure that Aboriginal students achieve increased academic<sup>11</sup> success in Vancouver schools and that they participate fully and successfully from kindergarten through the completion of Grade 12.

## Performance Indicators

The outcomes for this Goal will be evidenced by:

- An increase in the numbers of students participating in pre-school readiness and early childhood development programs.
- District-wide assessment of Kindergarten readiness.
- The use of classroom based assessment and performance standards to show an increase in the numbers of Aboriginal students in K-12 who are fully meeting and exceeding expectations in the key academic areas of Math and Language Arts.
- Increased numbers of students fully meeting and exceeding expectations in Grade 4 and 7 Foundation Skills Assessment
- Increase in transition rates for Aboriginal students from grades seven to eight, grades nine to ten, grades ten through twelve and into further educational opportunities.
- Increased student performance and participation in the Grade 10 English, Math and Science and the Grade 11 Social Studies Provincial Exams.
- Increased rates of participation and performance in Grade 12 Provincially Examinable courses.
- Increased graduation rates from Grade 12, based on Ministry of Education data.
- Successful participation in creative and skill building elective areas such as the Arts, Technology Education, and Physical Education

*{Mastery} is the desire to accomplish. It means taking pride in doing a job well. The value of mastery also comes from native traditions, where everybody had tasks to perform, for which they were respected. One job was not better than another".*  
**Martin Brokenleg**



10. Mastery: Great skillfulness or knowledge of a subject or activity in academic and /or elective areas.

11. Academic: Courses of study generally associated with scholarship and proficiency including, but not limited to, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Modern Languages.

# Mastery

## Targets:

- Establish baseline data of students participating in pre-school readiness and early childhood development programs in the first year of the Enhancement Agreement.
- Establish baseline data of Kindergarten readiness and interventions in the first year of the Enhancement Agreement.
- Increase numbers of Aboriginal students in K - 12 who are meeting and exceeding expectations in the key academic areas of Math and Language Arts by a minimum of 5%.
- Increase numbers of students fully meeting and exceeding expectations in Grades 4 and 7 Foundation Skills Assessment by a minimum of 5%.
- Establish baseline data indicating transition rates for Aboriginal students up to Grade 12.
- Establish baseline data to indicate transition from secondary to post secondary and / or further educational opportunities within the first year of the Agreement.
- Increase student performance and participation in the Grade 10 English, Math and Science and the Grade 11 Social Studies Provincial Exams by a minimum of 5%.
- Increase rates of participation and performance in Grade 12 provincially examinable courses by a minimum of 5%.
- Increase graduation rates from Grade 12, based on Ministry of Education data by a minimum of 5%.
- Establish baseline data indicating successful participation in creative and skill building elective areas such as the Arts, Technology Education, and Physical Education.

*" ... as a child I was chased up a tree by a bear. I guess the bear was my teacher. I learned not to disrespect".  
Tupper Aboriginal Community Member*



# Mastery

## Actions

Parties commit to implement actions that lead to the achievement of the goal.

- Include specific goals and objectives for Aboriginal learners in annual school plans and AEEA plans to support this goal.
- Develop and promote professional development in instructional strategies to assist educators to improve the success rates of Aboriginal students in specific areas such as literacy, Math and Science.
- Develop and promote professional development in instructional strategies to assist educators to improve the success rates of Aboriginal students.
- Use assessment practices that address the learning needs of Aboriginal learners with Individualized Education Plans. These assessments should include classroom based assessments, or performance standards.
- Ensure support for individual and collaborative curriculum development and lesson planning about Aboriginal history and culture.
- Provide support for Aboriginal students in the development of their Graduation Transition Planning.
- Create, implement and sustain tracking systems that accurately disaggregate Aboriginal data and changes over time from K-12, in key areas of academic performance in schools and in the district as a whole.
- Continue the support for the academic goals of Aboriginal learners through a variety of services.
- Provide for the granting of external credit for participation in Aboriginal cultural activities.
- Increase access to out of school support for Aboriginal Learners; e.g. out of class homework clubs, tutoring programs.

*"Students should be taught tools for choice so that each student can find success in his or her own way. Schooling should not be one dimensional but rather should offer many skill sets that kids can acquire".*

*Musqueam Elder, 2006*

## Culture and Community

To increase knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures<sup>12</sup> and contributions by all students through eliminating institutional, cultural and individual racism within the Vancouver school district learning communities.

### Performance Indicators

The outcomes for the goal will be shown by:

- Decrease in racial incidents and comments reported by Aboriginal Students.
- Improved results indicated by social responsibility surveys and anecdotal data through student forums.

*"So this is what we truly believe. This is what reinforces our spiritualities: that no being is greater than the next, that we are part and parcel, we are equal, and that each one of us has a responsibility to the balance of the system".*  
*Albert Marshall, Mi'kmaq Elder*

### Targets:

Establish baseline data in the first year of the Enhancement Agreement.

*"If education comes from the heart, it reaches everyone."* *ALI Forum, Aboriginal Community Member, Tupper Secondary.*



12. Culture: The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that the members of society use to understand their world and each other, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning. Source: The Canadian Encyclopedia Historica, 2007

# Culture and Community

## Actions

Parties commit to implement actions that lead to the achievement of the goal.

- Include specific goals and objectives for Aboriginal learners in annual school plans and AEEA plans to support this goal.
- Create and develop opportunities for the Aboriginal communities to contribute an Aboriginal perspective to classroom content, curriculum and experiences.
- Provide anti-racism workshops for district, school and administrative staff.
- Encourage, guide and support dedicated school wide development opportunities for the collective learning of staff, Aboriginal families and community members.
- Include Aboriginal content at all grade levels and across subject areas. Increased units, lessons and activities about Aboriginal history, culture, traditions and contributions.
- Pursue innovative models to better address the needs of students in transition: from elementary to secondary school level, between programs and mainstream, and between secondary, post secondary or work experience.
- Engage parents in supportive and informative collaborations with Aboriginal community members, VSB staff, and college and university professionals/students.
- Access Community Partnership grants.



## Governance and Implementation

***"We know from bitter experience that others do not know what is best for us. We are engaged in a fight that we will never give up; a fight to implement the policies which we know will help us lift ourselves above our present problems. We hope for and welcome the support of other people in Canada in that struggle."  
George Erasmus, Dene Nation, 1989***

In order to ensure the successful implementation of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, structures and processes must be in place to increase the opportunities for meaningful participation, representation and influence in the governance of the school system for members of the Aboriginal community.

To this end, an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Implementation and Monitoring Committee with representation from the Aboriginal Communities, and representative stakeholder groups, including but not limited to, students, unions, associations, diverse off reserve Nations and community groups, will be created to follow the progress of the agreement and report annually to the VSB, Aboriginal Community and Ministry on the progress of the agreement.

An annual Aboriginal Student and Community Forum will be conducted at the District level to acknowledge and support Aboriginal students' input in district directions.

The District will support ongoing Aboriginal student involvement in student leadership opportunities, and district initiatives to enhance the quality of the educational experience for Aboriginal learners.

The existing VSB Employment Equity policy will be supported and programs will be developed to facilitate the hiring of Aboriginal teachers and administrators.

Aboriginal involvement at all levels of governance within the district will be encouraged.

***"I feel less time should be spent talking about change and more actions should be taken. We need to develop a system that works to benefit the student and not hold them back. There have been many discussions about Aboriginal education but little progress. We need to establish goals and make the changes now."  
Lori Delorme, Métis Nation***



13. Governance: Implementation and monitoring of the agreement by the individuals or entities charged with the responsibility of implementing and following through with the Agreement.

## Implementation Plan

A Committee, called the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Implementation and Monitoring Committee, will be created to oversee the progress of the Enhancement Agreement and will report on an annual basis to the Ministry of Education, the Aboriginal Communities and to the Board through Committee I.

### Implementation

- The agreement will be in effect from June, 2009 until June, 2014, subject to revision and renewal.
- That terms of reference be developed.
- Where possible, baselines for goals will have been established by June of 2009. Some will need to be developed during the first year of the Agreement.
- An annual Action Plan will be developed to focus the work of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Implementation and Monitoring Committee
- An annual report will be jointly developed through continued dialogue with Aboriginal Communities and shared with the Aboriginal and Educational communities, the Board of School Trustees and the Ministry of Education.



## Memorandum of Agreement

We, the undersigned, acknowledge and honour our collective responsibilities for the success of all Aboriginal learners attending school in the Vancouver Board of Education.

We agree that the terms of this Vancouver Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement will provide direction for Aboriginal education in the school district for the period of June, 2009 to June, 2014.

With respect and honour towards all Aboriginal Peoples, we intend, with shared participation and wisdom, to work together in a mutually beneficial manner to develop appropriate and meaningful programs for the benefit of all Aboriginal learners.

### SIGNATORIES

M MacLvor

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Steering Committee

Margaret D...

British Columbia Ministry of Education

P Bacchus

Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Vancouver Board of Education

on behalf of Jimmy

Chief of the Musqueam First Nation

Maish

District Principal, Aboriginal Education; Chairperson, Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee

Rebecca Jels

Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association

David R Hodgson

Métis Nation, British Columbia

Ch R King

Parent Representation

Adrian J. Harvey

Student Representation

Christ Kelly

Superintendent, Vancouver Board of Education

John Hill

United Native Nation Society

Lynnda May

Urban Native Youth Association

## Appendix

### Acknowledgements:

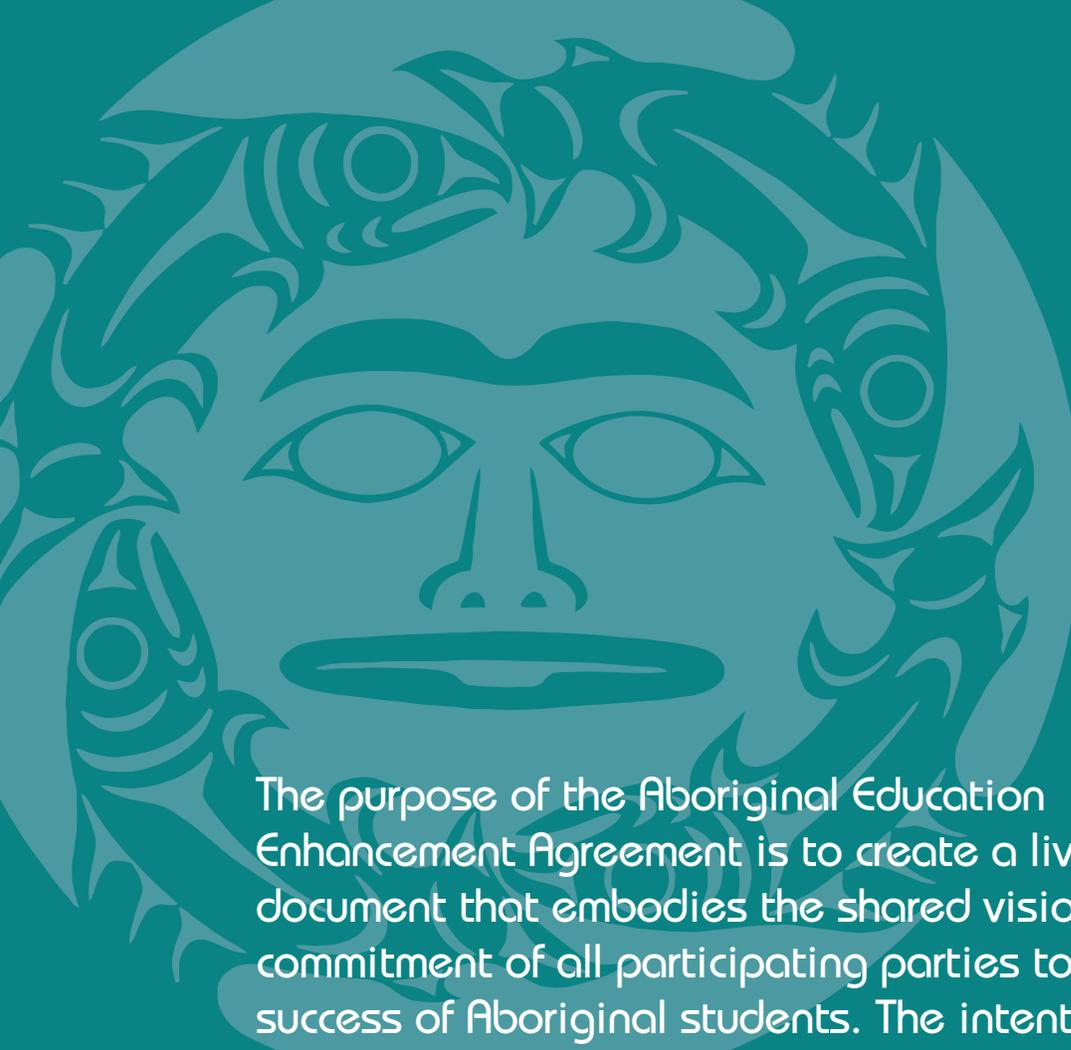
We would like to acknowledge and recognize the dedication, commitment and many hours of contribution of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Steering Committee and Working Committee along with the many district committees and community resource personnel who made this Agreement possible.

### Commitment and contributions by but not exclusive to:

District Parent Advisory Council  
 Greater Victoria School Board  
 Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters  
 Infocus Management  
 Justice Institute  
 Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association  
 Langara College  
 Lu'ma Native Housing Society  
 Métis Nation BC  
 Ministry of Education  
 Musqueam Band Council and Education Coordinator  
 Native Education Centre  
 Student, Parent, Elder, and Community Groups  
 United Native Nations Society  
 University of British Columbia  
 Urban Native Youth Association  
 Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society  
 Vancouver Aboriginal Council  
 Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society  
 Vancouver Administrator Secondary School Association  
 Vancouver Board of Education  
 Vancouver Community College  
 Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice Principals' Association  
 Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association  
 Vancouver Métis Association  
 Vancouver Native Health Society  
 Vancouver Native Housing Society  
 Vancouver School of Theology  
 Vancouver Secondary Teachers Association  
 VSB, Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee  
 VSB, Aboriginal Education Department Staff  
 Watari Research Association







The purpose of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement is to create a living document that embodies the shared vision and commitment of all participating parties to the success of Aboriginal students. The intent of the Agreement is to invite all school district employees and students, families and community members to be accountable for the support of Aboriginal students' holistic success. The Agreement also provides a road map for the development of future relationships and collaborative efforts to ensure the continuous success of Aboriginal students from kindergarten through grade 12 and beyond.

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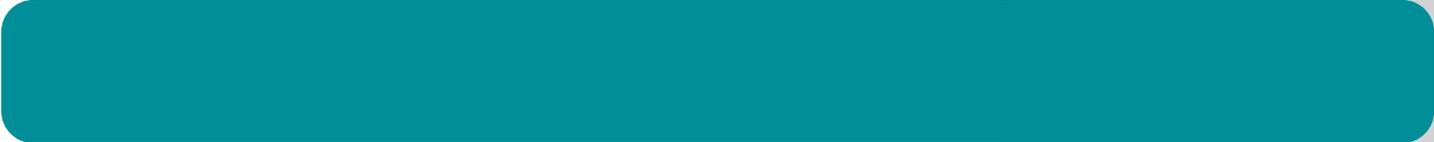
# Critical Evidence

Critical evidence and multiple measures used to analyze student success in Literacy include:

- **Student Learning Evidence** that describes student learning outcomes.
- **Classroom Evidence** is defined by a variety of assessment methods. The results are used by teachers to make decisions that will guide teaching practice and improve student performance. Examples of this type of assessment are Rubrics, Performance Standards, Rating Scales, Reading Recovery data, Phonemic Awareness Assessments, Running Records, Nelson Reading and Math Program assessments, classroom tests and Individual Education Plans for Special Needs students. These results are reflected in student report cards and at parent teacher conferences.
- **School Evidence** is defined by periodic assessments carried out by schools to provide immediate results of student performance on key standards-based skills. Examples of this type of assessment are Performance Standards and Quick Scales for Writing, Reading, Social Responsibility and Numeracy, Schoolwide Writes, Developmental Reading Assessments, Kindergarten Screening, Multilevel Academic Survey Test (MAST) for Reading and Math, Jerry Johns Reading Inventory, SMART Reading Assessment, Woodcock Johnson Assessment, ESL Matrix Spring Assessment, Test of Cognitive Skills, Canadian Achievement Test (CAT), Report Card Marks. These data are reflected in School Plans.

The vast majority of primary classrooms in the district are using the DRA to assess students. Most intermediate classes and some secondary schools are now using either Reading Assessment District #39 (RAD) grades 3-9 or Whole Class Reading Assessment Grades 3-8 (Vernon Assessment) with students. Teachers and administrators of the schools using these assessments received extensive in-service from the Literacy Team on how to administer them and how to use the data to improve instruction.

- **District Evidence** is valuable information about student success in Literacy and Social Responsibility and about how certain learner groups are performing compared to all other students. It is not intended to be used for student reporting. The Literacy Innovation Project results, Early Intervention data, Grade to Grade Transition, Graduation Rates, Elementary Social Responsibility Partnership Schools' research results and Secondary Safe School and Social Responsibility Survey Results. The district is currently piloting connection tool to assess the effectiveness of the district support of Aboriginal learners.
- **Provincial Data** is information which is collected by the Ministry of Education on an annual basis. It provides a district and school snapshot of achievement by grades four, seven, ten, eleven and twelve with trends of school results over time. Achievement of specific groups of students – male, female, Aboriginal, ESL and French Immersion – are provided. Examples of this type of assessment data are Foundation Skills Assessments and Participation Rates, and Provincial Exam results. These data are reflected in the annual District Plan and in School Plans.
- **Demographic Data** provides a description of the school context. Student data typically includes demographic information such as student's gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. In the Vancouver school district, demographic data provides a picture of student diversity as represented by the number of languages spoken by students in the district, the percentage of students who require English as a Second Language support, a number of Aboriginal, Special Education and French Immersion learners and the percentage of students who are living in poverty. The EDI Mapping Project results are an example of demographic data.
- **Program Data** reflects the outcomes of programs or processes (, Effective Behaviour Support, and Roots of Empathy Program).
- **Perception Data** reflects how school communities perceive

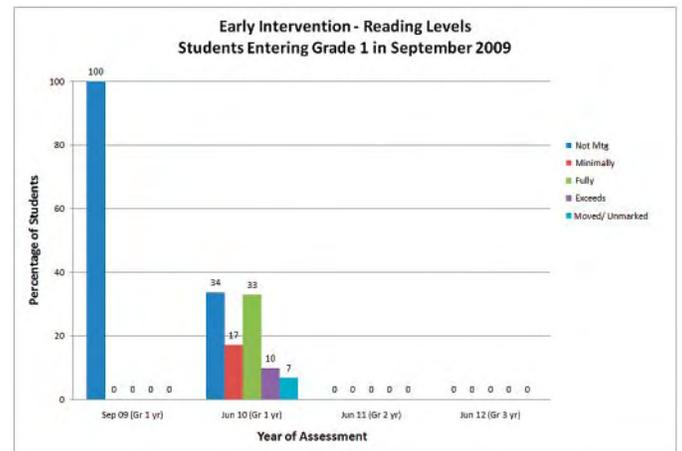
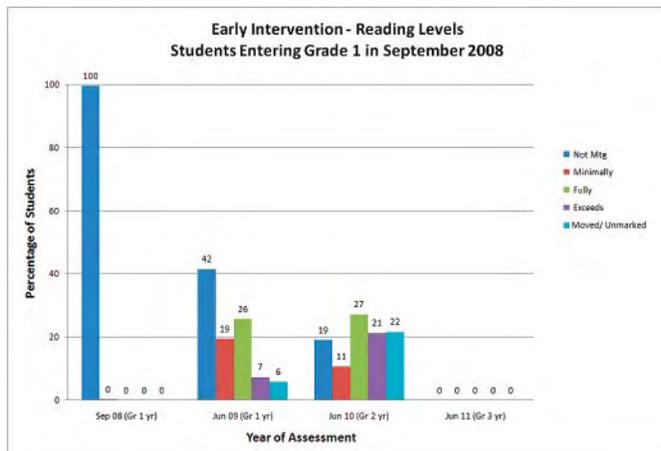
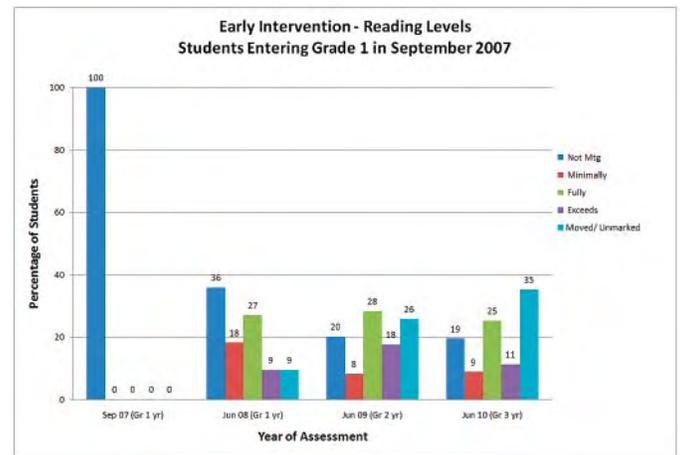
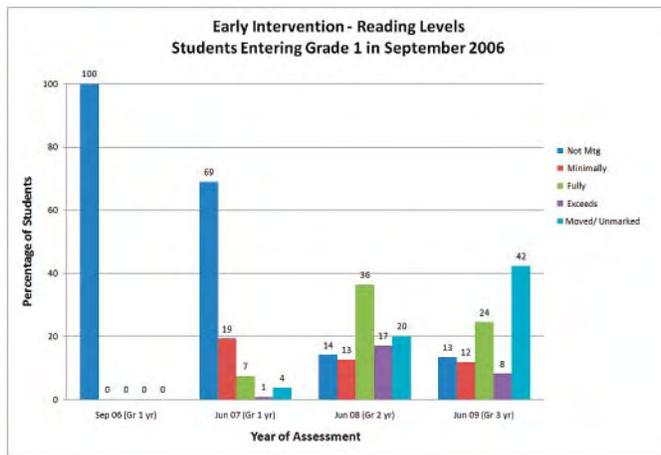
- 
- **Perception Data** reflects how school communities perceive or value the school's learning environments. Examples of this type of data are the Ministry of Education Satisfaction Surveys of parents/caregivers, students and teachers, Vancouver District Students' Council (VDSC) Survey of Secondary Students, Social Responsibility Perception Surveys for students, and parents/caregivers, School Safety Satisfaction Surveys, Healthy Youth Development Adolescent Health Survey: Vancouver Region, Student Self-Respect Self-Assessments, Student Belonging Surveys and other school developed surveys.



## Early Intervention Schools

### Early Intervention Schools

As of 2009, 21 schools are involved in an early intervention project which involves three components: good classroom teaching, effective small group interventions, and Reading Recovery one-to-one intervention for the lowest achieving students. The charts reflect only those children who were vulnerable entering grade one and show four cohorts of students as they progressed through the grades.





# 2010 MDI District Report Vancouver School District

## About the MDI

### Development of the MDI

The MDI is a self-report survey that asks children to report on five dimensions that are critical components of development and strongly linked to well-being, health, academic achievement, and success throughout the school years and in later life:

- Social and Emotional Development
- Connectedness
- School Experiences
- Physical Health and Well-being
- Constructive Use of After School Time

The questions included on the MDI are based on a developmental assets/strengths-based approach, emphasizing protective factors that support and optimize development. To insure that the MDI has strong psychometric properties (reliability, validity), we have conducted four pilot studies, including the present district-wide implementation for which 3,032 grade 4 children attending 72 public elementary schools in the Vancouver School District completed the MDI.

### Importance of the MDI

The MDI gives children an opportunity to share their own thoughts, wishes and needs as they move through middle childhood. Listening to children's voices is a fundamental step in the process of engaging them and providing them with positive learning experiences, both in and out of school, in enabling them to make responsible decisions and establish healthy habits, and in supporting them to accomplish their goals. Data from the MDI, in combination with information from other sources, are intended to be used by schools and communities to discuss, develop, plan, and implement practices, programs, and policies that engage and support children, their families, and their educators.

This report represents a collaborative effort to systematically collect and share information from children at this age, link results of the MDI to existing research, and provide information on local resources and tools that schools and communities can draw upon in their efforts to create school environments in which all our children can thrive.

#### What the MDI is

- The MDI provides representative and reliable information on children's feelings, thoughts, assets, strengths, needs, and wishes during the middle childhood period.
- The MDI allows schools and communities to examine whether their assumptions and expectations about their children's development and experiences are compatible with the children's own perceptions.
- The MDI can be a powerful tool for the mobilization and enhancement of initiatives that are sensitive to and build upon existing leadership, partnerships, resources, and strengths in the participating schools and communities.

#### What the MDI is not

- The MDI does not diagnose children with specific learning disabilities or areas of developmental delay.
- The MDI data cannot be used to prescribe specific practices or programs to teachers, parents, schools, or communities.
- The MDI does not assess the success or failure of children in the middle childhood period.
- The MDI does not identify individual children.

## What do the graphs show?

The graphs show the percentage of grade 4 students who completed the MDI survey whose responses fell into one of the three categories: high, medium, or low. In each graph, the results for all grade 4 participants in the Vancouver School district are shown.

## Connectedness

On the MDI, children were asked to tell us about their experiences of support from and connection with the adults in their schools and neighbourhoods, with their parents or guardians at home, and with their peers. Belonging is a fundamental need for people of all ages, and feeling well-connected is one of the most important assets for a child's well-being. Children need adults who care about them, believe in them, and listen to them. They also need to feel that they belong in school and that they have friends they can count on.

Children who do not feel connected are more likely to drop out of school and to suffer from mental health problems. Friendships and peer support are also critical for optimal motivation and can impact children's academic and life success. Children's connections to their parents also continue to play a central role in development. A single caring adult, be it a family member, a teacher in the school or a neighbour, can make a very powerful difference in a child's life.

## Number of Important Adults in School

### Important Adults in School

60%

13%

27%

### District Result

## What do these categories mean?

**High:** Children were asked to list all of the adults from their school who were important to them. Children who listed two or more adults were assigned to the 'high' category. In Vancouver, the majority of children listed two or more adults from school who they considered to be important to them.

**Medium:** Children who listed one adult from their school who was important to them were designated as 'medium.' In Vancouver, about 15 percent of the children listed one adult from their school (for example, teacher, principal, counselor, librarian) who was important to them.

**Low:** Children who did not list a single adult from their school who was important to them fell into the 'low' category. In Vancouver, 1 in 4 children reported not having any adult in school that was important to them.

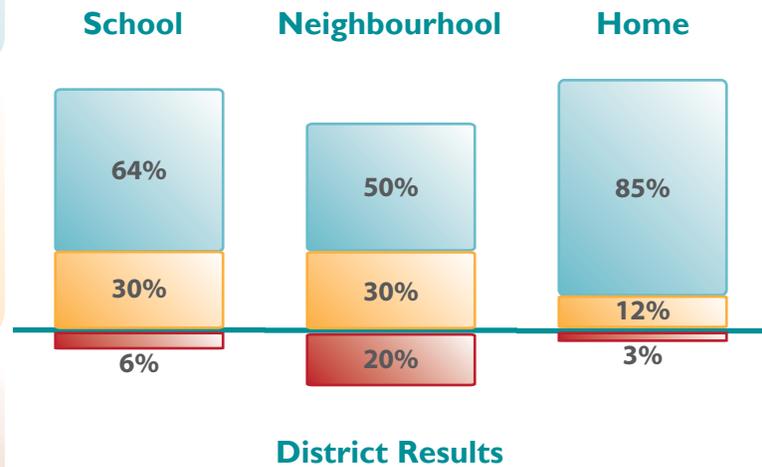
## Connectedness to Adults

### What do these categories mean?

**High:** Children who usually indicated that statements such as “There is an adult who really cares about me” or “There is an adult who believes I will be a success” were ‘pretty much’ or ‘very much’ true for them were designated as having ‘high’ levels of connectedness to adults.

**Medium:** Children who reported that these statements were ‘a little true’ or who reported a mix of positive and negative responses were designated as having a ‘medium’ level of connectedness to adults in a given context.

**Low:** Children who usually reported that these statements were ‘not at all true’ for them were designated as feeling ‘low’ levels of connectedness to adults in a given context.



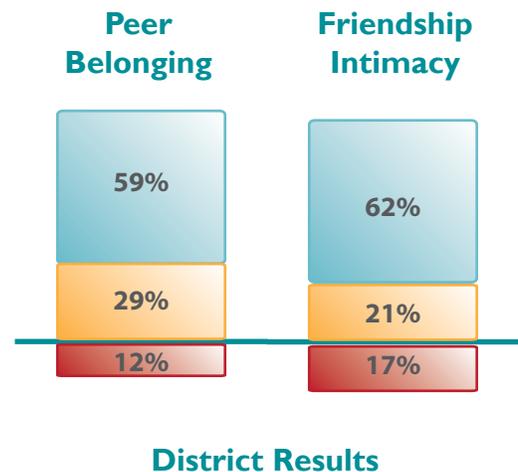
## Peer Belonging & Friendship Intimacy

### What do these categories mean?

**High:** Children who usually indicated that statements such as “When I am with other kids my age, I feel I belong” (peer belonging) or “I have a friend I can tell everything to” (friendship intimacy) were ‘most of the time’ or ‘always’ true for them were designated as having a ‘high’ level of peer belonging and friendship intimacy, respectively.

**Medium:** Children who responded ‘sometimes’ to these statements or who reported a mix of positive and negative responses were considered ‘medium’ in peer belonging and friendship intimacy.

**Low:** Children who usually responded ‘not at all’ to these statements were designated as having ‘low’ levels of peer belonging and friendship intimacy.









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