

2022-2023 - Year 3

School Learning Plan

1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY:

For September 2023, we are projecting to have 1,346 students enrolled at David Thompson Secondary, including 40 International students. David Thompson Secondary is a comprehensive high school emphasizing academic achievement, student leadership, athletic excellence, participation in the arts, and service to others.

We are in East Vancouver's Victoria-Fraserview community. The socio-economic status of our neighborhood consists of low to middle income families. David Thompson's school population is ethnically diverse. The top languages spoken in students' homes include Cantonese (30%), English (23%), Tagalog (11%), Punjabi (10%), Vietnamese (7%), and Mandarin (6%). Six percent of our total student population is enrolled in English Language Learning classes and just over two percent of David Thompson's student population is Indigenous.

David Thompson offers various programs to meet the needs of our students. The DT Odyssey Program is a District Choice Program, enrolls 150 students, and is known throughout the district for its students' accomplishments in Math and Science. At the senior level, we offer a variety of Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The Career Prep Work Experience program is available for senior students, and currently we have approximately 100 students enrolled. We have 4 District Special Education Programs at David Thompson: Junior Learning Support, EXEC (supporting students with their executive functioning skills), Social Development, and the Autism Resource Program. Approximately 10% of David Thompson's student population has been identified as having special needs. Each of these students has an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Inquiry Questions from Year 1 and 2 of the School Plan:

How do we effectively integrate the Core Competencies into curricular and extra-curricular activities within the school community?

How can we support students to develop a better understanding of self-care and mental wellness?

Inquiry Question for Year 3 of the School Plan:

How do we ensure that David Thompson is a place where all students feel a sense of belonging?

Where did the need for these goals come from?

The need for the original Inquiry Questions from Years 1 & 2 arose from the introduction of the redesigned curriculum. We wanted to focus on the implementation of the Core Competencies to help increase student engagement and to increase literacy across all curricular areas. From examining the feedback from student forums, the School Satisfaction Survey, staff, and the counselling department we also recognized the need to help support students with their overall mental wellness and to provide them with strategies for self-care.

For the Inquiry Goal that we incorporated this year, the need arose after seeing Provincial, District and School survey data. It was evident that the pandemic had a negative impact on many students, especially

with the development of their social-emotional skills. With a return to fulltime, in-person education, we realized that we needed to focus on restoring and maintaining a strong school culture and community of support so all David Thompson students could thrive. This new Inquiry question also aligns with the new Vancouver School District Education Plan which states that ‘the VSB will create an equitable learning environment where every child can experience a deep sense of belonging.’ It also reads, ‘having students see themselves and their communities in the curriculum.’

David Thompson students are motivated and actively involved in their school community. Our students are very respectful, tolerant, kind, and helpful. Many students participate in teacher led clubs and volunteer at community organizations such as South Vancouver Neighborhood House, Sunset Community Centre, Boys and Girls Club, and Killarney Community Centre to name a few.

Our students are also actively involved with the Community Schools Team (CST). One hundred and eighty of our students accessed leadership opportunities this past year where they volunteered before, during, after, and out of school time with elementary schools and community organizations. This out of school and weekend programming allows students to be more connected to school and their greater community, helps improve students’ attendance, and builds/enhances relationships between younger students and older students. Cooking programs focus on health, wellness, and good nutritional habits, and movement programs encourage students’ physical literacy, connection to nature, and social responsibility.

The Belly Filler Café serves a two-fold purpose of morning breakfast two days a week and a daily drop in for snacks and meals where approximately 60 students weekly receive supplementary nutrition and an opportunity to connect and receive SEL support. We also provided a VSB breakfast program that about 50 students used for their morning nutrition. These breakfasts (both hot and cold) were free to students.

Our students demonstrate a strong environmental consciousness and actively strive to minimize their ecological footprint. To support these efforts, we have established a Green Team club that engages in diverse school and community initiatives. Additionally, we have formed a partnership with Fresh Roots, an organization that collaborates with our students and teachers to maintain a community garden on our premises. Moreover, we operate a Recycling Club dedicated to educating and promoting recycling practices for plastics, organics, and general waste.

The students of David Thompson exhibit exceptional motivation and enthusiasm towards their learning. They actively collaborate with teachers to foster the development of their skills, aiming to become lifelong learners. The school also boasts a vibrant after-school atmosphere, with many students choosing to stay in the building beyond regular class hours in pursuit of extracurricular activities. They utilize this time to work on projects and homework, show their support for school events such as athletic performances or fine arts shows, and enjoy socializing with their peers.

Ensuring students’ physical and mental well-being is crucial for enabling them to unlock their full potential. Students regard their physical and mental health as top priorities, and our efforts are focussed on promoting student wellness by offering services and teaching strategies to help students alleviate feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress. We also recognize the considerable influence of social media on students, particularly with issues revolving around self-esteem and harassment. Social media has a tremendous impact on students, and as such, the school brings in organizations like the White Hatter and Safe Teen, to present to students on proper and safe use of social media/ technology.

To honour student voice, we conducted two student polls at David Thompson Secondary this year. We gave a survey to students in the fall and then followed up with the same survey in the spring. These surveys aimed to assess the students’ comfort levels within the school environment. We posted questions such as:

How can you tell if a teacher cares about you at David Thompson secondary?

Do you feel safe at school?

Do you experience a sense of belonging?

Do you feel welcome?

The majority of the responses were overwhelmingly positive, indicating that students felt supported and secure; however, a small percentage of students expressed less favourable views. Staff held monthly meetings to address this feedback and to develop strategies to enhance the overall sense of belonging and safety for all students. Some of these strategies included simple actions like teachers waiting at the classroom doors to greet students by name. Additionally, teachers aimed to familiarize themselves with each student on a more personal level by learning three important things about each student: 1) What is their name? What is their background? What is their superpower/gift? These efforts and many more were geared towards creating a nurturing and inclusive environment for all students at David Thompson.

2. WERE WE SUCCESSFUL?

Based on the student poll results, most students at David Thompson responded positively indicating that they feel a sense of belonging, a sense of welcome, and safety at school with “most of the time” and “all the time” being the predominant responses. However, it is important to acknowledge and address the concerns of the small minority who answered “never” or “almost never.” As a school community, there is a recognized need to focus on supporting these students and ensuring they feel welcome, safe, and a sense of belonging within the DT community. By continuing to work together we can strive to create an inclusive and supportive environment that embraces the well-being of every student.

During the year, we held grade-wide assemblies, titled ‘CARES assemblies,’ where we had the opportunity to further collect student voice. Using MS Forms, we asked students to tell us what it looks like when they feel a teacher authentically cares for them. Student responses were shared with teachers at our monthly staff meetings.

Below are examples of activities from 3 different departments at David Thompson used to help meet our school goals:

ENGLISH

Teachers in the English department have implemented various strategies to support student sense of safety in the classroom. The following activities contribute to a positive and inclusive learning environment:

- **Structured Interviews:** This activity involves students interviewing each other using a set of predetermined questions (helps students get to know one another and builds connections by fostering a sense of safety and community in the classroom).
- **Speed ‘Dating:’** Speed Dating activities typically involve students rotating and engaging in brief conversations with different classmates (promotes communication skills and inclusivity while students interact with a variety of peers).
- **Concentric Circles:** Students form inner and outer circles and engage in discussions or share their thoughts with a partner (encourages active participation, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas further enhancing the sense of safety and belonging).
- **Opinion of the Day Practice Presentations:** This activity involves students sharing their opinions on a given topic in the form of practice presentations (encourages students to express their thoughts, engage in respectful dialogue, and practice public speaking skills, creating an environment where diverse perspectives are valued).

For self-care, Personal Essay Writing assignments are used. These assignments give students an opportunity to reflect on their own life experiences and share valuable lessons they have learned. Writing personal essays can be cathartic and allow students to explore their emotions, perspectives, and personal growth. It also encourages empathy and understanding among classmates as they learn from each other’s experiences. Overall, these strategies and assignments promote a positive classroom culture, encourage student engagement, and support their emotional well-being.

ART

The Art department has taken additional steps to increase the sense of belonging for students. A few examples are as follows:

- More opportunities for students to share/celebrate their work (performances, screenings, showcases, etc.).
- Regular check-ins with students/groups (helps foster connections and address any concerns students may be having).
- Flexibility with due dates.
- Creating inviting environments where students feel comfortable and inspired.
- Classroom is available at lunch for students to access (for collaboration or socialization).

MATH

The math department has taken the following steps to create a sense of safety in their classrooms and to support student mental wellness:

- Allowing students choice in the amount of work/ questions (this approach reduces unnecessary stress for students and promotes a sense of autonomy and ownership over their learning)
- Allowing more time in class to work on assignments (helps to alleviate some of the pressures that students may feel outside of class).
- Individual meetings with students who may need extra attention (opportunity for personalized guidance and addressing specific concerns).
- Turning off cellphones (encourages focused engagement).

Greeting students at the beginning of class (creates a positive tone and welcoming environment).

3. HOW HAVE WE SHARED?

There are several ways that David Thompson recognizes and celebrates student achievement. Below are some examples:

- Teachers provide praise and descriptive feedback during classes.
- Through appreciative inquiry, we held a weekly CARES draw recognizing 5 students who demonstrated positive behaviour in the school.
- We create and send out a Week at a Glance (WAAG) to our parent/guardian community outlining events happening in our school to keep our families connected to our school community.
- We share stories of student success with teaching staff, school community and the Parent Advisory Committee.
- We honour student achievement by having a Breakfast of Champions recognizing students in non-traditional categories like Grit & Determination, Class Inclusion, Leadership, and Creative Measure.
- We showcase student work in display cases, on bulletin boards, in Grade MS Team channels, and in classrooms.
- We share information/successes at our Mini School Information Night, Gr. 7 Parent Information Night, PAC meetings, etc.

4. WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

David Thompson is committed to aligning its school goals with the VSB education plan, with a focus on improving student achievement, physical and mental well-being, and sense of belonging. The school will prioritize the incorporation of core competencies throughout the curriculum and extracurricular activities ensuring that essential skills are integrated into students learning experiences. Additionally, efforts will be made to increase equity by removing barriers to education and eliminating all forms of racism and discrimination. The implementation of the Ministry of Education's Reporting Order will involve self-assessment of the core competencies multiple times a year for students from grades K to 12. Through this process, students will gain a better understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement enabling them to set goals for personal growth. The core competencies are linked to curricular competencies in each course allowing teachers to make connections within their daily lessons. By embracing these initiatives, David Thompson aims to provide a well-rounded education that fosters student development and success in a supportive and inclusive environment.



District-wide Indigenous Focus (worldviews): To increase knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures, and contributions among all learners.

5. WHAT HAVE WE DONE AT OUR SCHOOL TO SUPPORT ALL LEARNERS IN REGARD TO THIS FOCUS?

At our school, we have taken several steps to support Indigenous learners. We have placed the first Peoples Principles of Learning posters in every classroom providing a quick reference for teachers and students. Additionally, land acknowledgements are made at every meeting or presentation in the school recognizing and honoring the Indigenous presence and contributions. We are currently undertaking a house post project where a 20-foot cedar house post is being carved by Musqueam carvers Chris and Crystal Sparrow. This house post (adorned with a whale, eagle and salmon as chosen by the DT community) will be placed on the front lawn of our school to face Musqueam and the Fraser River. Students will have the opportunity to witness the carving process and the unveiling will involve Musqueam elders and knowledge keepers who will perform a ceremony. In addition to this, we are expanding our course offerings to include three indigenous focused courses next year, namely English First Peoples 11, English First Peoples 12, and BC First Peoples 12 (Social Studies). We have also purchased various Indigenous resource to support these courses ensuring that Indigenous students can see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Furthermore, we have engaged in discussions during staff meetings on how to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing into our classes, recognizing importance of learning from Indigenous perspectives. Through these efforts we aim to create a supportive and inclusive environment that respects and celebrates indigenous culture, history, and knowledge.

6. HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE AND KNOWLEDGE?

For our September professional development day, we are organizing a visit to Musqueam to meet with local elders who will share with our staff the significance of a house post. There will also be a discussion and strategies to help incorporate the indigenous ways of knowing into daily lessons. This past year, the David Thompson department heads did a book study on Jo Chrona's book titled, 'Wayi Wah!' which explored the topic of reconciliation and incorporating the indigenous ways of knowing. We hope to continue working with Jo Chrona's book, and possibly invite Jo Chrona to David Thompson to further reinforce our understanding. Department leaders will share their learning with their respective departments. Teachers will take this learning and pass it to their students as we all continue to work towards reconciliation and honouring First Peoples' perspectives and knowledge.