

## 2022-2023 - Year 1

### School Learning Plan

#### 1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY

Emily Carr Elementary School is in a densely populated urban setting at Oak Street and King Edward in the Douglas Park area. We have 324 students in grades Kindergarten to Seven. Our school is named after the Canadian writer and painter, Emily Carr.

Our school population is diverse with approximately 17.6% of students having a first language other than English. We fully integrate almost 6.8% of our students with a Ministry Designation that represents their specific learning requirements.

Parents are formally involved in our school through an active and supportive Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and with generous contributions to fund raising, organizing school events, and aiding students' academic, social, and cultural growth. The PAC Inclusivity Committee continues to grow and promote family support and connection with families who have children with special needs and with initiatives, such as their information coffee session, focused on a chosen area of interest, and adding books to our school library on various topics around diversity and neurodiversity.

Students at Emily Carr are well-rounded, successful children with a variety of background experiences. They have many strengths in the BC Curriculum Core Competencies including positive communication skills, solid creative and critical thinking, and a strong sense of personal and social responsibility. Our students celebrate many aspects of their learning through activities including performances, assemblies, concerts, sharing within classes and between buddy classes, volunteer opportunities and field trips. Student Leadership programs (ex. Peer Helpers, Activity Leaders, Library Monitors, Morning Announcers, Hallway Monitors and Equipment Monitors) and student clubs/initiatives (ex. *Emily Carr's Got Talent Club*) continue to grow at Emily Carr Elementary, contributing to a positive school culture where students work in teams to achieve tasks, building communication and interpersonal skills, while promoting values of volunteerism, community service and cooperation.

## 2. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

### Strengths:

- Students enjoy being leaders and 'big buddies' to younger students through reading and other activities.
- We have some very kind, caring students who are acting as champions for others who need a boost in this area.
- Students are eager to be helpers. They readily volunteer to help and make a difference.
- At Emily Carr we have large participation rates in activities – Leadership Programs (ex. Peer helpers have been amazing with helping the younger students during recess and lunch), School Sports Teams (ex. Cross Country, Ultimate Frisbee and basketball) and Clubs.
- Many of our students have good communication skills, like to talk and are not afraid to ask questions.
- Most of our students like to read, are physically active both at school and away from school and are involved in many activities in the community.
- Students follow directions and routines relatively well.
- We are seeing a growing and more diverse student community of varying socio-economic backgrounds.
- Our students enjoy using technology as a learning tool.
- They like to learn outside of the classroom and especially enjoy field trips.

### Needs:

- Many students are continuing to learn to regulate their emotions and struggle with peaceful conflict resolution and impulse control.
- Many behaviour incidents can be related to a lack of self-regulation skills resulting in physical or verbal outbursts.
- Students are working on taking responsibility for their belongings, actions and their learning.
- Many students have difficulty with attention, staying calm, alert and focused.
- Growing anxiety is seen among some students and is getting in the way of their learning.
- Experiences of isolation and disconnection during the COVID pandemic; larger gap in overall academic levels as well as social emotional difficulties, especially with the younger learners.
- Wide range of learners, academically, and students with exceptionalities; a demonstrated need for differentiated learning and support.
- Many students with high social-emotional needs.
- Some students have experienced trauma or big life challenges.
- Many newcomers and high level of ELL students at reception level.

## 3. WHAT EVIDENCE SUPPORTS WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE LEARNERS?

- Evidence of what we know about our learners comes from staff through anecdotal reports, student learning progress reports and professional or class discussions.
- Referrals to our school counselor continue to be consistently high, as noted by her full caseload each week.
- Additionally, student voice has been heard through the data from the Middle Years Data Instrument that was collected from the 2022/2023 School Report, which shows that we could do better with school belonging (41% of our grade 7 students have a high degree of connection and feelings of being valued at school (school belonging). We are concerned that this is lower than the School District Average.

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## 4. WHAT IS THE FOCUS FOR OUR COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS BASED ON THE EVIDENCE?

### Focus:

- We believe if students feel like they belong in their school they will approach their relationships (peer and adult) and academics with more positive attitudes. An inclusive school climate is important to develop a sense of belonging, safety, and empathy amongst all our students, staff and parents. A relational based approach builds connections and fosters a feeling of belonging. “Being trauma-informed is a mindset with which educators approach all children.” (Mathew Portel, Understanding Trauma Informed Education, 2019).

### Connections:

- Within Goal 1 of the *VSB Education Plan 2026* it states that “The Vancouver School Board will improve student achievement, physical and mental well-being, and belonging by improving school environments to ensure they are safe, caring, welcoming, and inclusive places for students and families.” A focus on relation-based strategies, such as Trauma informed practice, may be a way to **connect with students, creating respectful relationships within the school community and to shift negatives into positives.** **Additionally**, exploring the vital role of emotional safety may shed light on what is behind some of the challenging behaviours we see in our classrooms. We are searching for practices that can help us restore and awaken caring feelings in our students, amidst the backdrop of the global pandemic and past trauma experiences, to build an emotionally safe and inclusive school.
- The first of three goals in the Aboriginal Educational Enhancement Agreement which describe what is important in improving success for Aboriginal students in the Vancouver School District is belonging; to increase Aboriginal students’ sense of pride, self-esteem, belonging, place, acceptance and caring in their schools.
- The *Personal and Social core competency* is “the set of abilities that relate to students' identity in the world, both as individuals and as members of their community and society. Personal and social competency encompasses what students need to thrive as individuals, to understand and care about themselves and others, and to find and achieve their purposes in the world.” Through a lens of trauma-informed practice we will focus on the development of this competency.

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## 5. INQUIRY QUESTION

How can we, as a community, apply trauma-informed practices in our classrooms and broader school environment to address behavioural concerns, and establish a sense of belonging, connection, and support for all?

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## 6. WHAT IS OUR PLAN?

### Year 1

Identify students coping with trauma by looking at the behavioural and emotional, social, and academic symptoms that indicate that a student may be experiencing trauma. Staff will use this information to guide choices in strategies used to support students.

Familiarize staff with an overview of Trauma-Informed Classroom Strategies compiled by Linda O'Neill, Serena George and Jillian Wagg in a staff-led professional development meeting. Individuals will then review the information provided in the handouts discussed.

Look at our school structures and how they promote connection and support good mental health and wellness for our students. Discuss where we can improve the learning experiences and equity for our students.

### Year 2

Through professional development on trauma informed practice, we will collectively learn more about trauma-informed classroom strategies, identify best practices and research how we can implement them at Emily Carr. We will continue to look at strategies and practices to support a whole school approach.

We strive to create a shared understanding and common language about how to create a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe school.

### Year 3

We will further implement strategies that help build trauma sensitive environments and further align trauma-informed core areas with social, emotional, and behavioral learning practices, disciplinary response, classroom management, and student and professional supports.

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## 7. WHAT SUPPORTS WILL WE NEED?

Staff led introduction of *Trauma-Informed Classroom Strategies* (May 2023) with handout compiled by Linda O'Neill, Serena George and Jillian Wagg.

A deeper look into trauma informed practices through professional development workshops. We have booked Angela Murphy for November 24, 2023.

Purchase of resources for further inquiry by individuals or small groups, including books by Chuck Geddes, called *Children and Complex Trauma: A Roadmap for Healing and Recovery* and *Reclaiming our Students: Why Children are More Anxious, Aggressive, and Shut Down Than Ever – And What We Can Do About It* by Hannah Beach & Tamara Neufeld Strijack

These resources will help staff to broaden their knowledge of trauma informed practices so that they can help students thrive and develop their personal and social core competencies.

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## 8. HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

A whole-school approach to trauma-informed practice can include strategies such as peer mentoring, teacher-student mentoring or restorative practices. We will know that we are on track if we see an increase in trauma-informed school-wide practices. Conversations with staff, students and parents will reflect our achievements.

Additionally, we will:

- Act upon and analyse ideas and strategies generated from literature and workshops that promote trauma informed practice.
- Post resources on the Emily Carr Teams Trauma Informed Practice Channel; creation of space for this knowledge to be shared.
- Connect regularly with staff to discuss ideas, obtain advice and feedback.
- Include trauma-informed practice information will be reflected in school newsletter/communication.
- Track the number of opportunities for students, staff and parents to increase connections within our learning community.
- Look to see if we can do better than or the same as the district average, within the data from the Middle Years Data Instrument, in the area of connection and feelings of being valued at school (school belonging).

If we see no changes or unanticipated changes, we will reconnect with Angela Murphy (author, educator, school psychologist and complex trauma coach) and have her return to do a follow up professional development session to review our strategies, both classroom strategies and school wide structures, and identify where we can improve our practices.

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## 9. HOW WILL WE SHARE THIS INFORMATION?

We will begin to make parents, students and other members of the community aware and involved in our school plan by sharing our information through formal means like PAC meetings and monthly newsletters, and through informal gatherings, like Friday morning parent coffee times.

Within our school, we will structure school assemblies, morning announcements, staff meetings and professional development days to reflect our school plan and goals.



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

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## 10. WHAT LEARNING HAVE WE DONE AT OUR SCHOOL TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS AND KNOWLEDGE?

The learners in our community are benefitting from opportunities within the regular curriculum to support and enhance their understanding of Indigenous worldviews and knowledge by:

- exploring available resources and student field studies to places such as the Museum of Anthropology
- reading books in class with Indigenous content; adding resources to our school library with indigenous contents/written by indigenous authors
- fostering a connection with nature; birds, plants, etc.; Related environmental stewardship; embracing the stories of Vancouver
- using Indigenous way of decision making (ex. by school administration when supporting student problem solving) in order to create a safe environment in which students can share their point of view with others

Additionally, we have enacted reconciliation through actions such as:

- providing an acknowledgment of ancestral territories of the Coast Salish People is integrated into our school routines and customs. It is spoken at the beginning of assemblies, presentations, morning announcements. Some classes are writing their own land acknowledgements to make them more meaningful
- having student leaders provide information on Indigenous contributions to Canada is integrated into the Remembrance Day ceremony
- celebrating Orange Shirt Day, throughout the school and including information within the morning announcements for all students, grades K-7
- using art/work going home and displays around the school to spark conversations between students and their families

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## 11. WHAT EVIDENCE OF UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS AND KNOWLEDGE HAVE BEEN FOSTERED WITHIN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY?

Evidence that understanding of Indigenous worldviews and knowledge has been fostered within our school community can be seen through evidence such as:

- most of our Indigenous students are meeting academic expectations and adjusting well at school, socially
- students are being taught about Indigenous contributions and perspectives in Canadian history and society
- students are exploring, discussing, and showing appreciation of Indigenous art, cultures, traditions, and ways of knowing
- intermediate classes are taught post-colonial Indigenous history, including the effects of residential school, for students to understand the challenges Indigenous people face today and our hope to eliminate discrimination and stereotyping

The amount and depth of activities and staff knowledge is reflected in the anecdotal reporting, myBlueprint, children's writing, newsletters, assemblies, ceremonies, morning announcements, and library book/literature collections within the school.

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

We will sustain and enhance our understanding of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge by continuing to:

- strive to teach Indigenous content authentically by incorporating Indigenous culture, history, and traditions throughout the curriculum
- post resources on our Indigenous Education channel on our Emily Carr Teams site
- explore the curriculum through different perspectives
- celebrate indigenous excellence
- access district supports during the 2023-2024 school year

The school will take actions moving forward that facilitate reconciliation by:

- continuing to include diverse perspectives, histories, and experiences into the curriculum, including indigenous knowledge about historical injustices, and exploring themes of reconciliation and social justice
- participating in district-wide professional development opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the diverse cultures and histories within their school community
- implementing restorative practices/approaches to address conflicts, build relationships and promote healing (ex. Restorative circles), allowing students to take responsibility for their actions and repair harm caused
- working on decolonizing our library collections, resources and activities
- acknowledging that we can/will do better as we continue our journey of reconciliation