

2023-2024 – Year 1 School Learning Plan

1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY (TO BE UPDATED EACH YEAR)

Gordon Elementary is a vibrant and active community of staff, students and families situated in the heart of Vancouver’s Kitsilano neighbourhood. Currently the school enrolls 18 Divisions with 400 students (we are classified as a full school) from kindergarten to grade 7. Our learners are quite diverse in their cultural, educational and life experiences.

Our school is part of the VSB Early Literacy Initiative, and we have Reading Recovery and Leveled Literacy Interventions program to support early learners in the primary grades. Our teachers are committed to deepening our understanding of the renewed curriculum to foster and facilitate an inquiry-based approach to learning. This includes student-centered teaching strategies, collaboration with colleagues in grade groups as well as across grades, resource sharing and expertise, and providing lessons that extend learning beyond the classroom. Our professional development is aligned with students’ learning needs as well as social/emotional growth. We see learning as a partnership with parents and caregivers, and work to provide meaningful, enriching opportunities to support a child’s learning at school and in the community. With the support of our Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), we recently created an outdoor learning space that complements our commitment to outdoor learning. Several classes do regular outdoor learning workshops, and we have a flourishing garden program where students learn about agriculture, plant species and how important the land is to Indigenous people.

We have recently updated our school Code of Conduct which we have renamed Gordon’s *Circle of Care*. Our *Circle of Care* is designed to foster a safe, inclusive, equitable, welcoming, nurturing, and healthy school environment which aligns with the new [2026 VSB Education Plan](#). This applies to all members of the Gordon community—students, educators, parents, and caregivers. Our *Circle of Care* seeks to support our understanding of our students’ needs and how we can best teach them the skills they need to thrive both socially and academically. We encourage all students to **R.I.S.E.** to success through their **R**elationship and **B**elonging, **I**ntellect, **S**pirit, and **E**motional Wellbeing. The staff explicitly teach and model what it means to **R.I.S.E.** in all locations of the school and the community. We have incorporated the Medicine Wheel into our *Circle of Care* which represents a symbol of healing, growth, life, learning and balance in many Indigenous communities. Through this lens, Gordon’s *Circle of Care* emphasizes a child’s social and emotional growth. Research shows that children who are both socially and emotionally healthy are the best learners and the most successful in school.

Parents and caregivers work as active partners within our school with a focus on developing healthy, engaged attitudes in our students as well as providing parent education on relevant and current topics. They support our school in innumerable ways through PAC fundraising initiatives and by volunteering with several programs and activities throughout the school year.

2. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS? (SCANNING)

Children’s sense of safety and belonging at school has been shown to foster their school success in many ways. When children have positive experiences at school, they are more likely to feel they belong within their school, feel more motivated and engaged, and have higher academic achievement. Children who feel a sense of connection and belonging to school have a sense of pride and desire to take care of each other and this place. Students are also less likely to engage in high-risk behaviours. Understanding children’s school experiences improves the ability to both create and cultivate school environments that are safe, caring, and supportive. Students’ social emotional learning and sense of belonging will be our focus for next year as we navigate our post-pandemic world. This work also aligns with the [2026 VSB Education](#) plan (Goal #1) which focuses on “improving the school environment to ensure they are safe, caring, welcoming and inclusive places for students and families.” At Gordon, this is what we see in our learners:

Learner Strengths:

- Student participation in leadership (e.g., student council, playground leaders, office monitors), helping adults and other students
- Students present a sense of pride being involved in the life of the school and the community (e.g., spirit days, SOGI activities, school wide assemblies)
- Demonstrating a positive attitude towards school
- Students are accepting of others as a whole

Learner Areas for Growth/Needs:

- Ability to work through anxious feelings/increase in self-confidence, use of mindfulness
- Ability to understand and focus upon using a growth mindset
- Skills to navigate social media peer dynamics and sense of isolation, adapting to new/novel social situations
- Developing awareness of surroundings and how behaviour/social interaction choices impact others (students, adults, the community); self-regulation
- Continue to model and teach what acceptance means and to continue our work around anti-racism and diversity

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

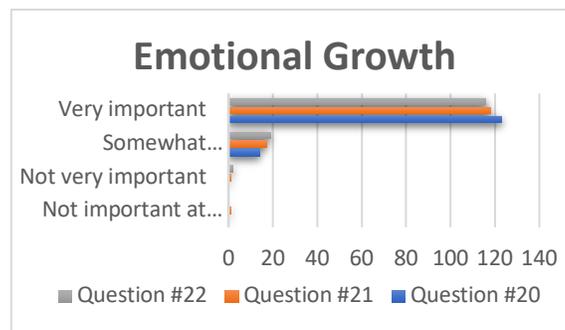
(SCANNING)

Parent Surveys

As part of the process to update our school *Circle of Care*, we strived to incorporate the voices of our whole community. We created a parent survey where 137 parents and caregivers within our community responded to several questions that highlighted what is most important to them, what we were doing well and what we needed to improve on.

The questions below focused on what was important to parents and caregivers at school:

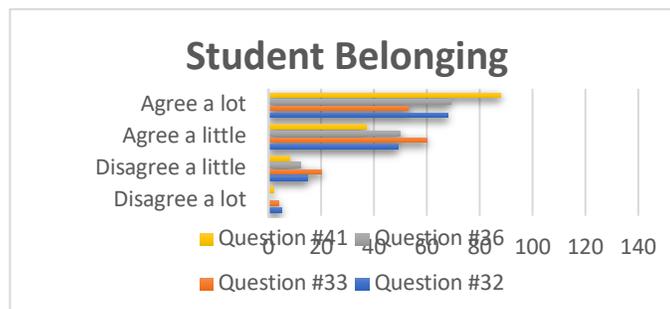
- Question #20 asked: How important is it to you to have your child learn about emotional self-regulation at school?
- Question #21 asked: How important is it to you to have your child learn about solving problems in peaceful ways at school?
- Question #22 asked: How important is it to you to have your child learn about how to care for their mental health at school?



These results show a strong need within our parent and caregiver community for school to not only focus on academics but also the social and emotional growth of their child.

The following questions focused on what was important for their child’s social and emotional well-being at school:

- Question #32 asked: My child feels part of a group of friends that do things together.
- Question #33 asked: My child feels that they usually fit in with other kids around them and this is important to them.
- Question #36 asked: My child feels that they are respected for who they are, and their identity is not only embraced but also celebrated.
- Question #41 asked: My child feels they belong in this school.

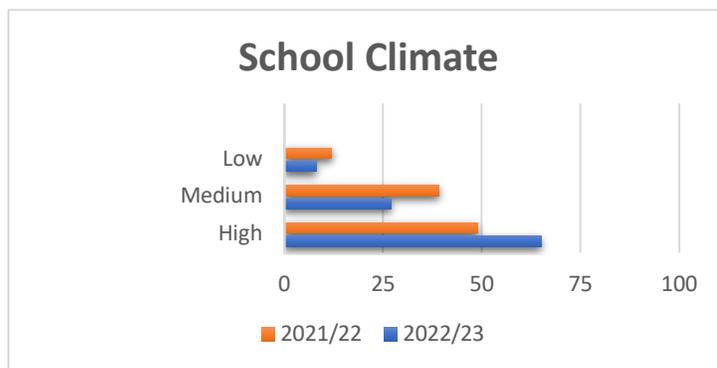


These results show that even though there is a high rate of students that feel connected to their peers and the school community, there are still 15% of parents and caregivers that feel their child is either not connected or a little connected to their peers, 18% believe their child does not feel they fit in with other peers and 9% feel they their child is not recognized for who they are and they do not have a sense of belonging at school.

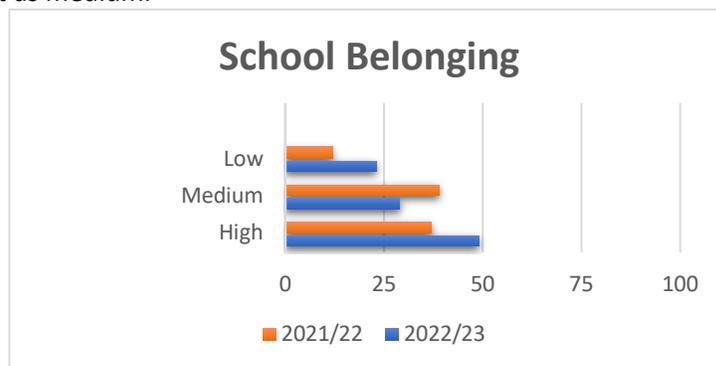
MDI Results

The Middle Years Development Inventory (MDI) is a self-report questionnaire that asks children in Grades 4-8 about their thoughts, feelings and experiences in school and the community. It uses a strengths-based approach to assess five areas of development that are strongly linked to well-being, health and academic achievement. In 2021/22 we surveyed our grade 7 students. In 2023/23 we surveyed our grade 6 students. Two areas that are of particular interest to us are how the students feel about their school climate and school belonging.

- School Climate – the overall tone of the school environment, including the way teachers and students interact and how students treat each other. e.g., “People care about each other in this school.”
- School Belonging – the degree to which children feel connected and valued at their school. e.g., “I feel like I am important to this school.”



The results show that even though there is improvement from 2021/22 to 2022/23 (e.g., decrease of 4%) in terms of how students feel about the school climate, we still have 8% of students that rate our school climate as low and 27% who rate it as medium.



In terms of students feeling a sense of belonging at school, we have only improved by 12% from 2021/22 to 2022/23 with 49% of students rating their sense of belonging at school as high. It is also interesting to note that the MDI also looks at connectedness between students and their school, family, and community.

One aspect of this is how connected students feel to an adult at school. e.g., “At my school there is an adult who believes I will be a success.” Our 2021/22 results show that 58% of students rate their connectiveness as high, 38% rate it as medium and 4% rate it as low. However, our 2023/23 results show a decrease in students’ connectiveness to adults at school which is lower than the district average.

Student Surveys

As a school we also surveyed the students as part of the information collected to inform our new *Circle of Care*. Students indicated that they feel safe at school but not all students feel they can be themselves at school or that they are recognized for who they identify as or feel safe to be themselves. In addition, not all students felt connected to one adult at school either.

4. WHAT IS THE FOCUS FOR OUR COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS BASED ON THE EVIDENCE? (FOCUSING)

Our *Circle of Care* seeks to support our understanding of our students’ needs and how we can best teach them the skills they need to thrive both socially and academically. This aligns with the BC’s Curriculum Core Competencies – Personal and Social domain.

The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) Principles of Learning states that “learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.” Our school plan will focus on increasing our students’ sense of belonging and connectiveness to our school community, so our students intrinsically want to take care of this place and take responsibility for their actions, reflect on their choices, and heal their relationships through restorative actions. By being supported in learning these skills, students will develop the ability to effectively manage different social and emotional situations. Students are expected to learn and mature as they move through their educational journey, and as such the expectations progress towards greater personal responsibility and self-regulation. Students with diverse abilities will be supported in this learning by providing support, resources, and accommodations according to their needs and abilities.

5. INQUIRY QUESTION (FOCUSING)

How can we improve student behaviour by instilling a sense of belonging and ownership within our students so they will be responsible for themselves and this place and how can we embed these teachings within Indigenous principles of knowing and being?

6. WHAT IS OUR PLAN? (PLANNING)

We will spend Year 1 focusing on learning our new *Circle of Care* “I can statements,” and what that looks like, feels like and sounds like in all aspects of our school community. This will give us an opportunity to see how our students respond to the new language and what really resonates with them. We will use this year to seek out current resources that focus on developing inclusive and supportive teaching practices, so all students feel like they are being represented. Parents and caregivers will also play a critical role as we can use PAC meetings, GORDTalk (parent information nights) and informal conversations as another way to gain insight into our students from a parent perspective. We can also use the contacts and expertise within our community for resources and expertise.

Year 2 we will see if our *Circle of Care* needs to be updated based on what we learned in Year 1. We will be able to see how our community responds to the language and resurvey our community to see if our students’ sense of belonging and connectiveness to school has changed. We will also review MDI and other data to see if student feelings of connectedness improve and parent perceptions of their child improve as well. Informal conversations, parent surveys, PAC meetings and GORDTalk events will also inform our practices. We will be able to implement the resources and teaching practices we discovered through our inquiry.

Year 3 will be about solidifying our *Circle of Care* and the current teaching practices that we will be using. We will review and revise, as necessary.

7. WHAT SUPPORTS WILL WE NEED? (PLANNING)

The resources below will be linked to our new areas of learning around student belonging and inclusive teaching practices that will be implemented using the curriculum and core competencies:

- Continuing to meet regularly with school staff to help structure classroom learning environments that support all students (e.g., quiet corner, use of pods for additional learning spaces, designate key areas in the classroom for certain activities, class mindfulness activities)
- We will continue to use SEL programs and tools like: WITS, Ease (Anxiety Program), Second Step, Consent, Go Zen! and Indigenous oral story telling
- School wide activities and assemblies that bring our school together and allow students to focus on what they are passionate about (e.g., SOGI Club, Student Council, Social Justice Club)
- Provide leadership opportunities for our older students to help support and mentor our younger students (e.g., buddy classes, peer helpers, office monitors, library monitors)
- Building our school library to include books about social emotional learning, diversity, social justice and updating novels and books (literature is a great way for students to see themselves reflected in the world)
- Seeking opportunities to attend professional development individually and in teams with a focus on student belonging, social emotional development, diversity, anti-racism and Indigenous knowledge
- Welcoming support from District mentors (e.g., SOGI, Safer Schools, Indigenous Dept.)
- Working with PAC to bring speakers in for the GORDTalk nights on topics that reflect the work we are doing around student belonging, diversity, and anti-racism
- Monthly Newsletters to parents on topics that reflect our goal as well as specific activities we are focusing on in school (e.g., Orange Shirt Day, Black History Month, Pride Month etc.)

8. HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK? (CHECKING)

We will continue to meet as a learning team to reflect and analyze data, information, and observations so that we can determine what is working and what is making a difference for our students.

We will examine:

- Successful rewording and development of our *Circle of Care*
- CSL report card comments
- Student engagement in opportunities that provide leadership roles and
- Student self-assessment of the core competencies
- Student goal setting and student-led conferences
- One-on-one parent/teacher or parent/student/teacher conversations
- Our regular meetings through professional development opportunities will allow us to develop responses if we see little change or encounter new challenges
- PAC meetings and GORDTalk sessions that involve parent engagement and feedback

9. HOW WILL WE SHARE THIS INFORMATION? (CHECKING)

Parents will be informed through school newsletters, PAC meetings and parent information nights (e.g., GordonTALKS). The School Growth Plan Committee will meet regularly and share progress at SCM and staff meetings. Staff will collaboratively provide leadership with students in the organization of regular school wide activities that help promote student belonging and connectiveness, social emotional learning, diversity and equity amongst our school community.



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

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

Our *Circle of Care* is embedded in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. We have adopted the Medicine Wheel as a symbol of healing, growth, life, learning and balance which is reflected in many Indigenous communities. Through this lens, Gordon's *Circle of Care* emphasizes a child's social and emotional growth. We seek to support our students' needs by teaching them the skills they need to thrive both socially and academically. Our focus is to embed Indigenous teaching practices within all curricular and core competencies.

11. WHAT EVIDENCE OF UNDERSTANDING OR INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS AND KNOWLEDGE HAVE BEEN FOSTERED WITHIN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY? PLEASE SHARE HOW IT IS EMBEDDED THROUGHOUT.

Teachers are incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and history into curriculum and pedagogy:

- Class-wide drumming workshops using our school drums
- School-wide Indigenous performances that highlight Indigenous storytelling
- Field studies to Museum of Anthropology and Fort Langley exploring impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities on the Fraser River
- School wide recognition, activities and lessons that focus on Indigenous history (e.g., Orange Shirt Day, Residential Schools, Red Dress Day, National Indigenous History Month)
- The school librarian has made it a priority over the last five years to purchase relevant, powerful, and respectful works of literature at all grade levels and deselecting books which do not have an authentic Indigenous voice
- Working with classroom teachers to underline the importance of using authentic voices to talk about Indigenous experiences and legends
- Science and Social Studies Indigenous environmental awareness (e.g., Salmonoids in the classroom, Heritage Fair)
- Focus on outdoor learning and gardening from an Indigenous perspective and connection to the land

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

Staff will continue to have discussions on how to incorporate the First Peoples Principles of Learning into our first goal of increasing our students' sense of belonging and connectiveness to our school community so our students intrinsically want to take care of this place and take responsibility for their actions, reflect on their choices, and heal their relationships through restorative actions.

- The school community will continue to use Indigenous literature in all curricular areas
- There will continue to be opportunities to make connections with outside community partners (e.g., the UBC Museum of Anthropology, Indigenous Department)
- As a school we will use First Peoples principles and perspectives to help guide our work and embody our new *Circle of Care* and restorative practices
- Professional Development for teachers (e.g., District Indigenous Focus Day, teacher workshops, lunch n' learn, book club)
- Engaging our parents through PAC, newsletters, and informal conversations which will highlight what their children have been learning in school as well as providing resources and literature to support this learning