

## **2022-2023 - Year 1 School Learning Plan**

### **1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY**

Sexsmith School is a diverse community of approximately 435 students. More than fifty percent of our students speak a language other than English at home. More than 20 different languages are spoken, with Chinese, Punjabi, and Tagalog as the predominant home languages. Our vision of success for our students focuses on building self-esteem by providing opportunities for success in all areas: academic, physical, artistic, social emotional and social responsibility. We want students to feel a sense of Belonging at Sexsmith.

Our Code of Conduct follows the VSB District policy and encourages Sexsmith students to REACH for the Stars:

R- Respect myself, others and our school

E – Excel in all that we do

A – Accept ourselves and others

C – Care for each other

H – Help when help is needed



Sexsmith has a variety of extracurricular athletic activities offered to intermediate students in badminton, ultimate frisbee, basketball, soccer, track & field, and volleyball with several staff members coaching these teams. Dedicated staff also support a noon hour intramural games program for our intermediate students, aimed to give them an opportunity for healthy activity during lunch hour especially through the winter, but also to allow further peer connection via these facilitated activities. This year, students who wanted to form their own clubs with a teacher sponsor also enjoyed developing their passion areas including with arts and crafts, Yu-Gi-Oh cards, charity fundraisers and more. This year, a staff sponsored chess club hosted more than 50 students a week, at various grade levels. Throughout the year, special events are provided for our students with the goal to get as many of them involved in our school spirit as possible including theme days such as Rainbow Day, led by our Student Council and Social Justice clubs.

We encourage and provide opportunities for individual student leadership including Student Council, daily PA Announcers, Assembly Leaders, playground Peer Helpers, Library Monitors, Lunch Monitors and Safety Patrol. To assist our youngest learners and their families make the transition into Kindergarten as positive as possible we host a Welcome to Kindergarten event each spring and this is

well attended by the new-to-Sexsmith families as well as by our community partners and itinerant staff.

At the heart of every school event is the desire for students, families (and staff) to know that they are welcome and part of the diverse beauty that makes up our school.

Parents are actively involved as partners in our school. They meet monthly as a PAC to discuss school programs and typically plan a variety of annual school activities. In the fall, with the assistance of our Multicultural Liaison Worker, Mrs. Nagpal, parents organize a Diwali celebration performance with participants from all grades and cultural backgrounds. In December, PAC partners with the South Vancouver Rotary Club to present a Breakfast with Santa event. In winter, the Lunar New Year event involves parents, students and staff providing various dance and music performances. In the spring, we celebrate the Filipino Fiesta as parents take the lead in teaching cultural and traditional dances and songs to not just Filipino students but to any students who want to learn and celebrate our diversity.

This is a key aspect of all the cultural events at Sexsmith—although they may originate with just one language or culture group, the events and the lead up to them includes everyone who wishes to take part, resulting in students teaching their peers about their pride and love for their own culture and others'. We strive to ensure that each event is equitable and accessible for all students. It is magical to see all staff members dancing Bhangra or to see a wide variety of students dancing with a lion and saying greetings in Chinese. Holidays, food, and festival are just part of the depth of cultural learning that occurs at Sexsmith. This year, we also chose to create more focus on our anti-racism work and honour African roots through dance and cultural study during Black History Month. We continue to invite guest speakers, performers and those who can enhance our cultural studies and sense of belonging at school, to be part of the Sexsmith team!

Sexsmith Staff is very thankful for the involvement and support of our parents/guardians, who not only work with us and give their time for cultural events and teaching, but also who work hard to fundraise and provide opportunities for student experiences and field trips. Hot lunch programs and other fundraising initiatives also help fund several wishlist items and technology purchases at our school. Thank you, Sexsmith PAC!

In addition to parent support, Sexsmith is also supported by the VSB Community Schools Team, our VSB Area Counsellor, and the Sunset Community Centre before and after school care. Through these groups we have been able to provide many extracurricular opportunities for our students.

Sexsmith is a TEGS school. TEGS stand for Think, Eat, Green. In years past, the program has provided the students with the opportunity to be part of a cooking program in class that accentuates growing, preparing and eating nutritional foods. We hope to renew this program for 2023-2024 at Sexsmith.

For many years we have been a Science Celebration school. Each child in Gr. 4-7 chooses a science topic and individually or with a partner does the research and follows the scientific method to learn more about their topic. This project-based learning culminates in an evening of science at our school. The students with the best projects from each class have the privilege of taking their project board to Science World for the District Science Celebration. The students' excitement in sharing their learning and investigating topics done by other students is a wonderful motivator for learning.

Many of our intermediate students are also involved in the Heritage Fair; this was a focus for our grade 7s this past spring. As with the Science Celebration our students do an in-depth research project on a topic that has had a significant impact on our country. The diversity of projects is amazing

and all the students learn from one another's work while gaining insight and knowledge into stories, people, and events that make up Canada's past.

Staff members are extremely committed to teaching and supporting students in all areas of the curriculum. They are passionate about providing relevant and experiential learning opportunities.

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



### Strengths:

- Supportive families
- Students are happy, enjoy coming to school, enthusiastic
- Generally respectful and responsive to adults
- Willing to use learning tools and develop skills
- Able to approach adults for support
- generally demonstrate kindness towards each other, sense of justice, accepting of differences
- General understanding that physical violence is not a means for conflict resolution
- Sense of community and often willing to volunteer to support school programs

### Needs:

- Problem solving skills
- Need support with conflict resolution, sharing, turn taking (primary)
- awareness and emotional regulation
- Social media safety awareness
- Friendship development
- Self-advocacy
- Lack of background knowledge/experiences outside of the home
- Increase opportunities for experiential learning
- connection to adults at school; further development and expression of identity and a sense of belonging at Sexsmith

Following the pandemic, students have not had the depth of experience socially that we might have once expected. Students show us through their everyday behaviours and their challenges, that they need ongoing support for learning about their own social emotional learning journey, about their emotional regulation and sense of psychological safety. As a staff, we discussed this and shared ideas about common goal areas we could continue our work around. Creating a school Sense of Belonging is what our staff has selected as way to link the many areas of needs that our students currently present.

Through class meetings, individual interviews and conversations, surveys and general observations, our staff gain knowledge about student and family sense of Belonging at Sexsmith.

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

Sexsmith Elementary's previous school inquiry was around how social emotional learning (SEL) impacted student success. Since we know that SEL has a direct effect, and because we know that students' use of language around mental health and SEL topics is growing, we want to tap into this opportunity to now link to connectedness and a sense of belonging.

We continue to be informed through data collected via our various lessons and programs including but not limited to:

- various classroom activities (especially those with student voice included such as class meetings, journaling, SEL lessons, etc)

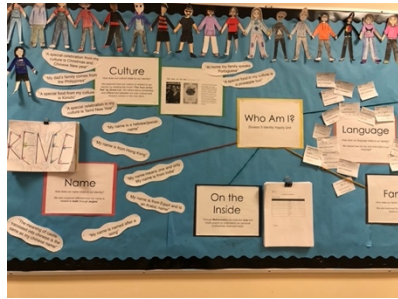
- Roots of Empathy

- MindUp

- mindfulness lessons

- The Zones of Regulation

- Second Step



- WITS problem solving

- Bucket Fillers

- Social Thinking Curriculum (Michelle Garcia Winner)

- Whole Body Listening

- Incredible Flexible You and Superflex

We know that students need to talk about their identity and the way we communicate that to others around us; however, we also notice that this takes time, and psychological safety in order to support student learning. Staff and families too, are on this journey.

Feeling that 'we belong' helps individuals establish roots and feel grounded in community. Feeling at ease and comfortable to share and question freely will allow for a strong sense of belonging.

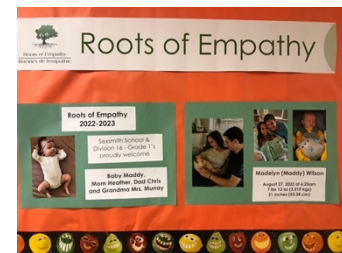
We examined the results of the [MDI \(Middle Years Developmental Instrument\)](#) assessment that grade 6 students responded to this year, as well as the Ministry of Education Student Learning Surveys for students in grades 4 and 7. This data provided a sample of responses that staff can consider as we explore this inquiry about Belonging.

Student Learning Surveys indicated:

- our students know that adults care but they do not always feel connected to us/would come to us as a trusted adult when a problem arises
- our students are being taught about mental health topics and SEL
- our students are somewhat resilient
- our students feel welcome at school but not always that they belong in a group or setting

MDI surveys indicated:

- our students worry about world problems (climate change, deforestation, pollution, species extinction)
- our students are taught about empathy and self esteem



**Both assessment tools indicated:**

- our students generally feel good about themselves and have fairly positive self esteem
- our students need support to know how their actions affect others (positive and negative); support to think of others and develop deep empathy
- especially in grade 4, our students do generally feel a sense of belonging at school, but like other research demonstrates too, this feeling can decline by grades 7 and 8. (Allen, Coates Nov. 2020 UCL Institute of Education)
- our students generally are well supported at home with breakfast/dinner often as a family each day
- despite individual, positive self esteem, students do not always realize that they can make a difference in our community

**We see the need for, and want to support students to:**

- feel comfortable and safe
- feel seen, noticed
- pull together
- care
- feel invested and engaged
- feel a sense of resilience even when faced with depression or anxiety
- share and take on ownership of our school environment
- help each other
- know that when you feel a sense of belonging, you feel motivated
- commit to their own learning journey
- explore their individual identities
- have open exchanges; be inclusive and supportive
- be honest and truthful
- feel supported and appreciated
- understand that our differences when put together, make for a stronger 'total' or overall well-being because of our diversity
- celebrate diversity

From our spring survey to families, we received feedback on this topic as a baseline. There was a small sample size and we will seek other ways to include more families when surveying in Year 2 including student interviewing, paper surveys and digital surveys.

2. Does your family feel a sense of belonging at Sexsmith? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

Yes	15
No	1
Sometimes	5



*What creates a Sense of Belonging at Sexsmith?*



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

With inclusion as a focus, we will strive to make an impact on learners' well-being and ability to thrive. Through school-wide initiatives like the Positive Behaviour Interventions & Supports (PBIS) process, assemblies and other community events, we want to create a safe space for learners. Community and connection is symbiotic and reflective: student-student; staff-staff; student-staff; parent-staff, etc.

We will:

- focus on K-7 learners and do this work in our grade group collaborations
- link our work to the VSB Education Plan goals around achievement, physical and mental well-being, equity, Reconciliation and Belonging
- spend time with the staff and parents/guardians on this sense of belonging as well, because of the interconnectedness mentioned above



*\*wordle created from staff description of a sense of Belonging*

#### 5. INQUIRY QUESTION (FOCUSING)

***How does a “sense of belonging” for students, families and staff facilitate ongoing success and positive learning for all?***

The most important work we can do to improve success for students with this inquiry goal area is to build relationships. We know that achievement is rooted in physical and mental well-being. We believe that focusing on a 'sense of belonging' at school will all us to link all these factors and make for an equitable learning environment. We know this also supports our Reconciliation path.





## 6. WHAT IS OUR PLAN? (PLANNING)

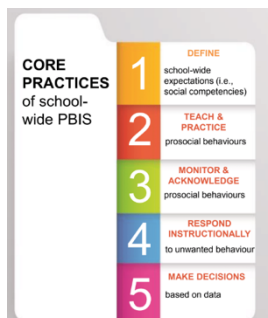
Our staff is committed to a 3 year plan focusing on a Sexsmith School Sense of Belonging. We want to explore the Positive Behaviour Interventions & Supports (PBIS) process with the leadership and support of a PBIS coach/VSB teacher, as well as through our staff meeting discussions and professional development collaborative time.

Bringing together different ideas that centre on one theme such as this, will help us to think deeply about how our influence affects student success. We will focus on:

- teaching resiliency
- using humour and joy; focus on the good
- being positive, proactive, present with students and families
- self management, and teaching the Core Competencies around Thinking/Personal & Self Awareness/Communication
- social emotional learning (SEL)
- connectedness
- physical health and well-being



We know that this is a long journey and that there may not be a definitive 'finish line'; however, we also know that we seek a school plan that reflects the work we see as vital.



Year 1: exploring what a sense of belonging looks like, sounds like, feels like at Sexsmith; begin to examine the PBIS process and assess our current code of conduct to find symmetry and common language

Year 2: work with our school community to develop that common language to become part of our school acronym, branding, code of conduct, behaviour matrices and direct teaching for SEL; follow the next steps of the PBIS process and create baseline data with DESSA or other tool

Year 3: continue this work and focus on celebrations and where to next; what does the data say about our student sense of belonging? How does this relate to other student success areas in academics?

## 7. WHAT SUPPORTS WILL WE NEED? (PLANNING)

SEL traits are naturally developed through the project-based curriculum and focus on the development of students' Core Competencies (CC). As part of communicating student learning to families and the Ministry of Education and Child Care, students self-assess



and reflect on their CC. Social emotional learning and reflection on one's core competencies can support resiliency and confidence building. Sexsmith staff will continue to focus on these areas as we explore assessing with descriptive written feedback and with supporting and mentoring students in their various areas of learning while working to build a strong Sense of Belonging for students, staff and families.



We will need to embrace the notion that “Educating the Mind without educating the Heart, is no education at all.” (Aristotle). We will continue to seek parent/guardian support in addition to that of each other on staff. In each monthly staff committee meeting, we discuss the line item “it takes a village”, seeking to address the many aspects of our SEL village, including:

- thank you/kudos to staff
- support needed for particular families
- safety concerns
- support for the adults as they consistently support students' emotions and needs, openly and with authenticity (to be further explored with Dr. Kim Schonert-Richel – MDI at UBC)

We will continue to seek support from VSB in the way of:

- training for PBIS work and SEL concepts
- training/workshops for differentiation and Universal Design for Learning teaching methods
- individualized consulting and observations for behavior support and guidance for teachers regarding self regulation and emotional regulation
- professional resources and professional development for SEL and assessment, anti-racism and PBIS
- possible DRT support for a future DESSA mini assessment (school wide)
- Ministry student learning surveys
- MDI result analysis --Ask students: “What makes an adult someone important to you?” “Is there one or more trusted adults at school for you?”

We will need the support of our parent/guardian community to give trusted feedback and we will need the support of our colleagues in order to do this vulnerable, important work of building relationships, connection and belonging.

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

- Resilient, empathetic student behaviours
- individualized progress with connectedness, empathy and SEL
- classroom celebrations
- class meetings that reflect positive sharing and social discussion around SEL
- decreased social media conflicts and more engagement from students about the way they want to treat others online

- school climate/culture assessments via staff meetings, individual admin/staff meetings,
- anecdotal student feedback, parent/guardian feedback
- decreasing number of office referrals for behavior
- decreasing number of students requiring individualized supports after being supported with universal SEL strategies and structures
- SSA team feedback regarding SEL specifics in each classroom
- Teacher anecdotes and reflections on SEL lessons
- MDI and Student Learning Survey results
- possible use of the DESSA for baseline in fall 2023 and again in spring 2024
- PBIS matrices and structures for reviewing our process
- seek academic and social emotional assessment data to support our process

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

We will continue to use the ongoing methods of communication happening at Sexsmith and will seek feedback in these methods as well:

- PAC meetings and events for families at school
- newsletters (monthly, via MS Sway; June 2023 newsletter [HERE](#))
- surveys sent via MS Forms
- school-wide and grade group assemblies
- morning PA announcements
- possible signage and quotes/motivating words and code of conduct words around school
- class meetings and journaling for students
- staff meetings and committee meetings; staff use of MS Teams
- SEL and PBIS behaviour reward system and possible bulletin board for public sharing



*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?

Sexsmith Elementary has a number of Indigenous families currently attending, but we seek to connect all our learners to the teachings of Indigenous Peoples. Knowing the Truth and sharing our Reconciliation journey as a collective of staff, students and families is important. We want to share our empathy and allyship in a natural way and this does start performatively with things like Orange Shirt Day, hearing the Coast Salish Anthem at particular assemblies and with everyday inclusion of Indigenous topics in the classroom.

Teachers at Sexsmith reflected this year on what they are learning, unlearning and re-learning about Indigenous worldviews and knowledge. We feel that in order to give this theme and area of professional development true focus, we must become vulnerable and open to sharing and learning from each other. Recently, teachers at Sexsmith collaborated with Indigenous education facilitator, Lori Snyder during our professional development including Indigenous plant teachings, and we reflected on our path to Reconciliation and where we are going next with this work. **Here are some of those reflections:**

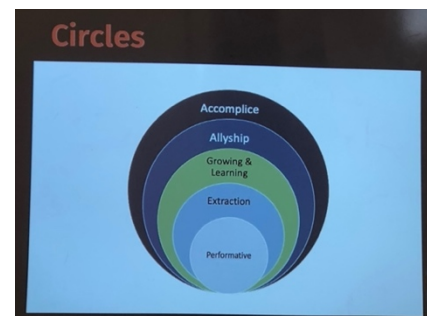
“I must be an open, accepting and inquisitive learner.”

“creating a safe environment for Indigenous and all students is key”

“I would like to explore the Fraser River, visiting both the FRCentre and the Musqueam Centre in order to have a deeper understanding of how local First Nations groups used the Fraser and what it means to them today.”

“(I want to) weave Indigenous education into every curriculum subject area, using every teachable moment to familiarize student with Indigenous ways of learning, reading authentic Indigenous stories, Orange Shirt Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, weaving, storytelling...”

“I want to move to the outer circle of Indigenous Allyship we learned about with Carolyn Roberts during our Pro D; first though I also want to maintain the performative things we do so they stay front of mind like wearing orange and creating land acknowledgements. As we move into the growing and learning circles as staff and adults in this community, we will build our understandings and support for Indigenous Peoples.”



One of the themes that teachers reflected on was the idea that we as educators, must consume Indigenous made content and media. When we approach Indigenous Principles of Learning, we can do so through reading, watching, social media, and participation in workshops and cultural events.

**Some of the important activities, units of study and themes that have been explored in classrooms this year included:**

-reading the novel “Fatty Legs” as a class study, examining the experiences in Residential Schools for Indigenous children



-using the 7 Grandfather Teachings during classroom and buddy lessons

-participating in Orange Shirt day on various levels including classroom lessons and activities around Residential Schools, about why we wear an [Orange Shirt and about Phyllis Webstad](#)

-reading and watching “Raven Tales” and learning about First Nations storytelling

-when studying about Indigenous histories in Canada; learning about colonization and about the genocide experienced by many First Nations

people

-learning about the resources, materials and dwellings used historically by various Indigenous groups in Canada (and Turtle Island in general)

-learning about the sustainability practices of Indigenous peoples

-artist studies of Inuit artist Kenojuak Ashevak, and connection with Andrea Fritz to learn more about Coast Salish Art teaching and style

-Haida, Inuit social studies units; Adrienne Gear unit regarding Culture for language arts

-integration of Sharing Circles and the concept of Circle with our class meetings

-Art and Indigenous perspectives for things like Remembrance Day, including work with VSB admin Robin Roberts about the Indigenous poppy

-integration and holistic learning: Indigenous Principles of Learning into our lessons and units wherever possible



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

*Our evidence includes:*



- feedback from students and families about their support for Indigenous peoples
- feedback from students about their learning around colonization and reconciliation
- feedback from teachers and staff about their own professional development
- artifacts and displays around our school

about their own learning/unlearning/relearning journey; modeling vulnerability and a place to grow from

-feedback from our Ministry of Education and Child Care ‘Student Learning Surveys’ to share that students are being taught about Indigenous Peoples and Culture; the evidence showed an area for growth in teaching about Indigenous languages specifically.

-we will seek further ways to assess student learning about Indigenous Peoples by creating a custom survey for our students, next school year

-when going through both the main library and classroom library resources during spring of 2023, we were able to find and remove texts that are out-dated or offensive in their representation of Indigenous Peoples. We want to celebrate diversity and Indigenous cultures, at the same time as recognizing colonial practices along our Reconciliation journey.

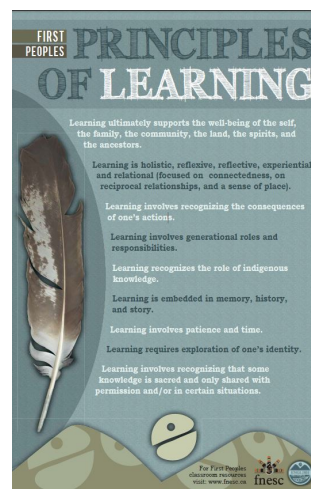
## 12. HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE AND KNOWLEDGE?

We will continue to work towards Reconciliation by focusing on our professional development in order to help our staff team deepen our connection to place and the land, and enhance our true understanding of the Indigenous Principles of Learning.

We will dedicate time during our staff meetings as well as on at least 3 of our professional development days during 2023-2024 to discuss our actions and goals around Reconciliation. We will do this through staff discussions, grade group collaboration meetings and through our own staff team-building activities that will always include links to the Indigenous Principles of Learning.

At Sexsmith, we will continue in classrooms with, and look to include, the following:

- consistent land/territory acknowledgements on the daily announcements, read by students; for 2023-2024 moving to classes writing these acknowledgements as a group to be read on the daily announcements, including their own reflections on the land and the gratitude we feel as a school for this privilege to learn here
- meaningful land/territory acknowledgments at assemblies, events and all public meetings at our school
- outdoor education and place-based learning for students and staff
- continuing to foster meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples such as Spelelih Anjeanette Dawson (Angie), Squamish Weaver who worked with our staff and influenced at least two classes of students this year with their ongoing weaving projects.
- creation and maintenance of a 'Decolonization & Reconciliation' section of our school library, including signage, quotes and artifacts that make a permanent collection of Indigenous resources for both students and staff to access (in progress-started January 2023)
- read aloud and language arts studies on books such as "Fatty Legs", "Barren Grounds", and others written by Indigenous authors
- connect Indigenous weaving practices with our ADST studies
- connect learning about myths and legends in various cultures to the stories of creation and moral teachings present in Coast Salish teachings; use of cedar in the classroom and themes about animals and moral teachings
- incorporating and weaving Indigenous stories and histories into more areas of our curriculum (ie. science, math, language arts)
- weaving together diverse multi-cultural events in our school with Indigenous Principles of learning-name the connections so students understand any possible connections and relationships



- performative* actions such as wearing or decorating with Orange to signify support for Residential School survivors and acts of Reconciliation
- creating accessible moments at various grade levels to learn from Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous educators as visitors to our school
- grade group collaboration to link classroom studies
- use of Musqueam teaching kits from the Museum of Anthropology at UBC
- team teaching with use of the "Secret Path" (Gord Downie & Jeff Lemire)
- continue to discuss texts like "Wayi Wah!" by Jo Chrona as a staff; begin a book club group for staff looking at this reading together, each month
- continued professional development will also be connected to the VSB Indigenous Education Department offerings with workshops from Carolyn Roberts and other educators
- continued professional development around Indigenous drumming and connecting Indigenous cultural practices into music classes
- continue to focus on, and talk with students about, how learning is ongoing and about the power of 'not yet' in order to connect to the Indigenous Principle that "learning involves patience and time"
- the library has and will continue to prioritize the purchasing of books that diversify our collection, emphasizing resources from Indigenous authors.