

2023-2024 - Year 1

Renfrew School Learning Plan

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

Renfrew School, with its majestic view of 22nd Avenue and Rupert Street across to the North Shore mountains, is an established and well-respected school that has been a part of the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood since 1928. We have many families that live outside our neighbourhood school catchment who choose to attend the Renfrew Montessori program or are in our district SELC program. Our enrollment is approximately 470 students divided between our neighbourhood, Montessori and Social Emotional Learning Centre (SELC) students. We have a well-attended Strong Start Program at Renfrew, and an on-site before and after school program facilitated by Collingwood Neighborhood House. Some after-school programming is provided at Renfrew by the Community Links Team (CST). Renfrew is part of the Windermere Family of Schools.

Renfrew is a diverse community that is continuing to work toward meaningful inclusion of all students and staff. Many of our students speak another language at home and are English Language Learners (ELL). We are dedicated to creating a positive and supportive learning environment that values and respects the self-worth and uniqueness of individual students. Students are supported to help them reach their full potential intellectually and in their development of the Core Competencies.

The Renfrew Parent Advisory Council (PAC) supports many opportunities and initiatives at Renfrew. They fund workshops for all students, contribute financially to field trips, classroom funds, performances and special programs like dance. PAC members help at many events, and this year the PAC planned and volunteered at a Halloween Pumpkin Patch for all students as well as provided healthy snacks for students at our Sports Day. Our PAC is actively involved in our school community, holding monthly meetings and a variety of fundraising initiatives.

Since the school re-opened after the pandemic, we have seen increasing parent participation. Parents want to share in their child's learning experience. Many parents join in classroom family reading, open houses, class parties, field trips and other special events. Families of Renfrew students are collaborative and supportive of their children's schooling and of school initiatives.

We continue to invest in updated technology for student use, with the support of the Renfrew PAC. In addition, some students have access to laptops in their classrooms to assist with their participation in classroom activities. Intermediate students have utilized technology in their learning by accessing the school FuturePLAY Lab for STEAM activities (science, technology, engineering, art and math), using laptops and iPads, Smartboards in some classrooms and robotics kits. Our FuturePLAY Lab became fully functional in January 2021 and is a huge asset to the school and student learning. This lab is used by intermediate teachers for their students to engage in a myriad of STEAM related activities. The room is equipped with resources including a laptop cart containing 30 laptops, movable furniture such as tables that can be used as whiteboards, Microbits, Edison Bots and a variety of seating options.

This year is our second year making a Story Studio available to teachers and students. We now have a room dedicated to Story Studio that teachers can use and are investing financially in enhancing our collection of materials. Story Studio is a literacy asset for students as it provides an opportunity for them to approach storytelling in a kinesthetic way, which for many students is reflective of how they learn best.

Renfrew offers students the opportunity to take on many service and leadership roles and provides access to extra-curricular activities in sports such as Track and Field, Cross Country, badminton and volleyball. Our students are responsible and keen to be involved in initiatives. We have a high level of participation in our Inclusion Club driving many student initiatives in addition to initiatives that are led by students through Student Council. There is excellent student engagement in teacher-sponsored opportunities such as Talent Shows and fundraising bake sales. Intermediate students can be counted on to positively contribute to the school and greater community through their participation in service and other leadership opportunities. In their learning, students report enjoying being at school and they understand and follow our school 'Circle of Courage' Code of Conduct, with a focus on taking care of themselves, each other and the community.

Indigenous First Peoples Principles of Learning are a foundation at Renfrew. This learning is part of our everyday approaches and can be seen in our emphasis on individual acts of reconciliation. Anti-racist education, activities and approaches are interwoven with teaching and planning. Students lead Indigenous Land Acknowledgments at school gatherings. We have 16 drums that were created by students during a drum-making workshop taught by Indigenous Education staff, that are used at numerous events and gatherings. We have a ceremonial 'Passing of the Drums' in which intermediate students gift the use of these drums to younger students. As part of this foundation, outdoor education is an important area of focus for students at Renfrew, and teachers use our school grounds, school garden, surrounding green spaces and field studies opportunities to connect and ground students to the land.

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

(SCANNING)

Renfrew students have shared interests including soccer, art, anime, coding, and sports in general. They are artistic and creative and work well in groups showing that they are developing skills that will serve them well in the future. Renfrew students are kind, inclusive and helpful.

In Term 1 of 2022, analysis of Communicating Student Learning Data in relation to English language arts reveals that most of our students are in the Developing to Applying range in the Proficiency Scales. About 13% of Renfrew students were in the Beginning/Developing and below proficiency level, while about 38% were in the Applying/Extending and Extending range. Renfrew students work hard on tasks presented to them and can apply decoding skills for reading.

With the disruption of learning during the past two years due to Covid-19, more students are struggling with academics such as reading comprehension, written output and math skills. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills, along with confidence with sharing their ideas with one another and public speaking are areas requiring additional support at Renfrew. Some students are struggling with written output and need to express their learning in a variety of ways. Many students have trouble going deeper into an issue (analyzing, inferring, etc.) and answering higher level analytical or synthesis types of questions and thinking about their reading in a meaningful way.

For all students, we continue to work at expanding vocabulary and to look for opportunities to communicate with adults and peers in a variety of settings, both orally and in written form. We are

wanting to deepen students' understanding of language and their background knowledge by providing more hands-on experiences and learning opportunities that take them outside of the classroom and that allow them to engage in inquiry-based learning.

In mathematics, analysis of Term 1 2022 Communicating Student Learning Data indicates that 64% of Renfrew students are at the applying and above proficiency level.

In the last year, we have seen a rise in the number of new families joining us from other countries during the school year. With many families new to Canada, we have an increased need for language support, translation services, resources for their children and their family and community connections. We are working on finding access points for families to participate in their child's learning in a positive and culturally meaningful way.

As is becoming more common across the city, we have a rising number of families that are struggling with food and housing insecurity and needing support to access clothing, winter, spring and summer camps and extracurricular activities and school fees. We strive to support families sensitively in whatever way we can.

Students' use of social media outside of school time continues to impact peer relationships at school. This is an area that requires more intervention than in previous years. Teaching students how to use technology responsibly and protect their online safety and privacy, and learning healthy boundaries regarding technology are areas needing continued focus.

During the COVID pandemic, school, peer interaction, community and family connections were disrupted. As a staff we are noticing that students struggle more with how to navigate conflict with one another and how to manage their nervous systems overall. Students have a more difficult time with self-regulation, both in the classroom and during unstructured time. Resiliency and problem-solving in peer relationships are challenging for many students. Support for mental well-being for students at school are more in demand than ever before.

We have seen a rise in office referrals for students who are struggling with peer conflict during unstructured time and with following direction in the classroom. Students arriving late at school has become more common. Referrals for social skills and mental health support from the counsellor and Youth and Family Worker have risen.

The results from the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) of Grade 4 students (2018/2019), Grade 7 students (2021/2022) and Grade 6 students (2022/2023), show many areas where Renfrew students are doing well (connections to adults at school, out of school activities, responsible decision making). These measures also indicate areas needing renewed focus.

This year, students reported the declining feelings of peer belonging. In the MDI, peer belonging measures children's feelings of belonging to a social group. e.g, "when I am with other kids my age, I feel like I belong." In 2018/2019, the measure indicated Grade 4 students feeling a high amount of peer belonging at 73%, in 2021/2022, this dropped to 64% of Grade 7s and this year indicated only 52% of Grade 6s feel a high degree of peer belonging.

We see similar declines in students' feelings of belonging at school. Belonging is the degree to which children feel connected and valued at their school. e.g, 'I feel like I am important at this school.' In 2018/2019, 75% of Grade 4 students indicated a high degree of belonging. In 2021/2022, only 50% of Grade 7s felt that way, compared to 47% of Grade 6s in 2022/2023.

From the MDI, 'We know that 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 (Wang & Degol, 2016).'

From the Renfrew student survey that was administered to all students in September 2022, we saw that 64% agreed that their teacher cares about them, and 56% felt that their peers care about them. We will have May 2023 results shortly and hope to see an increase in both of those numbers. We know that 'For younger children during elementary and middle school years, a nurturing and caring relationship with a classroom teacher is vital. Connections with warm and accepting teachers enhance emotional well-being, increase motivation, engagement and success in school for children in early adolescence.' (2023 MDI)

Students have told us in Inclusion Club and Student Council, through class meetings and initiatives, that they want more opportunities to participate in extra-curricular clubs and opportunities to come together with peers outside of their classroom. They are seeking to celebrate together, share what they know and connect more with each other.

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

(SCANNING)

- Middle Years Development Instrument – MDI – yearly information from Grades 4, 6 and 7 – UBC and VSB
- Renfrew-developed belonging survey administered to all students in September 2022 and May 2023
- Student Learning Survey – Ministry of Education
- Initiatives and conversations brought forth by students in class meetings, Inclusion Club, Student Council, Peer Helper meetings, basketball and soccer player meetings etc.
- Power BI information relating to enrollment and academic outcomes
- Communicating Student Learning (CSL) report cards
- CELI (early literacy) school data
- Conversations with parents at PAC meetings, school events, parent conferences

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

As a school community, we recognize that students are not feeling as connected at school as we would like. In addition, many students are struggling with some areas of social-emotional development. We have decided to focus on belonging as our school goal as we know that without this strong foundation, many students will not be able to reach their full potential. This focus will result in a stronger school community, which is of benefit to all – students, families, and staff.

The first goal of the Education Plan is to improve student achievement, physical and mental well-being, and belonging, which aligns with our focus. We are currently collecting a second set of data on student belonging and will use these results to inform our decisions moving forward. We will compare the responses of our student population from September 2022 to May 2023, as well as MDI results, to see how students' sense of belonging have changed. Based on these results, we will be able to tailor activities, programs, initiatives in order to continue improving the school environment to ensure that they continue to be safe, caring, welcoming and inclusive places for our students and families. In addition, these results will allow us to understand students' and families' needs to help us support them better.

Focusing on belonging also aligns well with the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement as one of its guiding principles states that “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.” (AEEA) By increasing a student’s sense of belonging, we are strengthening their relationship with staff, peers and the school in general. This will ideally foster a safe environment with a love of learning, that will carry students forward into the future.

The Core Competencies guide our practice by supporting the Big Ideas and Curricular Competencies. They are the overriding proficiencies that are embedded within the curriculum and help students delve deeper into the finer details of the curriculum. How students communicate, think and connect with self and others on a personal and social level are important foundations for learning and for life. While the development of the Core Competencies begins at home before school begins, we continue to foster students’ ability to communicate and collaborate, think creatively, critically and reflectively, as well as develop a personal and social awareness and responsibility and a positive personal and cultural identity. Core Competencies are closely tied to building a sense of belonging. When students self-reflect on the development of their Core Competencies, they take ownership of their learning and are able to identify strengths as well as stretches. By understanding where they are and where they need to go, this gives students a direct connection to their own learning and in discussion with peers, teachers and families, students will bridge the gap between home and school, creating a stronger sense of relevance and belonging at school.

5. INQUIRY QUESTION (FOCUSING)

How can the Renfrew school community continue to build a more inclusive and supportive school environment that helps students feel connected and have a sense of belonging at school?

6. WHAT IS OUR PLAN? (PLANNING)

Year 1:

- Increase family connections to the school; Meet the Teacher Night, Winter Breakfast, open-houses, celebrations of learning, performances, assemblies
- Opportunities for school-wide and combined class learning and events
- Open houses for classes to learn from one another
- Student-led assemblies/presentations
- Student planned and led theme days
- School wide fitness – reintroduce Fitness Fridays to the Renfrew community where students participate in weekly fitness sessions
- Class meetings

- Explicit instruction around prosocial skills, social emotional skills, inclusion, community building in class and larger school - for example, assemblies, Open Parachute Lessons, agendas at Inclusion Club and Student Council
- Explicit instruction in classes about how to regulate emotions and when to seek additional help for mental health
- Reviewing and teaching Code of Conduct for all students at the beginning of the year and throughout the year
- Restorative discipline practices using the Renfrew Code of Conduct
- practice in classes identifying emotions for example, visuals, mood meter
- use of Sensory Room and body breaks for students
- targeted groups for students struggling with pro-social skills

7. WHAT SUPPORTS WILL WE NEED? (PLANNING)

New Areas of Learning:

- -SEL teaching during assemblies to build community (student-led)
- -teachers work together to learn and develop SEL lessons, school-wide events etc.
- -mental health toolkits for students (district provided)
- -trauma-informed professional development
- -Open Parachute lessons (social emotional learning and mental health) for teachers to use with students
- -growing our library collection to reflect the diversity of experience within the Renfrew community

New areas of learning, as in the examples above, provide Renfrew teachers and support workers with opportunities for continual professional growth. Giving staff the tools and resources to support our most vulnerable learners will increase students' connection to learning as well as to the people who work with them in this space. Offering a safe environment where they know they have a soft place to land and adults who will listen and help is how we can continue to build on that sense of belonging.

“The Personal and Social 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.” (<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/>)

Teaching students to reflect on their personal and social competency will enable them to identify strengths and stretches in their learning, as well as teach them to understand more about themselves as a learner. This will give them a greater sense of ownership of their learning and help them set goals as well as identify the steps needed to achieve these goals. A student's sense of belonging comes from knowing that they have a safe place to learn and that there are adults in the building who care about and support them. By having conversations about their learning and making these deeper connections with teachers and adults, this will also create bonds that will increase one's sense of belonging.

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

- MDI data for baseline data
- Data from office referrals
- Data from School Based Team, counsellor and Youth and Family Worker referrals
- Information from class reviews
- Conversations with students in classes and at club meetings
- Standing item on School Committee Meeting Agenda to discuss progress, concerns and initiatives
- Staff Meetings that focus on data, outcomes and approaches

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

- Parents/Guardians/Community: PAC meetings, newsletters, open houses, conferences, Meet the Teacher Night
- Students: speaking about school goals directly to students; seeking input and feedback from students in Student Council, Inclusion Club, in class meetings and at assemblies
- Point of discussion at staff meetings, Staff Committee Meetings (SCM), intermediate, primary, resource and student support worker meetings



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?

- Many staff have participated in professional development around the use of authentic Indigenous resources
- Professional development in January 2023 in which Renfrew staff examined where we are, where we want to go and how we are going to get there in terms of Indigenous education
- Wahi Wah book club for staff
- Indigenous education as a standing item at staff meetings; this is a monthly opportunity for staff to share what they are doing in their classrooms in order to build capacity and connections for all staff
- Shared resources channel for staff – (Teams)
- School-wide events – Indigenous People’s Day; Orange Shirt Day; Missing and Murdered Women, Girls and Two-Spirit people etc.
- Student-written, student-led, Indigenous land acknowledgements that include commitments to individual acts of reconciliation at every assembly and school gathering
- Student-led drumming and Coast Salish Anthem to begin assemblies and gatherings
- Students leading acknowledgements and drumming for community events such as Winter Breakfast and Welcome to Kindergarten
- Passing of the Drum Ceremony – Indigenous-led, senior students passing the drums to Grade 3 students
- Inviting Indigenous performers and storytellers to Renfrew. For example, this year, Visions of Turtle Island (Tribal Vision Dance)

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

- Careful consideration and critical examination before purchasing resources pertaining to Indigenous education – fiction and nonfiction
- Enhanced representation of Indigenous authors in the Renfrew school library
- Class displays highlighting new knowledge learned in class by students
- Students who understand what reconciliation is and why it is important
- Students who understand two-eyed seeing and are learning how Canadian history has omitted the voice of the original peoples
- Many classes participating deeply in outdoor education and the importance of the land – to our futures, and to the Indigenous people who have, and continue to care for the land
- Many classes participated in and learned about salmon in the salmon release program; Indigenous content embedded in this learning; at the culmination of the learning, we held an assembly for all primary classes and families to come together to see the highlights of what was learned
- School garden and outdoor education opportunities for students to learn about the land, and local Indigenous history
- Classes learning some local Indigenous words
- Use of Museum of Anthropology kits in classrooms to enhance student understanding
- Indigenous worldviews are woven into teaching approaches, not stand-alone lessons or ‘events’
- Indigenous land acknowledgement at PAC meetings

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

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- Staff to continue to seek out local Indigenous protocols to inform our work. For example, following protocols when inviting Elders to visit the school or teaching an art lesson about an Indigenous artist
- We have applied for a grant to create 15 more drums to increase our collection of drums from 16 to 31, which will allow all students in a class to drum at the same time
- Annual passing of the drum ceremony: Grade 7 students ‘pass’ the drums to younger students at Renfrew
- Continuing to seek out and invite Indigenous storytellers and performers to Renfrew
- Ongoing effort to make our learning around Indigenous education and reconciliation at Renfrew visible – displays, assemblies, open houses
- Ongoing financial commitment to enhancing our library collection of Indigenous authors as well as materials to be used by classes – for example, novel sets, textbooks etc.
- Time set aside at monthly staff meetings to share ideas and approaches Indigenous ideas/ways of learning into subject areas including math, science and social studies
- Staff continuing to seek out professional development opportunities, book clubs etc.
- We are in the process of applying for an Artists in the Classroom grant that would allow us to have an Indigenous artist support Renfrew students in creating permanent, visible Indigenous art within our school