



Vancouver School District

School Plan for Cunningham Elementary

Year 3 (2021) of 3 Year Plan, 2020- 2021

1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY:

Cunningham Elementary School was first opened in 1959 as an annex to Norquay Main School and was named Norquay School Annex. After the building was expanded to meet the growing population, it was officially reopened in November 1966 and named G.T. Cunningham Elementary School. George T. Cunningham (1889 – 1965) was a lifelong resident and businessman of Vancouver who was honoured for his philanthropy, public service, and dedication to education. His family continues to volunteer and be active in the school community.

The Cunningham site is also home to Carleton Elementary school, which experienced a fire in 2016. The Cunningham and Carleton students, staff and parent community are working as a single school for organizational purposes. Combined, there are approximately 400 students enrolled.

Many of our students come from working families that have a wide range of educational backgrounds and income levels. Most families have both parents working outside the home. Although many of our students are born in Canada, English is often not the dominant language at home and childcare is often provided by non-English speaking grandparents. Our student population has a variety of cultural backgrounds originating in many different countries. Approximately ninety percent of our student population identifies an additional language, other than English, spoken at home. Of the 25 languages spoken in our school community, 30% is Chinese speaking, 30% English, and 12% Vietnamese. Approximately 51% of our students have English Language Learner (ELL) designations and are receiving additional English language support. We are a multi-cultural school where diversity is valued.

The Cunningham site home to two District CORE programs. Approximately, 7% of the students have Special Education designations. Support is provided to these students a variety of ways, including School and Student Support Worker support and resource time.

Our school supports food insecure students with a box lunch from the Food4School program and the Backpack Buddies program. KidsSafe provides once a week after school and break time programming for vulnerable students. We are also supported with a Youth and Family Worker from the Community Schools Team.

To encourage social and emotional growth, we encourage our students to participate in, and contribute to, all aspects of school life. For our primary students, this means helping around the classroom and participating in the many events held throughout the school year. For our intermediate students, we provide leadership opportunities through sports teams, service clubs, and special-interest clubs. As part of the Gladstone Family of Schools, we also offer after-school Community Links Team extra-curricular programs.

Students know and follow our school's Code of Conduct and our motto, Cunningham/Carleton CARES: Considerate, Accepting, Responsible and Respectful, Enthusiastic, and Safe. Our Code of Conduct

presents information in a child-friendly format and clearly outlines behaviour expectations, including online and out-of-school behaviour that can impact the learning environment at school.

Our vision of success is that our students will become more confident, independent and resilient learners as they navigate through school and beyond. Experiential learning through inquiry-based projects and learning outside of the classroom and communicating this learning through a variety of ways, using technology to personalize their learning experiences at school, and that they will have a greater understanding, knowledge, and appreciation of Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures, and contributions.

2. WHAT DID WE SEE?

Students are beginning to develop a curiosity for their learning. They are increasing their level of independence and building their confidence while taking ownership for their learning journeys. Co-Vid restrictions have put on hold some of the experiential learning opportunities planned for this school year but through creativity, innovation and technology students at the school were still able to participate in Arts Umbrella programs, bike programs, take neighbourhood walks, design challenges and modified play days. We were fortunate to have several artists at our school, painting murals and carving a school House Post which allowed students to participate in Co-Vid safe whole community projects.

3. WERE WE SUCCESSFUL?

The school inquiry question was: Does providing more experiential learning opportunities result in increased resiliency, curiosity, creativity, and independence? It has been a difficult year to measure success with respect to experiential learning opportunities but we have made a conscientious effort at the school level to provide more experiential learning experiences on the school site.

One class has chosen to take morning walks around the school field before entering the school to start their day. The teacher uses this time to connect with each child while allowing the children a chance to connect with each other. The teacher uses the information gleaned from these walks to guide their practice and set the students up for a successful day. Another class takes the students to a neighbourhood park to play kick ball regularly.

We have had a carver at our school, carving a Welcome Post and a visual artist painting murals. Students have had the opportunity to help with the projects, speak with the artists and learn from them.

Although confined to the Co-Vid health regulations, our staff has been finding ways to engage the students in the community and help them to develop connections to their learning.

3. HOW HAVE WE SHARED?

We have shared our experiences with the community via PAC meetings, Twitter and weekly eNews. We have a comprehensive and developed school Microsoft Teams site with channels for staff sharing. Each of our classrooms also have a Teams site where students can communicate with their peers and teachers. We are looking to expand our involvement with community partners next year.

4. WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

We have seen an increase in the levels of anxiety in our students over the past year. As a result, we are planning a new multi-year goal which will serve to help build social emotional learning capacity in our students. Our inquiry question will be, “Does improving our physical environment, allowing for more outside time, and direct teaching of SEL techniques reduce the anxiety levels of our students?”

We will be examining how space and our physical environment affect our student and staff social emotional well being. We will be exploring more outside time and ways to bring the outdoors in – more natural light, plants, working with natural products. Akin to the daylighting streams project happening in Vancouver, we will begin to daylight classrooms and our school.

We will explicitly teach students techniques to develop their social emotional capacity. As a staff, we are committing to participate in four workshops over two years hosted by the Dalai Lama Centre for Peace and Education. The science based Heart-Mind Well-Being Framework introduces participants to the five positive human qualities that promote Heart-Mind well-being: secure and calm, alert and engaged, gets along with others, compassionate and kind and solves problems peacefully. We will create lessons, host assemblies and organize school activities using the HMWB framework.



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

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

Collectively we have worked on incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing into all facets of our school. From indigenous acknowledgments to all school wide functions to incorporating ways of knowing into our lessons. Our Indigenous Enhancement Worker helps support classes with lessons and works with small groups of students.

We had the pleasure of having a Welcome Pole carved on-site in our courtyard by a Squamish nation artist. The students were able to learn about the artist, the meaning of the pole and the history of carving from the artist. The pole will be raised in our Peace Garden overlooking the new outdoor classroom.

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

We will continue to incorporate, promote and celebrate indigenous culture in our school community. We will listen to the needs of our indigenous parents and take action on their specific concerns. We will increase our collection of indigenous literature, and art. Next year, our hope is to provide our students with out of school opportunities for learning.