



Vancouver School District

School Plan for Tyee Elementary School

Year 3 (2020 - 21) of 3 Year Plan, 2017 - 2020

"Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, current school plans have been carried forward to the 2021/22 school year."

General School Story:

Tyee is an active learning community of staff, students and parents working together to ensure an engaging, supportive Montessori education in a respectful and emotionally safe learning environment for students. As a single track Montessori School guided by the philosophy of Maria Montessori, Tyee is a unique Choice Program in Vancouver. Students throughout the Vancouver School District may apply to Tyee beginning in kindergarten through an application to the Vancouver Board of Education choice schools lottery system. The computer application lottery determines those placed into kindergarten. Parents may also choose to place their children's names on the existing waitlist at any grade level by completing an application of intent at the school.

There are currently 185 – 190 students in 8 divisions enrolled at Tyee. Students are organized into Primary 1, 2, 3 and Intermediate 4, 5, 6 multi-aged classes, with students in Kindergarten and Grade 7 in dedicated grades. Parents are highly involved in the school to support the success of the Montessori program through PAC fundraising, community-building events and parent education, as well as by offering their expertise at the school and classroom levels.

Teachers are committed to providing a rich learning environment for all students based on Montessori principles and on fulfilling the expectations of the Ministry of Education curriculum. Teachers collaborate to ensure that the Montessori philosophy underlies all educational decisions at Tyee. The Montessori approach supports continuous progress as children work on personal goals and academic challenges. Students learn to work independently, in small groups, and as a member of the class. Resource and SSA support is available to those who require extra academic and social emotional support. Personalized learning, individual project based learning, and critical and creative thinking, which are crucial components of the Revised Curriculum, have always been tenets of Tyee's philosophy.

Tyee staff enhance student learning through a variety of programs such as environmental sustainable living, food production, and supporting healthy lifestyles at a deeper level through the school garden. Entrepreneurial skills are fostered as students either make or grow items to sell at the Tyee pocket markets. Active living and outdoor education introduce students to a variety of experiences and life skills such as snowshoeing and skating. Each Fall, Grade 7 students experience outdoor education through Sea to Sky Outdoor School on Gambier Island. Gymnastics, tennis or badminton, Dance, Art, Writing and Science residencies and other enrichment opportunities are provided throughout the year

- Review inquiry question and where the need for this goal came from (evidence, etc.)

Our Inquiry Question was: 'How can we support our learners in the area of written output, both from a practical (printing and handwriting instruction) and engagement (inspiration to write) perspective? This question arose from Foundation Skills Assessment results, Report Card marks and from staff's persistent and ongoing conversations and concerns about the writing challenges experienced by some of our most vulnerable students. The specifics ranged from students' lack of fine motor ability and keyboarding skills, to work avoidance in the area of written work leading to lack of practice and skill building, to difficulty with creative output. Our plan was to provide specific, focused writing instruction and sufficient practice time for students to develop and improve their practical writing skills, combined with many classroom and whole school opportunities to write.

2A. WHAT DID WE SEE?

- Describe the overall strengths as well as the needs of the learners.
- What is going on for them?

Our students come from many different backgrounds, the commonality being that their families have chosen an alternative Montessori program. Our typical learner tends to be curious, creative, enthusiastic and quite independent. Because of the choice provided in the Montessori curriculum, our students are used to planning their own work cycles and are encouraged to be critical and creative problem solvers who take ownership of their own learning.

Many of our students in both Primary and Intermediate grades have written output challenges and even as we addressed this through our school goal these past two years, we have continued to see evidence of their struggle. Because of our writing goal, however, we were more focused on finding ways to provide specific skill-based instruction, scheduled daily in-class writing time and more specific one-on-one support for those students who needed a scribe, a guide or technological support.

We continued to observe the connection between students' social emotional state, such as anxiety or dysregulation, and their success academically, especially with written output.

2B. WHAT DO WE NEED TO RE-ADJUST?

- Outline any changes or adaptations from previous plan. Be sure to include rationale for why these changes should be made and how you believe that it will help.

We are committed to our 3-year writing goal, as we have seen that our united whole school focus on writing, and particularly our writing residency, our publication of 'Voices of Tyee' and Celebration of Learning which showcases all of our students' writing, has led to improved writing outcomes. This year, year 2, we were determined to have a Writer in Residence culminating in a whole school publication. We wrote an Artist in Classrooms grant last May and resubmitted it in the Fall, combining it with an Indigenous story telling component. Unfortunately, we did not get the grant, possibly as we had received two the previous year. However, both staff and parents were so determined that we have a Writer in Residence, that PAC agreed to fund a shortened residency of four sessions for each class. This has been an invaluable experience for teachers and students, and a highlight of our focus on writing. Next year, for year 3 of our goal, as well as continuing with much of what we have been doing to support our writing goal, we would like to incorporate more whole school Social Emotional Learning practices in a formal way, as we see the connection between self regulation and academic success.

1. WHAT IS YOUR NEW PLAN?

- Explain plan (i.e. specific activities for year 2) and any changes from previous plans

Year 2:

- Our Writer in Residence, Lori Sherritt-Fleming, will provide four sessions for each class, using drama as a springboard to writing. Teachers will meet with Lori to plan the sessions which will be based on this year's Montessori 'Great Story', 'The Basic Needs of Humans'. Each class will chose a specific topic related to The Basic Needs of Humans (Human Rights, Rights of the Child, Indigenous culture, Virtues, Myths of Creation, and Personal Artifacts, for example), and a genre (poetry, letters, myths, short fiction, for example). Every student will have a piece of writing published in an anthology. Students will present their work at a Celebration of Learning/Book Launch.
- Teachers have applied for and received funding for a Teacher Inquiry/Book Study "What Every Writer Needs" by Ralph Fletcher, "Sparks in the Dark" by Todd Nesloney and Travis Crowder, and "A Teacher's Guide to Writing Conferences" by Carl Anderson, which are informing their practice.
- Teachers are using the "Traits of Writing" crates.
- Our Communicating Student Learning sessions have had a focus on literacy, with new ideas which teachers are bringing back to the classroom.
- Teachers are aware of areas of challenge for their students at the various grade levels. These include: getting ideas and getting started on a writing assignment; paragraph and essay structures; revision and editing; non-fiction writing, etc.
- Teaching writing strategies of Powerful Writers; teaching specific lessons on how to write, such as adding detail, varying sentence structure, etc.
- The Kindergarten teacher has new Montessori literacy materials, and runs a 'Writing Workshop' every day.
- The Teacher Librarian is working with gifted and strong writers in enrichment groups and entering them in poetry competitions (all our entrants were published!)
- Author visit and writing lesson for writing groups; author visits for Ready Set Learn and Welcome to Kindergarten.
- Field trip to Writer's Festival at Granville Island with Writers' Group.
- Continue to teach and explore technological forms of writing and communication, such as powerpoints, documentaries, blogs, vlogs, Fresh Grade, writing emails, etc.
- Continue to work on delivering solid, direct teaching instruction of writing and revising skills; incorporation of writing conferences as a way to provide immediate and personalized feedback.

2. WHAT SUPPORTS WILL WE NEED?

- Review and revise support plans for this year
 - Teacher Inquiry money for book study groups on Writing.
 - PAC money for Writer in Residence (\$3,150.00).
 - Resource support will work in tandem with classroom teachers to support students who are most in need of extra writing support.
 - The Kindergarten teacher is implementing a printing program as well as Writing Workshop daily. She has ordered 'Handwriting Without Tears' to use next year. This strong start in early literacy will support all students and teachers.
 - Staff Meeting time will be dedicated to discuss and review the goal throughout the year.

3. HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE SUCCESSFUL?

- Revise (If necessary) or repeat indicators from previous plan
 - Report card marks from 2018-19: marks from January report cards and estimated June report marks (based on work to date and a cold write) show a gain for all students, which in some cases is fairly substantial. No student has gone down since the January reporting period.
 - FSA scores: Grade 7 – 24 'On Track' and 2 'Extending'; Grade 4 – 21/21 who wrote were 'On Track'. This is an improvement from 2017-18.
 - Teacher observations: Teachers note improvement overall, but also find that their good writers get better, while struggling writers continue to struggle.
 - Parent comments and observations: Parents have shared positive feedback about their children who are passionate about writing. What we see is that our strong writers are being given many opportunities to write, are being encouraged and showcased through publications (Newsletter, anthology, poetry competitions, Challenge Programs, etc.) and are thriving. Younger and less proficient writers are reported as having a greater interest in writing, including the habit of writing for pleasure and interest at home. "So glad the school is working on writing!" reported one parent. "Both of my children loved having Lori in to work on writing; they are much more ready to write larger pieces of writing," said another.
 - Teacher Inquiry Book Clubs on Writing have led to sharing of effective ways to teach writing.

4. HOW WILL WE SHARE?

- How will we make parents, students and other members of the community aware and involved?
 - Writing posted on bulletin boards throughout the year (writing is more prevalent in our halls than artwork).
 - Student writing on the Virtues Project read daily over the PA after lunch.
 - Student writing published every month in the newsletter
 - Some classes have blogs or use FreshGrade, which are excellent venues to share student writing.
 - 'Voices of Tyee', our publication which is a result of our Writing Residency, will be the culmination of our focus on writing; every student will have a piece of writing published, and will receive a book.
 - Our 'Celebration of Learning/Book Launch' on May 30th will showcase oral presentations of student writing. Family groups of students from Kindergarten to grade 7 will present their work or a selected part of their writing to a parent audience in eight classrooms. This authentic experience will highlight for students the real purpose of writing.



District-wide Aboriginal Goal: To increase knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions among all students.

5. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE ABORIGINAL LEARNERS IN OUR SCHOOL?

- Include numbers of students, grade levels, etc.

4 students – 2 in grade 7, 1 in grade 6 and 1 in grade 4.

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

- List examples of pro-d, special events, speakers, curricular integration, routines and customs, etc.
 - Tyee has a strong culture and a long tradition of valuing Indigenous teachings and weaving them throughout the curriculum. Last year we had two drum-making sessions with Tyee and District staff and had a spectacular Drum Awakening Ceremony on April 30, 2018 with VSB District staff and Elders in attendance, followed by a potluck feast. This was a spectacular event, though not one that will occur annually.
 - Every assembly at Tyee is begun with an acknowledgement that 'We live, work, play and learn on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish nations (Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh)'. A Primary 1, 2, 3 class usually leads the acknowledgement, but now the whole school population participates – it is very moving to hear 200 voices in respectful unison repeating the acknowledgement with hands cupped to symbolize smoke going up to the creator. Our students have discussed the importance and meaning of the acknowledgement in their classes.
 - Drumming Circle with 20 student drummers, staff and Chaz from the VSB take place twice monthly. Students practice drumming, talk about the importance of their drums, and learn the protocol of the drums – treating them like they are living things; never putting the drum face down; everyone in the circle is an equal. Although the teacher who leads the drumming circle is retiring next year, she has set in place the mechanism for the drumming circle to continue.
 - Tyee celebrated 'Orange Shirt Day' with a high level of participation.
 - A teacher accompanied one of our grade 7 students to the Grade 7 Moving Forward Celebration.
 - Tyee drummers have been practicing The 'Coast Salish Anthem' (Chief Dan George's prayer) for the VSB Pole Ceremony where they will be among 1001 drummers!
 - We had a First Nations performance: 'How Raven Stole the Sun' and have booked one for next year.
 - Our library collection of First Nations books as well as our Resource and Early Reader collections in classrooms continue to be expanded. This year our Teacher Librarian culled our First Nations collection, only keeping books that followed the criteria of being books published by a First Nations publishing house written by an Indigenous author or with clear permission to tell the story.
 - Grade seven outdoor camp has an Indigenous component.
 - We have an Indigenous plant section in our school garden and there are two 'plant walks' scheduled for June which will highlight the traditional and medicinal uses of native plants.
 - Intermediate classes have studied the effects of Residential Schools with classes through a variety of ways, including graphic novels.
 - Primary and Intermediate classes have tied this year's Montessori focus of the Fundamental Needs of Humans to the historical and contemporary fundamental needs of First Nations Peoples.
 - An Intermediate class has read and compared First Nations legends with myths.
 - An Intermediate class tied their Science unit on ocean life into the importance of sea life to Indigenous people.
 - A Primary class did animal research on animals native to BC which were important to First Nations People. They wrote poetry and did art projects about these spirit animals.
 - A Primary class did a research project on the Coast Salish people and their fundamental needs.
 - A Primary class raised salmonoids in the classroom, released them in Beaver Lake, and studied the life cycle and the importance of salmon to Indigenous people.
 - Our music listening program has an Indigenous music focus during Indigenous week in June which highlights traditional and modern Indigenous music.
 - Teachers have attended the after school Indigenous Pro-D sessions; three staff members have taken the Ed eX Reconciliation Through Education.

7. WHAT WILL WE CONTINUE TO DO IN THIS AREA?

- List continuing and new initiatives

- We will continue most, if not all of the above activities as they have become part of our annual activities.
- Teachers will continue to weave Indigenous education into the curriculum.
- Teachers will continue to implement the First People’s Principles of Learning in teaching and planning.
- Future Pro-D plans include attending the Indigenous Math Conference at UBC.
- We are already discussing the Indigenous Focus Pro-D Day on May 15th next year.
- We are thinking about doing a school-wide project/residency on Art and Botany with an Indigenous plants focus.

8. HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE ARE BEING SUCCESSFUL IN THIS AREA?

- Include both data-driven and anecdotal examples
- Give opportunities for student, staff and parent voice

- Almost 100% of our students participate in the Indigenous acknowledgement, up from an estimated 25% last year.
- All classes have incorporated Indigenous education into the curriculum in a deep and meaningful way – all of the units of study were unique.
- Our library of First Nations books has increased every year and the quality of the books is excellent – these are titles the teachers have selected based on knowledge and study.
- Classroom and resource room collections of First Nations books were increased this year, allowing students the ease of having a new, attractive First Nations book to choose during reading time in class.