



1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY

University Hill Elementary School is a kindergarten to grade 7 school with a population of 360 students, located in the Pacific Spirit Park, near Acadia Beach and the University of British Columbia. We are happy to work, learn and play on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. After being a kindergarten to grade 5 school, in September 2020, we completed our transition back to a kindergarten to grade 7 school.

The student population is composed of permanent residents in the catchment, as well as children of UBC employees, students, and visiting professors. We also have students coming to Vancouver with their families to learn English. Our current student population includes 165 funded English language learners, 11 International students, and 5 Indigenous students. Many of our students are multi-lingual and our school population has 33 different home languages. The cultural diversity of the school lends itself to meaningful, cultural learning.

Generally, our students have well developed background knowledge and are familiar with adult negotiated conversations and ask lots of questions. Parents are actively involved in the education of their children and have high expectations for academic achievement.

Our Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is very active with an elected executive that is committed to providing amazing opportunities for students. During COVID, they helped fund and support outdoor learning opportunities for students with direct input into designing our new outdoor learning space. During a typical year, the PAC helps facilitate after school activities like basketball, chess, Lego Robotics, yoga, and various other clubs. The PAC also holds parent education sessions on various pertinent topics, and the PAC has spearheaded several events, such as a Multicultural Fair and an Arts Festival. During a non-COVID year, volunteers are plentiful in the school and students benefit from the many learning opportunities and sense of community.

Our school offers unique learning spaces for students. Being in Pacific Spirit Park, University Hill Elementary School has direct access to a network of trails in the forest, a freshwater salmon stream, and Acadia beach. We have an outdoor classroom with large rocks arranged in a circle and we are in the process of designing a second space. These spaces are used to help facilitate class meetings, drama activities, cooperative games, and other activities. We have a Ready Bodies Learning Minds lab in the school to help students self-regulate and be better prepared to learn. Through the generous support of FuturePlay, we have redesigned our library into a modern learning space with flexible furniture, open space, large whiteboards for ideation, and technology to support inquiry-based learning. The diverse spaces for learning are conducive to

place based learning and implementation of an inquiry model of teaching and learning. Students are invited to ask curious questions to drive their learning and understandings of the world. Our teachers provide opportunities for students to refine their questions to engage students in making observations, predictions, creating and testing hypotheses, and using a variety of language skills to communicate understandings.

The proximity of the school to UBC and downtown Vancouver provides easy access to extension opportunities at educational venues, as well as mentorship opportunities. This creates a multitude of unique conversations and learning opportunities. Mentors have included Dr. Hart Banack from the Faculty of Education / Outdoor Education, Dr. Dave Ng from the UBC Biodiversity Genetics Department and Carrie Serwetnyk, former Canadian World Cup Soccer player. Community partners include the VSB Community School Team, the Vancouver Public Library, Pacific Spirit Coastal Health, UEL, UNA and UTOWN @UBC.

2. **WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT OUR LEARNERS?** (SCANNING)

Our students are keen and engaged with their learning and enjoy coming to University Hill Elementary. Our students have strong background knowledge, are able to ask thoughtful questions, and have solid numeracy and English language skills. We know that COVID has limited our students' social interactions and they are excited to reestablish connections. Our students are looking for more opportunities to share their cultures and personal identities, and to feel a deeper sense of belonging within their community. Students and staff identified that learning can be disrupted by social-emotional challenges. As a staff we have begun to explore how we can best support students to develop social-emotional skills and therefore enhance learning in all areas.

3. **WHAT EVIDENCE SUPPORTS WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT OUR LEARNERS?** (SCANNING)

Report card data indicates student proficiency in Numeracy and English Language Arts.

Student, staff, and parent/guardian surveys have been a source of evidence in understanding the social-emotional needs of our students. Students participated in 3 different surveys: The Middle Years Development Instrument, The Student Learning Survey, and teacher led surveys. Each survey shows common trends indicating a desire to develop social-emotional skills and develop a deeper sense of belonging.

Anecdotal data during play and cooperative learning, as well as opportunities for student voice (student self-assessment of competencies, reflections, rubrics) indicate the challenges students have in identifying and managing their feelings, coping with stress, and problem solving.

4. WHAT FOCUS EMERGES FROM THIS EVIDENCE? (FOCUSING)

Our students need opportunities to reconnect with peers and to develop a deeper sense of belonging through opportunities to share their identity. Our students need support to develop and apply a toolkit for use when they are having difficulty managing emotions and self-regulating.

This focus connects to the following goals and objectives from the VSB Strategic Plan:

Goal 1:

Engage our learners through innovative teaching and learning practices.

- Enhance support for students with specific needs
- Support the implementation of the curriculum
- Enhance assessment and reporting strategies to support teaching and learning
- Ensure Aboriginal students achieve increased academic success in Vancouver schools and that they participate fully and successfully from kindergarten through the completion of Grade 12
- Provide increased opportunities to connect students to their learning

Goal 2:

Build capacity in our community through strengthening collective leadership.

- Support professional networking opportunities and collaborative practices for our staff
- Encourage and appreciate the contributions made by our students, families, employee groups and community partners
- Support professional development opportunities for staff in the implementation of the curriculum
- Enhance and support opportunities for student voice
- Enhance and support opportunities for parental engagement.

Goal 3:

Create a culture of care and shared social responsibility.

- Increase Aboriginal students’ sense of pride, self-esteem, belonging, place, acceptance and caring in their schools
- Increase knowledge, awareness, appreciation of, and respect for Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions by all students through eliminating institutional, cultural and individual racism within the Vancouver school district learning communities
- Encourage and enhance practices that support cultural, emotional, physical and mental well-being
- Support effective, thoughtful transitions for all students at each stage of their development
- Respect and celebrate all forms of diversity
- Support collaborative relationships with community partners that enhance student learning and well-being

5. INQUIRY QUESTIONS (FOCUSING)

How can we support social-emotional and physical well-being in our students, along with a sense of belonging, both individually and as a school community?

6. WHAT IS OUR PLAN? (PLANNING)

1) Implement our new Code of Conduct

In May 2021, the school went through the process of rewriting its Code of Conduct. The new Code of Conduct uses inclusive language to help develop a sense of belonging while also clearly outlining expected behaviour. It has language and a framework for students of all grade levels to use to guide and reflect on their behaviour. At University Hill, we *Take Care of Yourself, Take Care of Each Other, Take Care of this Place*. The Code of Conduct also has a guiding metaphor grounded in Musqueam knowledge—*Take care of each other, come together, and hold one another up*. In year one, we look to fully embrace the new Code of Conduct, use the common language throughout the school, and use it to guide class codes of conduct.

2) Student Self-Assessment and Goal Setting

In each classroom students will use the personal and social core competencies to self-assess their social-emotional strengths and stretches. Using the ‘I can’ statements, students will identify and document growth in areas of ability. Students will also identify ‘I can’ statements to set goals. They can document their progress with examples of experiences at school.

3) Identity Celebration

Developing a new schoolwide event that celebrates our diverse school population. The whole school investigates the concept of identity and it culminates in a schoolwide celebration. This is an opportunity for teachers to co-plan and co-teach.

4) Skill Building

Using established social-emotional programs as a base for skill building. These programs will be explicitly taught and intertwined in activities throughout the curriculum. The school will expand skill develop with targeted lessons focusing on the big ideas and curricular competencies from the Physical and Health Education curriculum. Students will also have the opportunity to refine their social-emotional skills through increased student leadership opportunities. We will partner with University Hill Secondary students to train student leaders. The school will support and participate in SOGI and anti-racism initiatives initiated by the school district.

7. WHAT SUPPORTS WILL WE NEED? (PLANNING)

University Hill students and staff will be working together to create an environment of safe, caring and creative space for children to improve their social-emotional skills. A full day of professional development will be dedicated to the continued exploration of resources available, understanding the lived realities of the school's diverse student population, and challenge ourselves to go further as a school community.

We can work with PAC to design and offer parent information sessions on important social-emotional topics.

Welcome a diversity of presenters and volunteers to the school including Elders, dance groups, authors, musicians, etc.

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

If we are successful, we will see a gradual shift in behaviours, especially during unstructured times. We will also see results in our The Middle Years Development Instrument, The Student Learning Survey, and teacher led surveys that indicate a greater sense of belonging and ability to solve problems in peaceful ways. We will also see evidence of growth in our student self-assessments.

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

Open House at the school, assemblies, digital presentations.

Student and staff contributions to the classroom and school newsletters sent out via email.

Reporting and Assessments: Report Cards, student/staff/parent Conferences, Celebrations of Learning, Portfolios.



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

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

We have five Indigenous students attending our school in various grades. We know that our Indigenous students want to learn about and celebrate their culture and history. We know that we must acknowledge history and colonial legacies and move forward in a better way by seeking opportunities for ongoing Reconciliation. This includes building connections with Indigenous families at our school. Staff strive to create a sense of belonging for every child at University Hill Elementary.

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

- Embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into all curricular areas
- Indigenous Acknowledgements at the beginning of assemblies, formal meetings, and other events
- Embedding Musqueam knowledge into our Code of Conduct and using it as a framework for guide our practice
- Showcase Indigenous dance and music through school-wide performances
- Explored place-based learning through regularly scheduled outdoor learning opportunities
- Develop an Indigenous plant garden and research about how the Musqueam people used the plants for a variety of purposes
- Creation of 2 outdoor learning spaces that includes a circle of 12 stones that provides seating for a class of students exploring the power of using a circle for sharing, medicine wheel teachings, and other aspects of Indigenous culture
- Unveiling of the Spindle Whorl Carving by Richard Campbell commissioned by the school with donation from school, grant and parents
- Mounting and display of print by Susan Point with the spindle whorl theme
- Weaving projects
- Presentation by the Sto'Lo Dancers comprised and narrated by members of Indigenous families at the school. Two students were able to demonstrate their dancing skills wearing their regalia
- Fieldtrips to The Museum of Anthropology, the Reconciliation Pole
- Participation in Orange Shirt Day and The Walk for Truth and Reconciliation
- School representation and viewing of the Opening of the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre – UBC Aboriginal Portal
- Teaching about residential schools and Canadian cultural genocide in an age-appropriate way to students using appropriate resources
- Purchase of new texts and online resources to accurately represent Indigenous culture in Canada
- Purchase of books with Indigenous authors, illustrators, and information to support teaching and learning

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

As a school community, we will continue to look for opportunities to enhance student learning and create a sense of belonging for all students, especially our Indigenous students. All the initiatives mentioned will be carried forward into next year with the addition of acknowledging more often when we are learning about Indigenous knowledge, culture, and history. Student feedback informed us that students are not aware when they are learning about local Indigenous cultures, and we plan to make their learning more visible. We look forward to refining and enhancing activities and making a meaningful impact on all our students.

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

Through the Middle Years Development Instrument, the Student Learning Survey, and student feedback, we can assess the impact of our teaching. We can review student knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of Indigenous cultures and contributions. These surveys can also inform school staff on the student sense of belonging in the school community. These findings will then be discussed as a staff and reviewed on how we can celebrate and continue to improve.