

2022-2023 - Year 1 School Learning Plan

1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY

Dickens Annex is a buzzing community nestled in the Kensington-Cedar Cottage neighbourhood of East Vancouver on the unceded lands of the x^wməθk^wəyəm | Musqueam, Sḵwxwú7mesh | Squamish & səlilwətaʔ | Tsleil-Waututh Nations. The school community is comprised of families with ethnic origins including, but not limited to: English, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Japanese. Dickens Annex maintains an overarching theme of child-centeredness supported by four defined pillars:

1. multi-age groupings of students within classrooms and work groups
2. differentiated instruction for student engagement and learning
3. authentic assessment for learning to monitor individual and continuous progress
4. working within a collaborative learning environment

The school Code of Conduct is “Do your best, help each other and find joy.” Students are encouraged to develop a growth mindset to extend their knowledge and experiences while contributing to their school environment by being *bucket fillers* through kindness and care towards themselves and others. Students are encouraged to participate in a multitude of leadership opportunities including but not limited to hosting weekly assemblies and leading school singing. The staff, students, and parents feel that this is a supportive approach to student learning as students are active participants in understanding their learning needs and strengths, as well as setting their own learning goals.

Dickens Annex shares an active and dedicated Parent Advisory Council (PAC) with Dickens Main. The PAC Executive meets monthly and values and encourages parental input and dialogue. The PAC offers many diverse events throughout the year, culminating in an annual Spring Fling. We welcome parents into the school to contribute to student learning as volunteers, sharing their knowledge and experiences with the students.

The students, staff, and school community appreciate and value Indigenous histories, cultures, and traditions and are committed to their ongoing learning. This is evident in parent participation for events like drum making, drum awakening, and singing of the Coast Salish Anthem at weekly assemblies. With our ongoing commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, we continue to unlearn and learn through oral storytelling, hands on experience, and personal connections.

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

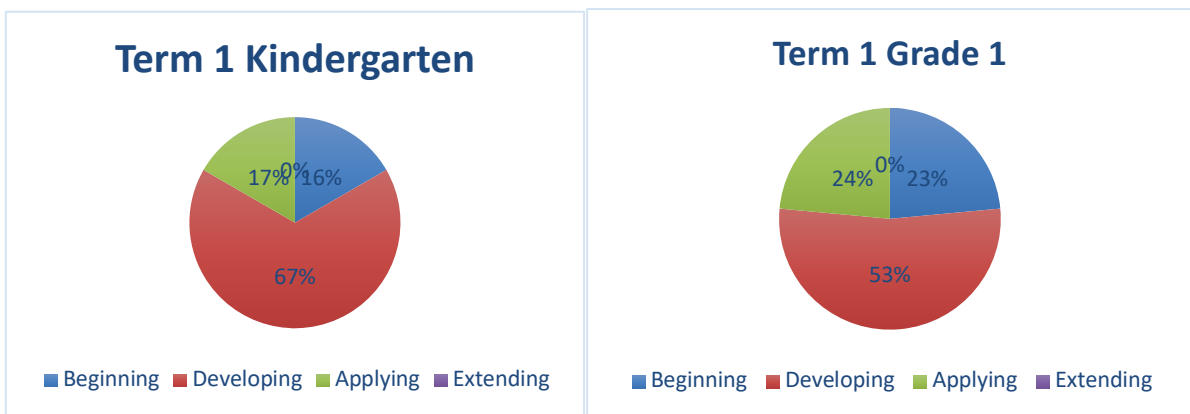
The Dickens Annex student body represents a diverse range of academic, physical, verbal, and social emotional needs. Reflective of the community that they come from, students value diversity, inclusion, and kindness. Students identify as being leaders who are accepting, kind and adaptable. Students who were once shy demonstrate growth as they begin to take on leadership opportunities in this safe learning environment. Some students require intervention by way of modification, adaptations, and/or additional learning supports. Teachers and staff provide these interventions in class as well as in small, targeted learning groups.

We know from research into the Science of Reading that reading is a product of language and decoding skills. As our students' oral language skills generally appear to be a relative strength, the decreased interest is likely because they may not have the skills to systematically decode more complex words to understand their meaning. Students may therefore lack the fundamental skills required in order to be successful in school and in life.

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

The way in which students focus during story time tells us that children love stories. Teachers have noticed that as students get older and the content of interest matures, some begin to lose interest in reading, we see a decline in older students borrowing books from the library and reading time in school leads to increases in behaviour and other curricular subjects become challenging. Reading and writing are fundamental skills that students require in order to be successful in school and in life.

When comparing baseline Kindergarten data to reading/writing outcomes of students in grade 1, we noticed students were not making as much progress as we would expect. With the shift in student needs as result of Covid and the increase in time needed towards teaching self-regulation strategies and social emotional learning, we realized a change in literacy instruction was necessary. To eliminate achievement gaps, we recognize that systemic teaching needs to take place and for staff to follow a scope and sequence to ensure all the word recognition strategies are taught explicitly to improve student outcomes.



The number of students 'developing' decreased; some students made progress and are now in the 'applying' category, but some students moved to the 'beginning' category, resulting in an increase in 'beginning' readers over the year.

We used the following assessments:

- DIBELS 8 ASSESSMENT: used to measure a fluency and automaticity to decode and blend nonsense words
- Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Assessment: phonemic awareness

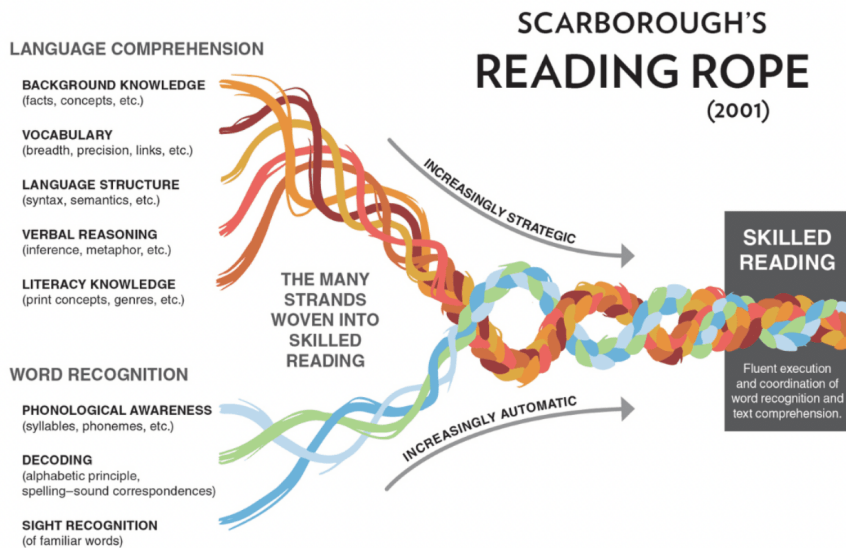
By using these assessments, teachers curate their lessons to ensure that the missing skills are taught explicitly. Additional support is provided for students who require more practice to solidify these skills and lock them into their long-term memory.

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

Teachers at Dickens Annex are committed to inclusive education and improving student outcomes in Literacy based on the Science of Reading. Rather than provide intervention to those who need it, teachers believe that all students should receive instruction that would be considered “intervention,” allowing for full participation and successful outcomes. We believe that providing all students with the support to be proficiently literate *is* trauma-informed practice as it allows students to be empowered and in control of their learning and life outcomes. When students see themselves as readers and writers, they continue to grow. Being a reader and writer has a direct, positive impact on achievement, physical and mental well-being, and belonging. We believe it is the right of every child to be literate and we take this mandate seriously.

5. INQUIRY QUESTION

We value evidence-based learning practices; and as such teachers refer to the strands of the Reading Rope to ensure that students are explicitly taught the strategies to become skilled readers. ¹



¹ <https://dyslexiaida.org/scarboroughs-reading-rope-a-groundbreaking-infographic/>

Many students at our school have strong language comprehension which allows for rich discussions in class; school wide Group Language provides additional immersion of the elements of Language Comprehension for those students who are English Language Learners. This shared experience of reading a story and talking about it nurtures a love for reading for students across all grades.

How do we build students up for success as skilled readers and writers, in an inclusive and trauma-informed way, to nurture their love for reading beyond their primary years.

6. WHAT IS OUR PLAN?

We strive to provide consistent and systematic phonics, phonemic awareness, and fluency instruction to address the Word Recognition part of the Reading Rope. To do so, all teachers have undergone **Sounds Write** training in 2023. Sounds Write is a sequential linguistic phonics program, based on Science of Reading research, that helps students learn the alphabetic code. We will continue to use **Heggerty** for our phonemic awareness instruction as it has demonstrated its low barrier accessibility, especially for our beginning English Language Learners and those in the youngest grades. As we continue to move away from levelled readers, as these do not align with the sound patterns taught explicitly in a Structured Literacy approach, we invest in **decodable books** so that the texts align with the skills that students are working on. These texts are well thought out and sequenced to ensure students are mastering the code.

In the first year, teachers will organize and become fluent in systematically teaching Phonological Awareness, Decoding, and Sight Recognition using Heggerty, Sounds Write, and decodable texts so that students can be skilled readers well beyond their primary years.

In the second year of our plan, we plan to look at the Writing Rope to explore how to better deliver writing instruction. We will be looking at various writing programs to decipher and determine which one(s) will be best suited for the students at Dickens Annex.

By the third year of this plan, we should have a better understanding of where the gaps lie for our students and how to fine tune our Literacy program at Dickens Annex.

7. WHAT SUPPORTS WILL WE NEED?

We are implementing a school wide scope and sequence to ensure continuity of learning, so students are systematically and sequentially taught both the initial and extended code. Opportunities for collaboration amongst staff and teaching colleagues prove to be invaluable as ideas and challenges are shared and discussed. Small group instruction in and out of the classroom, where groups are fluid to meet the ever-changing needs of students, will be one of the ways to provide students with extra support. Decodable books are an essential tool for practicing targeted skills and building automaticity. We will prioritize expanding our decodable book collection to meet the learning needs of the older grades as the code gets more challenging.

As the Reading Rope shows, word recognition is one part of the greater whole. The Language Comprehension portion of the rope (which is often our students' strength) will continue to be addressed through meaningful classroom discussions, lessons, vocabulary building and exposure to a wealth of rich texts in class and Library.

8. HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

Teachers assess students to facilitate learning. We will be using Acadience as a universal screener to report benchmarks to families in addition to Sounds Write assessments. The evidence to show we are on track is through the students; they will be able to decode, read, and write words that align with the initial and extended code they have learned. By gathering data through assessment and tracking student growth, we will see the code knowledge that requires attention in addition to student strengths.

Targeted benchmarks include, but are not limited to:

- Sound spelling correspondence (alphabetic code)
- double consonants (e.g., ff, ll)
- one sound is represented by two letters (e.g., Sh, ch, wh)
- multiple ways to spell a sound (eg. /ae/ can be spelt ay, ai, ea, a_e)

9. HOW WILL WE SHARE THIS INFORMATION?

Community members play an integral part in student learning at Dickens Annex. The day starts with welcoming families into classrooms for Family Reading. This is a great opportunity for students to showcase their skills as they practice the decoding skills they have learned and/or use other books to enhance their language skill. This is an opportune time to orchestrate the Language Comprehension and Word Recognition strands as students engage in shared reading. Students are encouraged to read at home with Home Reading programs that emphasize and target specific codes and decoding strategies. Families will be informed of the aspects of literacy learning as well as student progress through these opportunities in addition to newsletters and conferences.



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?

Dickens Annex has a few students who identify as Indigenous. As a school, we continue to do the important and necessary work towards Truth and Reconciliation. Some of the ways in which we embed our support and appreciation for Indigenous knowledge includes:

- Singing and drumming of Coast Salish Anthem at weekly assemblies
- School wide drum making
- Drum Awakening ceremony
- Drum circles for events and everyday music
- Increased titles by Indigenous authors/illustrators in the library
- West Coast Indigenous Art as a focus for Fine Arts curriculum
- Inter-tribal dancing as one of the genres introduced during Week of Dance
- Author visit and oral storytelling by Kung Jaadee
- Learning about and incorporating Indigenous plants to school Garden

11. WHAT EVIDENCE OF UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS AND KNOWLEDGE HAVE BEEN FOSTERED WITHIN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY?

Our school continues to strive to embed Indigenous worldviews and knowledge in our everyday learning. Students understand the importance and meaning behind land acknowledgements and value the drums as gifts to the school that are to be passed down to future students. This legacy project has allowed for students to internalize First Peoples Principles of Learning including but not limited to:

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational.
- Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

An example of a student-initiated learning opportunity was when a grade 2/3 class wrote letters to the Minister of Veteran Affairs, Lawrence MacAulay, to voice their beliefs that there should be a special Remembrance Day poppy designed to honour Indigenous Veterans. The letter was then forwarded to the Dominion President and then to the Director of Poppy and Remembrance Day, Freeman D. Chute. This initiative came organically from the class's Social Studies lessons and is a clear indication that

students value and take ownership of their role towards reconciliation. Since this correspondence took place, the classes have also written to Prime Minister Trudeau inquiring about giving people on Indigenous Reserves access to clean water.

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

The First Peoples Principals of Learning teaches us that “Learning involves patience and time.” To enhance our understanding of Indigenous perspective and knowledge, we know and appreciate that learning opportunities must be embedded throughout the year. We continue to look for new opportunities to include Indigenous perspective and knowledge in our school wide themes, like we do with Week of Dance and Healthy Living Week. Through Professional Development days, hands-on experiential learning, as well as inviting guests to the school, Dickens Annex is committed to doing the work and taking actions towards reconciliation.