



Vancouver School District

School Plan for Roberts Annex

Year 3 (2021) of 3 Year Plan, 2018 - 2021

1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY:

Lord Roberts Annex is a kindergarten to grade 3 primary school located in downtown Vancouver. The current enrollment is 140 students. Lord Robert's Elementary and Lord Robert's Annex are two sites offering student placement in the Lord Robert's catchment. Over the last several years, there has been an increase in the number of young families registering in the Lord Robert's catchment. As a result, some students are temporarily placed at other school sites until space come available at one of the two sites.

The school community is diverse with a variety of cultures and linguistic backgrounds represented. Approximately 30% of the students are English language learners with 21 different languages spoken at home. 10% of the students have Ministry designations and have a variety of supports in place to ensure their success. The students come from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. Roberts Annex has an active, involved parent community.

Roberts Annex students live throughout the densely populated downtown core, with the majority living in multi-unit low and high-rise dwelling. The student population was at one time very transient with less than 25% of the students remaining in the school until Grade 3, however, this has changed. This year, 14 of 20 current Grade 3's have been enrolled since Kindergarten and 16 have been enrolled since Grade 1. 70% of our leaving class of Grade 3's have been at Roberts Annex for the entirety of their formal education. This stability has resulted in cementing a firm school community and culture with a proud sense of belonging.

2. WHAT DID WE SEE?

Our learners at Roberts Annex have many strengths including:

- The ability to take responsibility for their learning
- some willingness to take risks
- Inquisitive nature
- Creativity
- Acceptance of others (diverse community)
- Strong foundation in literacy helped by extensive Early Intervention strategies

Our learners have a need to:

- Feel safe
- Have structure, routine, and appropriate boundaries

- Have more experiences in nature
- Have more time for unstructured play
- Have more practice and instruction related to social and self-regulation skills

Some of our learners:

- Struggle to balance the use of technology with healthy sleep and exercise habits
- Experience family stress
- Experience economic stress (food and housing security)
- Have a lack of access to outdoor space (apartment living)
- Still require significant support to help with conflict resolution
- Experience a loud, busy, and vibrant environment of living downtown

We have sought out student voice in our exploration of their needs. Through random interviews, anonymous surveys, and teacher anecdotal observation, we have gained insights that have helped guide our selected school growth and goal areas.

Prior to selecting a school goal, staff assessed and determined that student literacy supports were well established and working. Robert's Annex offers an Early Intervention Literacy Program to all students. Students are given as needed supports such as good classroom practice, extra small group, and one-to-one support for those students with the highest needs in the form of Reading Recovery. Students who did not yet meet expectations in English Language Arts in (2019) only made up 20% of the Grade 3s, 3% of Grade 2, and 9% of grade 1s. Because of the on-going supports in place, students who were not yet meeting expectations were being given intensive supports and many had already been identified as requiring a special education program with a Ministry Designation

While exploring possible school goals, staff gathered and shared observations of student learning behaviour. Staff observed that students often got 'stuck' and overwhelmed by their feelings of frustration when they came upon a new task or one that they had not yet mastered. At times, students would give up easily or avoid new or unfamiliar activities for fear of not doing it 'right' or making a mistake. Students were often heard saying things like "I can't do it".

Based on these observations, the school team felt the need to focus on building self-regulation skills and in particular a school culture of "Growth Mindset" as inspired by the work of Carol Dweck. The skills as outlined by Dweck align with the BC Ministry of Education curriculum's Core Competency, Personal Awareness and Responsibility, specifically the facet of Self-Regulation. With developed self-regulation skills, students:

are aware that learning involves patience and time. They can persevere in difficult situations, and to understand how their actions affect themselves and others.

The idea that *Learning involves patience and time*, is also identified by the [First Nations Education Steering Committee \(FNESC\)](#) as one of the First Peoples Principles of Learning.

The resulting overarching school goal was designed to support learners in developing personal awareness and responsibility over their own learning by developing a school culture of positive and flexible thinking, and perseverance. Over the last three years, staff progressed through the following inquiry questions to guide school growth towards this goal:

- Year 1: How can we create opportunities to deepen and sustain student engagement using Growth Mindset with all aspects of their learning; including STEM and Technology, Indigenous Learning, Outdoor Education, and Inquiry Based Learning?
- Year 2: How does approaching all learning with a growth mindset strengthen students' abilities to take risks and become more divergent, creative, positive thinkers?
- Year 3: How does an on-going focus on Growth Mindset support all aspects of learning in the context of changes in instruction and routines?

Staff approached these inquiry questions both for learners and as learners. Through whole staff group professional learning opportunities like workshops and book clubs, the educators at Roberts Annex actively worked towards building and developing a Growth Mindset culture of learning. Classroom copies of *Bubble Gum Brain; Ready, Get Mindset...Grow* by Julia Cook helped provide age-appropriate language and metaphors that were quick and easy for students in Kindergarten through Grade 3 to digest.

3. WERE WE SUCCESSFUL?

We feel that we have been successful at fostering and maintaining a culture that values a Growth Mindset at Roberts Annex. We gathered evidence of this success through staff anecdotal observation, through survey data and through student voice.

Anecdotal Observation

During both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years staff have shared their anecdotal observation of student and staff demonstrations of growth mindset language and actions. A sampling of the observations is included here:

(GR 1/2) "At the beginning of the school year you hear "I can't" statements. "I can't read. I can't write." Many of the students say "I need help" before they even try to do what is being asked. As the students are taught the difference between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset and the language that goes with it, you begin to stop hearing the "I can't". There begins this transformation of increase independence as the students start taking more risks and chances with their learning. "

(Gr 1) "They are working hard on the research side of their (current inquiry) questions where in our guided inquiry in November there were a lot of tears and appeals for help, they now are using the (growth mindset) tools provided to explore their questions on the whole."

(Gr 2/3) "I tend to see this growth mindset the most in math and STEM challenges. Students are able to reflect on their individual math goals, learn from their mistakes and take pride in their accomplishments."

(Gr K) "For many students at the beginning of kindergarten, they felt frustrated in drawing simple shapes. Now, they are drawing recognizable pictures with details and backgrounds. This transformation comes from their ability to take on new challenges and try new things, even if they are difficult at first."

As these observations identify, students are more able to approach their learning with a growth mindset. The change in language away from "I can't" and the increased risk taking is noticeable during regular learning time and on the playground during free play. Students not only use the language of a growth mindset learner, but they can also even be heard holding adults accountable when they catch us saying "can't" or using other self-limiting language when we are experiencing a new learning opportunity.

Survey Data

Survey data collected also indicates that students are aware that learning requires a growth mindset approach. Students, families, and staff at Roberts Annex have the option to participate in the Student Learning Survey (SLS) each school year. To gather further data about student understanding of Growth Mindset, the following question and multiple-choice answer option was added to student surveys the SLS for 2020/2021:

- How many times do you "use your Bubble Gum Brain"? Student response options were: Everyday, A few times a week, 1 time per week, A few times per month, Never, I do not know what that means)

Based on the 17 Grade 3 survey participants, 70% shared that they used their Bubble Gum Brain "Everyday" while 10% said "A few times a week". The remaining 20% did not answer the additional question for unknown reasons.

Student Voice

During March of 2021, we randomly selected 3 students from each of the 7 classrooms for a short verbal interview to further explore their understanding of Growth Mindset. In a one-to-one meeting in a quiet space away from others, 21 students were asked the following open ended and multiple-choice questions:

- How do you feel when you make a mistake when you are learning? What do you do?
- What does growth mindset mean?
- What does having a bubble gum brain mean?
- How often to you use your bubble gum brain?
- Do you remember a time when you saw another student use a bubble gum brain?

Through student responses, we can see evidence that students have developed a strong understanding of how and why to approach learning with a Growth Mindset.

- 20/21 had mixed emotions about making a mistake but had a plan for what to do to fix it (“I try again”, “I fix it up”, “I think in my brain to keep trying”).
- Not everyone know what Growth Mindset means – 7/21 demonstrated a clear understanding
- Almost all students (19/21) knew what it meant to have a “Bubble Gum brain”
- 16/21 students shared that they use their Bubble Gum Brain once a day or more. Only one said Never.
- In reflecting on their observations of others, 16/21 were able to recall specific examples of when another student encountered a challenge but “tried again”, “did not give up” and in some cases after trying “did do it”

Summary

The efforts of students and staff as they embrace a culture of a Growth Mindset, has had a positive impact on attitudes around learning over the past 3 years. In response to each of our original inquiry questions we have learned the following:

1. *How can we create opportunities to deepen and sustain student engagement using Growth Mindset with all aspects of their learning; including STEM and Technology, Indigenous Learning, Outdoor Education, and Inquiry Based Learning?* In reflection, staff found that by developing a whole school curricular content around the book *Bubble Gum Brain*, students could express and demonstrate their ability to show a growth Mindset during a wide variety of school activities.
2. *How does approaching all learning with a growth mindset strengthen students’ abilities to take risks and become more divergent, creative, positive thinkers?* It is evident from the data collected that students are aware of their role in their learning and that while they may encounter challenges during learning, it is their job to use those opportunities to find ways to grow. The positive problem-solving attitudes that have developed clearly show that students are more willing to continue to look for solutions to problems and to share their learning with others.
3. *How does an on-going focus on Growth Mindset support all aspects of learning in the context of changes in instruction and routines?* In the context of a global pandemic, when student access to the curriculum has required significant changes in how learning opportunities are delivered, the students and staff at Roberts Annex have made good use of their Growth Mindsets. Flexing and changing monthly and sometimes daily to increased handwashing requirements, decreased access to shared learning materials as well as new structures for classroom connections and collaboration have all been managed with kindness, grace, and an open mind.

3. HOW HAVE WE SHARED?

We have shared our progress towards building a culture of growth mindset with our community through group communications and individual interactions. Group communication and involvement in our progress occurred regularly through the Vice Principal's Weekly Letters to families, Website updates, regularly scheduled PAC meetings, staff meetings and through classroom meetings and learning opportunities. Individual communications and involvement in our goal occurred with families through Communicating Student Learning conferences and with students as needed based on their progress towards skill development and understanding.

4. WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

Based on the positive impact that building a culture for a Growth Mindset has had in our school, it is the intention of school staff to continue to provide regular review, lessons, and targeted supports to reinforce and maintain student skills and understanding using age-appropriate materials.

As we begin to move towards the Fall of 2021, discussions around new directions for our School Growth Plan have started. Staff are interested in seeking further ways to further the District-wide Indigenous Focus goal. Additionally, inspired by federal initiatives and funding to schools during the 2020/21 school year and the need for our Roberts Annex students to access more outdoor learning opportunities, staff are exploring how to develop more opportunities for Environmental, Place Based and/or Outdoor Learning. Based on our experiences and understanding of student needs, staff are considering growth plan goals that could highlight Outdoor Learning, Place Based learning or perhaps a combination of these which also includes an Indigenous Focus.



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?

Students at Roberts Annex have had many new and interesting ways to increase their knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Indigenous histories, traditions, culture, and contributions. Staff have participated in Professional Development opportunities as a group and as part of their own personal explorations. From these opportunities, we were inspired to seek out new Indigenous focused educational materials and learning opportunities for students. In addition, we have engaged with opportunities for support as offered to staff and students by our Indigenous Education Department.

Students directly benefited from the professional learning done by staff. In May and November of 2019, the District Indigenous Education department provided 2 full days of opportunities to grow and develop educator's ability to support all learners. During the Indigenous Focus days, staff heard the stories and experiences of Indigenous community members and were inspired to seek out more opportunities to weave Indigenous learning into our whole school initiatives. Staff also reviewed and explored ways to redesign the schools code of conduct using a framework that would be more inclusive of all learners.

Staff gathered and reflected on the data from 2021 Grade 3 students as part of the Student Learning Survey (SLS). Student responses indicated that they were unaware of some of the learning they were doing at school about First Peoples and First Nations languages. While the data paralleled other Grade 3 students in the district, the data prompted staff to shift practice to help students become more aware of existing Indigenous content while simultaneously seeking out new opportunities.

As part of increasing learning opportunities, staff sought out new books for our library's Indigenous Literature collection. The collection contains an increasing number of story and picture books written by Indigenous authors about Indigenous experiences and ways of knowing. Marked with a special stamp on each spine for easy searching, this year we added the following books:

- A Day with Yaya by Nicola I. Campbell
- A Walk on the Shoreline by Rebecca Hainnu
- When we are Kind by Monique Gray Smith

Staff also sought out grant funding and PAC support for Indigenous performances through Art Starts. Through a series of whole school assembly learning events, students learning from home and those attending the school site gained insights into local Indigenous languages and story telling through the work of Haida storyteller, Kung Jaadee. Kung Jaadee told her 6 stories in English but also included both Haida and Halkomelem (Musquem) words; first using the First Nation language followed with the English translation. A second performance opportunity occurred with the support of PAC funding. Th'owxiya: The Hungry Feast Dish by Axis Theatre, written by and performed by Indigenous artists was also shared by all students as a school wide event.

Teachers in various classrooms utilized the Six Cedar Trees resources based on the book Celestine Aleck, a Coast Salish artist and Margot Landahl, a teacher, to guide activities and student work on the BC curriculum's Core Competencies. Materials created and shared with BC educators feature images from the book and content to support student learning. See the following websites for some of those resources:

- [Comox Valley Schools](#)
- [Strong Nations books](#)

As part of the yearly review of the school Code of Conduct, staff explored and discussed how this required document could be changed to both reflect the Robert's Annex community but also become more inclusive for all learners in the context of the unceded territories on which the school is located. Staff wanted to explore how to frame behaviour expectations using more supportive and positive language. Inspired by the work of Dr. Martin Brokenleg for his (co-written) book *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*, staff found the "Circle of Courage" was a possible way to reframe behaviour goals and supports for

students. The Circle of Courage uses the Medicine Wheel, a four-part circular framework used by some Indigenous peoples of North America to provide a way to support building students personal skills and resilience. The goals areas of Mastery, Generosity, Independence and Belonging make up the four quadrants of the circle and parallel both the values at Roberts Annex and the BC curriculum's Core Competencies. Staff have worked together on four separate occasions over the last year to identify goal behaviours for each of the areas as well as matching strategies to support on-going growth towards those behaviours. Collaborative work with the VSB Indigenous Education department has begun and we are excited to eventually create a short series of examples to share out with the community. This work continues to be in progress at this time.

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

- Continue to seek out new materials and culturally sensitive ways to increase knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Indigenous histories, traditions, culture, and contributions including the following:
 - Continued participation in both district wide professional development and self-directed initiatives to build on and/or improve existing learning opportunities for all students.
 - Using Art Starts as a way of selecting high quality Indigenous artists and performers to share with the whole school community.
 - continue to seek out and build the existing library collections of books by Indigenous authors sharing Indigenous experiences.
 - On-going lessons inspired by the books and resources by Indigenous Artists and writers throughout the year.
 - On-going use of Six Cedars Trees resources and Strong Nations books
 - Collaboration and support as available from VSB Indigenous Education Department
 - To explore further how place based and outdoor education can provide more opportunities for including First Peoples Principles of Learning and further our work toward the district goal.
- Continue our work to redevelop the school Code of Conduct into a more inclusive document that honours the place in which we learn for the coming school year. These goal exemplars will illustrate student actions and the supports through practice and approach in classrooms and on the playground. We look forward to future staff gathering and the next District Wide Indigenous Focus Day to complete this valuable work.