

# Enhancing Student Learning

## Report to the Minister

### **REVIEW AND REFLECTIONS**

## Contents

The Enhancing Student Learning Report consists of four parts.

**Part 1** is this written report that describes the Board of Education’s commitment to continuous improvement, FESL alignment with district priorities, consultation with partners and Rightsholders, and review and reflection on data contained in part 2 of the report. Part 1 provides a context, rationale and priority areas for the District’s Strategic Plan but does not include the Strategic Plan as this document is submitted separate from the Enhancing Student Learning Report.

**Part 2** is a link to an [interactive site](#) that brings together required student performance measures for all learners as well as for required categories of students. Performance of all learners and specified categories of students can be reviewed simply by selecting the group from the list of options located top-left in the report view. Graphs adjust automatically for each group selected and moving back and forth between groups helps identify similarities and differences between populations of learners.

**Part 3** is a link to the [Ministry of Education FESL data for SD70](#).

**Part 4** is a link to a [sample school plan](#) provided as an example of the district’s commitment to continuous improvement. The sample plan highlights the linkage between school goals and district goals and describes the evidence, processes, and strategies considered in developing school improvement plans.

Together, parts 1-4 comprise the District’s Report to the Minister required under Ministerial Order 302/20. The Report guides the district’s improvement plan, provided separately as the Pacific Rim School District’s *Strategic Plan*.

The Enhancing Student Learning Report and associated documents and the Strategic Plan are posted to the sd70 website at <https://www.sd70.bc.ca/apps/pages/EnhancingStudentLearning>

## Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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The Pacific Rim School District's commitment to continuous improvement is captured in Board Policy 100: Vision/Mission/Purpose/Expectations and Appendices I, II & III. In summary, the cycle of continuous improvement is driven by the following goals and actions:

1. The Board of Education's *Strategic Priorities 2017-2021* outlines three priority goals
  - a. **Intellectual Development and Student Success**
  - b. Indigenous Reconciliation and Relationships
  - c. Foster a Sustainable Organization
2. The **Intellectual Development and Student Success** priority provides the framework for the District's Education Plan and contemplates six broad, aspirational goals based on intellectual, human and social, and career goals outlined in the Mandate for the School System. These aspirational goals state that our students will:
  - a. transition from grade-to-grade culminating in a Dogwood diploma within six years of entering Grade 8
  - b. acquire literacy and numeracy skills required for further learning and for post-secondary life
  - c. develop the thinking skills and processes necessary to inform, guide and regulate their learning
  - d. develop and apply social and emotional learning strategies to become resilient, flourishing, self-aware individuals
  - e. develop and apply socially responsible behaviours in their school and community
  - f. graduate with the academic preparation, career awareness and work experience necessary to meet individual post-secondary goals.
3. Each school must consider a variety of relevant, appropriate measures of student performance in relation to these broad goals and identify a minimum of two school improvement goals focusing on
  - a. intellectual growth, (e.g. literacy, numeracy or school completion)
  - b. student well-being
4. The variety of data includes required provincial assessments, as well as district, school, and classroom-based assessments that should be considered in identifying goals, setting targets, and developing strategies to improve learner performance.
5. School planning incorporates a multi-year approach whereby schools annually develop, review, refine, and approve plans in consultation with educators, parents, students, Indigenous rightsholders and other community partners as appropriate.

6. School improvement goals and strategies are mindful of performance by populations of learners and must consider specific strategies to improve performance of Indigenous learners and/or marginalized populations of learners.
7. School Plans are reviewed with District Staff, shared with the school community, posted to district and school websites, and presented to Trustees at a public board meeting. A sample copy of a school plan is attached to this report.

### Alignment and Consultation

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The alignment between District goals and Provincial goals is further reflected in each of the district's three Local Education Agreements (LEA), through discussions and sharing at the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, and in work with local nations regarding the academic performance of Indigenous learners. For example, LEA's specifically note attention to "overall academic performance, literacy and numeracy performance, grade-to-grade transitions, Dogwood graduation rates, and transitions to post-secondary education" for on-reserve learners, while ongoing discussions regarding a revised Enhancement Agreement also consider a similar focus on academic performance measures for all Indigenous learners. These goals are also reinforced through the district's Equity Scan that strives to eliminate gaps in performance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners.

In developing the *2021 Enhancing Student Learning Report*, the Board of Education first considered the requirements outlined in the *Framework for Enhancing Student Learning* (FESL) and Ministerial Order M302/20 in the context of the Board's *Strategic Priorities 2017-21* and ongoing improvement plans. Noting the scheduled review and revision of current Strategic Priorities into the 2021-25 Strategic Plan, staff also reminded the Board of Education that 'new' FESL requirements were consistent with familiar practices relating to identifying learning goals, developing and monitoring improvement plans, and engaging in rightsholder and partner consultation.

### Board of Education

District staff provided trustees with a Draft Enhancing Student Learning Report in the summer of 2021, providing an overview of strengths and challenges emerging from the data and where data aligned/did not align with corresponding local or classroom data. In what was to become a consistent theme in subsequent consultations, considerable time was spent on the efficacy of the report and its reliance on measures such as Foundation Skills Assessment and Student Learning Surveys. Notwithstanding this concern, trustees clearly saw areas where provincial, district, and classroom evidence aligned and where gaps in learner performance were evident.

### Education Committee of the Whole

The mandate of the Education Committee of the Whole is to discuss and make recommendations to the Board of Education on matters related to general education directions

and to provide regular reports to the Board on education programs, services and learning outcomes. Comprised of trustees, district staff, and representatives from District Parent Advisory Council, Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, Principals and Vice Principals Association, Alberni District Teachers Union and CUPE Local 727, the Committee reviewed and discussed learner outcomes contained in the Enhancing Student Learning Report. Arising from this discussion was the renewed commitment to a focus on numeracy, literacy, and student well-being both as discrete goals unto themselves and as large-scale strategies to improve school completion and transition rates.

### **Indigenous Education Advisory Committee**

The District Indigenous Education Advisory Committee (IEAC) also reviewed and discussed learner outcomes contained in the Enhancing Student Learning Report with a focus on Indigenous learner performance, looking at both on reserve and off reserve learners. Representation on the IEAC includes Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council, local nation's Education Managers, Metis Association, teachers' association, trustees, district staff and principals/vice principals. Both Nation and Tribal Council representatives are familiar with achievement data such as the *How Are We Doing Report* and the local-developed "Red-Yellow-Green" at-risk learner assessment and noted the disparity of outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners, as well as between on reserve and off reserve learners. The IEAC noted the correlation between raising the district's overall performance through a concerted effort to improve Indigenous learner outcomes, and strongly supports a District Plan that focuses on Indigenous learner success with a particular emphasis on outcomes for on reserve learners.

### **School Principals and Vice Principals**

As school leaders in the district, principals and vice principals were also consulted in the development of the Enhancing Student Learning Report. Principals and vice principals noted the consistency in trends between K-7 provincial and local data, yet secondary administrators remained concerned about performance on provincial assessments that did not align with school or classroom-based assessments. All commented on the need to have a range of evidence of student learning as a means to consistently triangulate results, to identify areas in need of improvement, and to develop strategies and/or interventions.

### **District Parent Advisory Council**

Discussion with the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) about the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning occurred in the Spring of 2021, highlighting similarities and differences from previous processes and involvement in district and school planning. Specific to this report, DPAC was consulted in September 2021 as part of the Education Committee of the Whole, with ongoing discussion to take place during regularly scheduled Education Committee and DPAC meetings during the 2021/22 school year.

## Review and Reflections

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### Summary

Reflective of a pervasive, historical trend in literacy, numeracy and school completion results, there remains a large gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners and between on reserve and off reserve learners. Measured over 10- and 20-year periods, progress has been made in closing gaps in many of these areas and there remains a positive, upward trend in school completion rates for all learners and for Indigenous learners. Yet unacceptable gaps in performance persist and continue to demand action. Unfortunately, historical gaps in performance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners is not unique to the Pacific Rim School District. Given the district's demographics where approximately 43% of students self-identify Indigenous ancestry, a focus on Indigenous learner success will yield significant improvement in measures for all learners as well as Indigenous learners and will work towards eliminating the performance gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

For each of the Intellectual Development, Human and Social Development, and Career Development areas required in this report, review and reflection first considers results for all learners with a further discussion of sub-population performance where appropriate. Sub-populations of Children and Youth in Care and Students with Special Needs fluctuate from year to year, and, in some cases, masking of data prevents detailed review and reflection.

Caution must also be exercised in placing too much emphasis or value in standalone provincial assessment results. In particular, low participation rates and disengagement in 'not for marks' Grade 10 literacy and Grade 10 numeracy assessments suggest they are not particularly reliable indicators of performance at this time. Low participation rates also masked performance for most Grade 10 sub-populations. Secondary schools continue to grapple with students meaningfully engaging in new Provincial literacy and numeracy assessments, and endeavour to find ways to have students see 'value' in these assessments.

In contrast, Grade 4 and 7 Foundation Skills Assessments have historically high participation rates (92%) and consistently reveal stronger performance in literacy over numeracy at both grades 4 and 7. An emphasis on reading and writing is understandable in the context of learner vulnerabilities, and the district has done a good job in reducing vulnerabilities in language and cognitive development – as measured by the Early Years Development Instrument (EDI) – and increasing learner performance as measured on a variety of provincial, district, and classroom-based language arts assessments.

While the commitment to reading and writing remains strong in our elementary and secondary schools, results clearly support a similar long-term emphasis on numeracy.

## Intellectual Development – Literacy

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Strongest results in terms of parity with provincial averages are in Grades 4 and 7 reading, with a slight, understandable drop for the 2019/20 school year. While scores were highest in Grade 7 writing and relatively consistent with provincial scores, performance in Grade 4 writing was much lower overall and considerably lower than provincial averages.

Indigenous learners consistently scored lower than non-Indigenous learners, and other than Grade 4 reading and Grade 7 writing, Indigenous performance was lower than the provincial average for Indigenous learners. On reserve learner performance more closely aligned with provincial results for this group, yet it remains significantly lower than other local populations and thus a key area for improvement.

As noted above, the Grade 10 literacy assessment reflects a single year measure with extremely low participation rates. Accordingly, secondary literacy is better considered through classroom-based assessment and grade-to-grade transitions. Secondary schools will be focused on improving participation rates to establish a more reliable, valid baseline upon which future targets can be established.

Improving literacy performance remains a priority for the school district.

## Intellectual Development – Numeracy

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Numeracy performance on Grade 4 and 7 FSA's show an alarming trend provincially and locally. Overall performance in numeracy is lower than literacy, and lower performance is consistent among all populations of learners. Locally, Grade 4 performance is static at approximately 58% while Grade 7 performance has noticeably declined the past three years. As with the case for literacy, numeracy scores for on reserve and off reserve learners was comparable if not situationally better than provincial peers yet significantly lower than other local populations. Data for Children and Youth in Care and students with Special Needs was largely masked.

Participation in Provincial Numeracy 10 is very low and performance significantly lower than either classroom-based assessments or reflected in grade-to-grade transitions. As with literacy performance, secondary schools will be focused on improving participation rates to establish a more reliable, valid baseline upon which future targets can be established.

In the past year, schools have begun to prioritize numeracy over literacy in school planning while district staff have committed to an investment in professional learning, resource teacher staffing, and numeracy resources to support improved learner outcomes. Improving numeracy for all learners is the first priority in the district's *Strategic Plan*.

## Human and Social Development

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Human and Social Development has been a priority area for the school district and goals relating to improving student well-being have been a cornerstone of school plans for the past decade. The overall strength of responses on the Student Learning Survey supports ongoing efforts to create conditions where students feel welcome, safe, and connected in our schools. The district relies heavily on data contained in Early Years Development Instrument (EDI), Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI), and Youth Development Instrument (YDI) assessments, and has used MDI results extensively in school planning to gain deeper insight into student well-being, identify areas of growth, and engage staff, students, and communities in strategies to improve outcomes for learners. In 2020/21, the district was one of two pilot districts for the YDI, and we look forward to incorporating this new data set to help inform and guide secondary schools.

Overall, trends for all learners are consistent with provincial responses, yet, while consistent with provincial results, it is worth noting that student's sense of belonging is significantly lower than other measures relating to caring, safety and feeling welcome. Caring adults is particularly strong among responses from all sub-populations and reflects a concerted effort to address feedback observed in early MDI results and supported by research.

Indigenous responses are also aligned with all learners in the district and are consistently higher than provincial averages for this group of learners. While Indigenous learner performance in literacy, numeracy and school completion continues to demand our attention, it is heartening to know that Indigenous learners generally feel safe, welcome, and cared for at school – a necessary condition to support learners' intellectual development. Finally, unlike other measures in this report, there is little difference in results according to on reserve and off reserve learners.

## Career Development – Transitions

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**School Completion** rates continue to trend slightly upwards yet there remains, on average, a 10% gap between district and provincial school completion rates on either 5-year or 6-year completion rate scales. The district is shifting emphasis to a 5-year school completion rate yet retains the 6-year data set as the additional year has played an important role in the historical increase in graduation rates and acknowledges the considerable time and effort invested in and by learners who have previously struggled or progressed at a slower pace yet have persevered to earn high school graduation.

The district gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous completion rates mirrors the gap between the district overall and the province, yet the gap between district Indigenous and province indigenous is much smaller. Off reserve learner performance is trending upwards at a rate of 2% per year, the last three of which have been on par with provincial counterparts. A similarly promising trend among on reserve learners has faltered in recent years and on reserve graduation rates have seen a significant decline.



Indigenous learners comprise a large percentage of Children and Youth in Care. Despite improvements in recent years, school completion for this population remains lower than provincial averages. Similarly, completion rates for students with Special Needs has shown improvement in the past three years yet continues to be lower than district or provincial results.

**Grade-to-Grade** transitions have been a focus for the school district for many years and we are pleased to see strong indicators of success for all learner populations and an overall number that mirrors strong provincial results. Within district populations, Indigenous performance is slightly lower than all learners, and on reserve learners continue to transition at a lower rate than off reserve learners.

**Post-Secondary Transition** numbers for all learners closely parallels provincial results as measured by first year and three-year transition rates. The greater consistency with three-year transition rates resonates with the narrative of many graduates who defer entering post-secondary largely for financial reasons associated with having to leave home communities to attend post-secondary. Indigenous learners and students with special needs also figure prominently in three-year transition numbers, the former transitioning at a higher rate than the provincial average.

### Relationship to Strategic Plan

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The district's Strategic Plan is submitted as a separate document, noting priority areas as well as performance trends, learning targets, and key improvement strategies. Areas of focus and growth within the Strategic Plan include improved

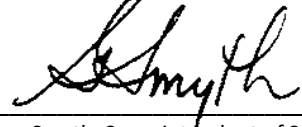
1. Numeracy skills for all students
2. Literacy skills for all students
3. Social and emotional well-being for all students

Within each of these areas, raising the performance of all learners while eliminating performance gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners and between on reserve and off reserve learners is a district priority.

Board of Education Approval

Signature:   
Pam Craig, Board Chair

Date: 2021-09-29

Signature:   
Greg Smyth, Superintendent of Schools

Date: 2021-09-29