

# BOARDS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## STORIES FROM YOUR COMMUNITIES

### DEVELOPING THE PATHWAYS TO LEARNING SCHOOL DISTRICT 48 (SEA TO SKY)'S NEW EDUCATION PLAN

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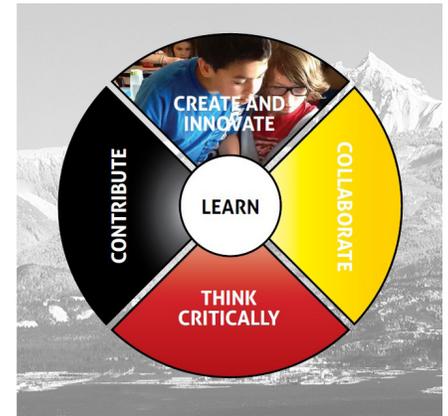
Knowing precisely what a student will need in order to be successful in the future is difficult to predict. However, as supported by the BC EdPlan, global research, and what our communities are saying they want for their children, there are key competencies which lead to resilient learners who are ready to adjust with flexibility and confidence during life's journey. As well, there are very important issues of morality which exist in our country and local communities involving the revitalization of Aboriginal culture, language, and ways of knowing. But how does a school district embrace a pervasive and systemic approach to all of this most important work?

As a socially-conscientious and educationally ambitious group of trustees, the School District No. 48 Board of Education embarked on a Strategic Plan development process in 2013 which embraced—and continues to hold staff accountable for—these endeavours. Setting the stage for the work ahead, the Board began by seeking input in order to re-establish their overarching mission, vision and values to lead the staff through the work of the future. Under those guiding principles, the Board directed staff to create a new and innovative education plan with new objectives for their next few years. A team of forty stakeholders, eighteen of whom were teachers, met to sort through the community, staff, parent, and student input toward

the writing and establishment of this new plan.

As the team worked through the collected information in a backwards design approach, thoughtful consideration was given to

establishing a holistic perspective which might embrace both a focus on competency development and a pervasive Aboriginal viewpoint. The Aboriginal symbol of the Medicine Wheel was selected to represent this holistic balance. Beside each identified competency in the new education plan is a word describing the relative importance of place within the Medicine Wheel - Self, Physical, Intellectual, Spiritual, and Emotional. As well, each of the student competencies have been further challenged through



the work of globally recognized learning expert Howard Gardner and his Five Minds for the Future (2009), which describes the Disciplined, Creative, Synthesizing, Ethical, and Respectful Minds. These two broad, overarching views of a complete learner now serve to

guide the district's work in leading through the one common goal of the school district - We will create safe, purposeful and powerful learning environments, in order that all students can think critically, create, collaborate, contribute and learn.

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The progress to date is notable. **The SD48 Aboriginal six-year completion rate (graduation rate) has improved from 39 per cent in 2010 to 81 per cent in 2014, now matching the graduation rate for all students in the district.** Simultaneously, suspension rates for all students in the district have dropped by 59 per cent over the past three years and are on track to continued reduction. There are many committed staff, families, communities and hard-working students making these results happen. Below are three specific examples.

The hard work of this important change began with teams of staff taking a 'one student at a time' approach

even prior to the establishment of the new education plan. Students were collected who were 'Missing in Education' by teams of teachers and education staff and brought back into the fold of schools. Individuals enrolled in school were met with and teams planned for the individual supports of each and every student with a focus on the most vulnerable learners. Simultaneously, the staff held the belief and adjusted teaching and programming to aim for all students being able to meet literacy expectations by the end of grade three. This student by student planning continues in earnest with individual student learning plans for all Aboriginal students.

## Pathways to Learning: Strategies

Our Pathways to Learning describe the pedagogical or instructional STRATEGIES that will lead to higher order skill development for our students. Through these approaches, students will be able to explore, discover and develop themselves as complete learners. By leading along each of these pathways, our teachers can place an emphasis on students demonstrating all of the competencies, as seen through a balanced perspective.

### Assessment

is a pathway to understand student learning. It is knowing where they are, where they were, and what next steps they should take in their learning. By utilizing assessment for, of and as learning students use criteria, rubrics, exemplars, self and peer assessment, descriptive feedback, personal learning targets, reflection, and collect samples of their work to drive their learning forward.

### Collaboration

is a pathway that leads to groups of students working together toward a common goal. It inspires the creation of new knowledge and respect for different ideas. Students learn to understand each other and monitor themselves.

### Engagement

is a pathway leading to the active involvement of all students. Cooperative structures and strategies allow students to access prior knowledge and deepen understanding. Students are always actively involved toward a specific end product or goal. Learning is differentiated to reach each learner at his/her own place.

### Play and Exploration

are pathways that support student curiosity and risk taking. Hands-on and inquiry based approaches lead to the development of individual student creativity and the innovation of something new: an idea, an interpretation, or a product.

### Purpose and Authenticity

are pathways for students to engage in meaningful and personally relevant learning. Students use interdisciplinary approaches and 'voice and choice' to make connections to their own reality and to a broader perspective. Community partnerships and projects support learners in applying their learning through real world problems.

### Technology

is a pathway for students to access, use, communicate and produce information. It also allows students to archive, track, and present out their learning over time.

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Perhaps the most notable distinction of the new education plan, beyond the commitment to a widely held Aboriginal viewpoint, is that the 'strategies' to meet the goal are related to pedagogical or instructional approaches, rather than 'initiatives' or 'programs'. This approach to educational planning has made explicit the work of the classrooms while also allowing for multiple pathways for teachers to engage in the work and support their students. Teams of teachers continue to meet to co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess, using the competencies as their student learning goals and the Pathways' pedagogical strategies as their instructional approach.

While initiatives and programs are not the specific strategies of the new education plan, there are many important programs which support the direction of the new education plan and make visible the Board's priorities for supporting Aboriginal student success. To name a few, a new K to 6 outdoor exploration school with a focus on Squamish Nation (Skwxwu7mesh) culture and language will start in September, 2015. In the North, the large K to 7 elementary school provides Lil'wat Nation (St'at'yemc) language lessons for all students in the school, including the French Immersion program. Next year, this language program will expand to the secondary school. The recent addition of an Aboriginal Youth Council now has sixty grade 8-12 students representing and leading Aboriginal student leadership across the district.

The Board of Education has established an ambitious plan to meet the needs of all learners with a clear emphasis on supporting all Aboriginal learners through an important world view and a highly accountable plan. The SD48 Board of Education is making a difference. ■



**Learn**

- Core skills - communication, literacy, numeracy, readiness
- Personal responsibility, health, habits of mind – self regulation, intrapersonal skills
- Resiliency, adaptability, intuitiveness, confidence

Self/Disciplined Mind



**Create and Innovate**

- Making something new
- Technical, artistic and digital skills
- Curiosity, Imagination

Physical/Creative Mind



**Think Critically**

- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Synthesizing, analysing, connecting, deep thinking

Intellectual/Synthesizing Mind



**Contribute**

- Local and global citizenship
- Social responsibility, character development, leadership
- Environmental responsibility

Spiritual/Ethical Mind



**Collaborate**

- Interpersonal skills
- Being respectful of others' opinions, flexible
- Working cooperatively

Emotional/Respectful Mind

Your  
**BCSTA**

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