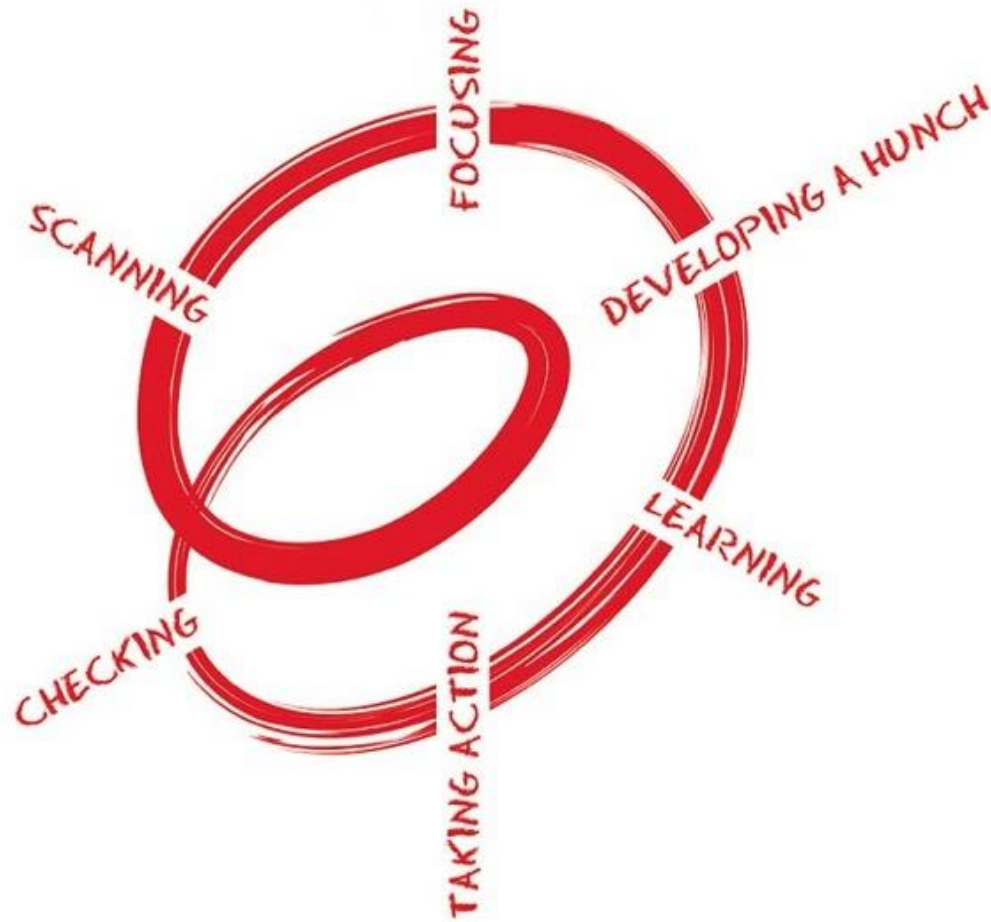




School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) School Growth Plan



"Spirals of Inquiry for equity and quality"
Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser

Draft Plan developed by:



School: COLUMBIA

School Context:

Columbia Elementary is located in a residential east of the central area Penticton. Currently there are 266 students are enrolled from Kindergarten to grade 5 in twelve divisions. The school provides a full K-5 education program for students in our catchment area. Columbia Elementary proudly provides a solid foundation in the core areas of the curriculum; as well as extracurricular opportunities that extend our children's learning including interschool athletic teams and intramural activities, a Music Program and Glee Club, and opportunities for students at all levels to demonstrate and develop leadership skills. The Columbia staff is embracing opportunities to take learning outside of the classroom through field trips while incorporating Indigenous Ways and First People's Principles of Learning into many areas of the curriculum.

Our school is fortunate to have a supportive Parent Advisory Council and parent community. PAC provides financial support to subsidize many of these extracurricular activities. This support helps to provide necessary transportation, resources and equipment to extend learning into alternate locations in and around our community. Through meaningful, hands-on educational experiences students are given an opportunity to engage in their curriculum and connect it to the world around them.

Inquiry Question:

Connecting the Five Cs to Community Building

If we intentionally provide a variety of community building opportunities will students feel more connected at school?

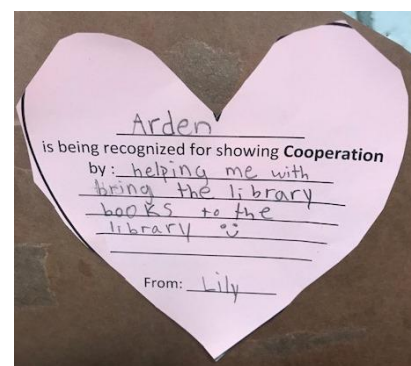
Our goal is to continue to increase student, staff and parent connectedness to the school community by focusing on the core competencies of: Positive Personal and Cultural Identity, and Personal Awareness and Responsibility.

Focusing:

We believe strongly in creating and maintaining a culture at Columbia that connects all of the people who work and learn together. Our staff members (teaching, non-enrolling, itinerant and support) are dedicated to making Columbia a high quality learning environment



with respect to classroom instruction and school-wide behaviour. We embrace our “5Cs – Consideration, Cooperation, Courtesy, Common Sense and Commitment to Learning” and use a multi-age grouping organization to bring staff and students together in a purposeful way to teach, practice and celebrate traits that contribute to the climate in our school. We expect and recognize being the best school and community citizens we can be. We know that research tells us that in order for academic learning to occur students must have their Social Emotional Learning supported and feel connected to others, calm and self-regulated.



Scanning:

Successes

The 2017-2018 brought about a number of additional staff changes at Columbia. The continuation of school goal work around “Connectedness” remained important to both staff and students. Initiatives from the previous year made a significant difference and were continually built and developed into a year-long process for explicitly teaching and practicing the 5Cs (Consideration, Cooperation, Courtesy, Common Sense and Commitment to Learning) through multi-age activities.

A focus on the Core Competencies of Social Responsibility and Personal Awareness and Responsibility was agreed to with the ultimate goal of improving the learning environment to support student success. A continued focus on the climate in the building was a priority.

On the Curriculum Implementation Day in October teachers were divided into groups to collaboratively plan a series of lessons to be taught school-wide. Each “C” was introduced at a school assembly and administration connected the intention of the “C” to the greater context of what it means to be a Columbia “Roadrunner” in a school where staff and students engage in learning together. The lesson format was consistent for each activity and had a self-reflection component for teachers to debrief and complete with their own classes after the activity was over. Often these were displayed in the hallways after completion and enjoyed by staff, students and parents.



Challenges

The plan to explicitly teach the same lesson to all students in multi-age sessions was successful however; it also became apparent through staff conversations that the historical “5Cs” may no longer be the best framework. The original intention of the 5Cs was to teach and recognize traits of good citizens. In our work as educators, we wanted to align our efforts with the new Core Competencies in order to have student self-reflection and assessment fit with the new approach and language we are using. This will become a focus for next year.

It is important for us to be able to have a school goal that everyone knows and can explain. Right now, staff are aware of where our shared efforts hope to lead us but we wonder if the students truly understand. One class was asked “What is our school goal?” and there responses show that we are on the right track:

- ✓ Take care of the school
- ✓ To use the 5Cs
- ✓ To make sure everything and one is healthy and safe



Student voice – We asked several students from various grade levels for some feedback in regards to multi-age teams and connections to school. Here are some of their responses:

What do you like about our 5 C - multiage groupings?

“It is fun” - P, Grade 2

“We get to be in a different classroom with a bunch of other kids” - I, Grade 2

“We get to meet other friends” - M, Grade 3

What has helped you become connected at school?

“When I brought my soccer ball to my old school no one wanted to play with me... when I moved I saw that everyone wants to play soccer and I joined them and now I like this school” – K, Grade 5

“Ms. Long is very kind and really nice... the kindness of Ms. Long has connected me more to this school. She makes me like it (school) a bit more everyday... you get more chances, more opportunities, more choices (in grade 4). - J, Grade 4

“I remember in grade 3 my friend Olivia decided to work with me when no one else did. In grade 3 everyone thought that I was weird... (What Olivia did) made me feel really nice and comfortable... now, I don't feel bad about who I am” – A, Grade 5

Student story – We asked teachers if there was a particular student who they had noticed a change in that could be told as a short anecdote. Here is a response that demonstrates how a child's connection to others plays a role in their attitude and success in school:

I spoke to J.G. about his improvement since the fall. He noted that in Grade 1 he felt his teacher did not understand (him) and he was always in time out. In Grade 2, he had a great teacher who “gave him a chance”. In Grade 3, he liked how his teacher was nice and always used visual aids. This year, he feels he is doing well as I am a “very kind person” and I “treat him well, so he treats me well”. We had a very special conversation! – Ms. L, Grade 4

Middle Years Development Instrument

Our data received from the Middle Year’s Development Instrument’s (MDI) school report reveals a high percentage of students who feel connected to adults at our school and reports around the overall tone of the school environment and student interactions with teachers as being positive with scores that are above the district average. Our MDI results also revealed that 95% of students had 2 or more adults who they felt were important to them at school but 19% reported that they had mixed positive and negative responses around friendship and having a peer to talk to and one who understands them.

NUMBER OF IMPORTANT ADULTS AT SCHOOL



95%
2 or more



0%
One

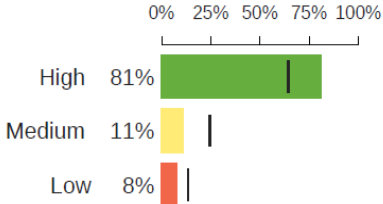


5%
None

CONNECTEDNESS WITH PEERS

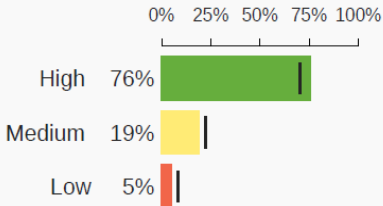
PEER BELONGING

Measures children's feelings of belonging to a social group. e.g. "When I am with other kids my age, I feel I belong."



FRIENDSHIP INTIMACY

Assesses the quality of relationships children have with their peers. e.g. "I have a friend I can tell everything to."



New Professional Learning:

On the April 16 Professional Development Day a BCTF workshop was hosted at Columbia with a focus on self-regulation. Our entire teaching staff and Administration, Education Assistants and several itinerant staff including School Counsellor and Speech-Language Pathologist participated in this full day seminar. While the topic isn't specifically about "Connectedness" it is our hunch that there is a relationship between feeling connected and the sense of calm that comes with being regulated and ready to learn.

As a ticket out the door from this session we asked all staff to indicate what they needed to know more about in order to delve deeper into self-regulation. Below are a sample of the responses from classroom teachers, Education Assistants, Itinerant Support Staff and Administration. Commons themes specific to self-regulation include the need for resources, time to observe others teaching and modeling strategies as well as determining consistent language school-wide.

- I would like to observe another teacher in a classroom who is teaching/modelling self-regulation strategies
- I would like to participate in a book club around Growth Mindset
- I would like to have conversations around becoming (and modeling) comfort with discomfort
- I would like collaboration time to create a "Zones" style sensory room
- I would like to have profiles on students so that I do not unknowingly say or do something to upset them (unregulated students who do not have an IEP)
- I would like clear, concise classroom expectations for each teacher
- I would like more consistency throughout the school – knowing what all students need or the expectations
- I would like to know how to create expectations that are simple and concise for grades K-5 – How can I help kids regulate in a dynamic classroom that is always changing?
- I need to remember that visual aids work if you refer to them regularly
- I would like consistent language school-wide
- I would like a physical "safe" space to allow regular students out of the classroom when they need a break
- I would like the Zones of Regulation book
- I would like to be able to observe other teachers using Zones of Regulation in their class. It is one thing to be told but another to see it in action.
- I would like the Mind Up Program and Zones of Regulation for Intermediate grades
- I would like a Growth Mindset resource and opportunities to observe others using self-regulation programs
- I would like to participate in a book club on an author who focusses on self-regulation and then discuss the book with co-workers
- I would like to understand where students are developmentally at different ages in regards to their ability to self-regulate
- I would like to know which current resources we have in the school I would like to develop a curriculum for common language



- I would like to look at different resources and common language lessons that address the Core Competencies
- I would like more consistency across the school and school-wide rules posted
- I would like consistent school expectations for everyone
- I would like to know classroom expectations and the language used
- I would like to know the language classroom teachers are using e.g. Zones/expected-unexpected for when we have to speak to students outside
- I would like the Zones of Regulation book and activity cards for my own use in the classroom
- I would like to know classroom strategies to calm students physically in order to be prepared for learning (i.e. Soft music, low lights, outside break etc.)
- I would like to create a better physical environment in my classroom and create a calmer environment by waiting for 100% attention

Taking Action: What will you do differently?

Our next steps include a shift from the 5Cs to the Core Competencies in the new BC Curriculum to allow for consistent common language across grade levels and a variety of settings. We anticipate that we will also look at our core values and beliefs to determine what we would like our combined efforts to aim towards improving. We are also ready to look at the connection between Social Emotional Learning and student academic success.

Some things we may investigate include:

- The importance of self-reflection and self-assessment on student learning.
- What do you think our success with community building can be a spring board for? Can we link it to student academic success?
- How does being a creative thinker impact student learning?
- How does being a critical thinker impact student learning?
- How does being a communicator impact student learning?
- How does being personally aware and responsible for yourself impact student learning?
- How does having a positive view of yourself and your culture impact student learning?
- How does being socially responsible impact student learning?

Communication Strategies:

At the stage we are at our communication with our greater school community is informal. Our parent advisory council is aware of our focus on “Connectedness” and share a similar feeling that the climate in the building is improving with a focus on bringing people together.

We will formally share this Columbia Growth Plan with them at the June PAC meeting. We want them to understand that the activities we do in the school are intentional and working towards a shared goal of having students better connected to others at school. Using the Spiral of Inquiry to cycle through our work needs to be shared so that they understand the process we follow.

We will also share our MDI data which indicates that we have been successful in connecting students to adults in the building but need to continue to work on connecting them to peers who they could potentially identify as friends in the future.

Parental/Community Involvement:

Once we begin to try things differently, in a more formal inquiry approach, we anticipate that parents will play a role in the collection, analysis, and processing of data and information. Once they are familiar with the concept of connectedness as a means of improving academic and social success we will ask them to reflect on their own child's connectedness to school. We believe this feedback will be meaningful if the context of the questions is fully understood.

Connection to the District Goals:

The District's framework includes a system-wide focus on Literacy, Numeracy and School Completion. By focusing on the Core Competencies, a set of intellectual, personal and social and emotional proficiencies, we are helping students to develop an engagement in life-long learning. We have a hunch that an individual's ability or inability to connect to others would have a direct impact on enjoyment of school and in turn their belief in themselves and put forth a diligent effort in regards to their learning. We hope to play a role in having students walk the stage with purpose, dignity and choice. By knowing themselves better as learners we hope that they are better equipped to make decisions, understand how to self-regulate and act on their own curiosities about their future.

Connection to the 7 Principles of Learning:

1. Learners at the centre

- connections to school and others looks different for individual students
- the benefits to learners are evident as connections grow
- self-assessment and identity are interconnected
- purposeful planning for student engagement in outdoor activities and a variety of learning opportunities

2. Social nature of learning

- multi-age groupings provide purposeful social interactions outside normal group of peers and classmates
- working with others can provide high challenge/low risk
- leaderships skills can be demonstrated at any age
- our activities help to foster a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities as individuals, a class and a school
- knowing that peers can be a resource is valuable to accept in the early years
- staff collaboration and mentorship – the responsibility for teaching belongs to everyone

3. Emotions are integral to learning

- each individual's confidence in their own abilities is directly related to their internal feelings (specifically belonging and acceptance)
- feelings of confidence and success will drive new behaviours
- connections to adults give students assurance through a trusting relationship
- students are better able to thrive when they feel cared for
- trying new things with new people can put students in a desired state of discomfort
- providing support through discomfort builds resiliency

4. Recognizing individual differences

- follow up activities provide options at all levels as developmentally appropriate
- multi-age groupings recognize different levels of expertise and build student capacity through intergenerational learning
- activities are designed to allow different entry points and degrees of inclusion
- providing opportunities to showcase student strengths through intramurals and clubs

5. Stretching all students

- using multi-age groups with different adult leaders places students outside their comfort zone
- self-reflection about the 5Cs is personal and has students looking inwards at themselves and their actions
- recognizing their personal contributions to making the school a better place drives students to stretch their thinking beyond themselves
- maximizing student motivation by helping them see themselves in their learning
- focusing on helping students to thrive unleashes potential and creativity

6. Assessment for learning

- recognizing and celebrating success is an effective form of feedback
- assessment (self, peer and teacher) can have a profound influence on motivation and self-esteem of students
- taking ownership over one's own actions and reactions helps them see areas for improvement
- increasing engagement through self-reflection is authentic

7. Building horizontal connections

- Connectedness to others will impact progress and attitude towards learning across the curriculum
- learning opportunities with real-world relevance are authentic
- expectations, routines and structures that support all classroom and school activities align students as part of the great student body
- the ability to transfer what is being learned to more unstructured and less closely supervised areas