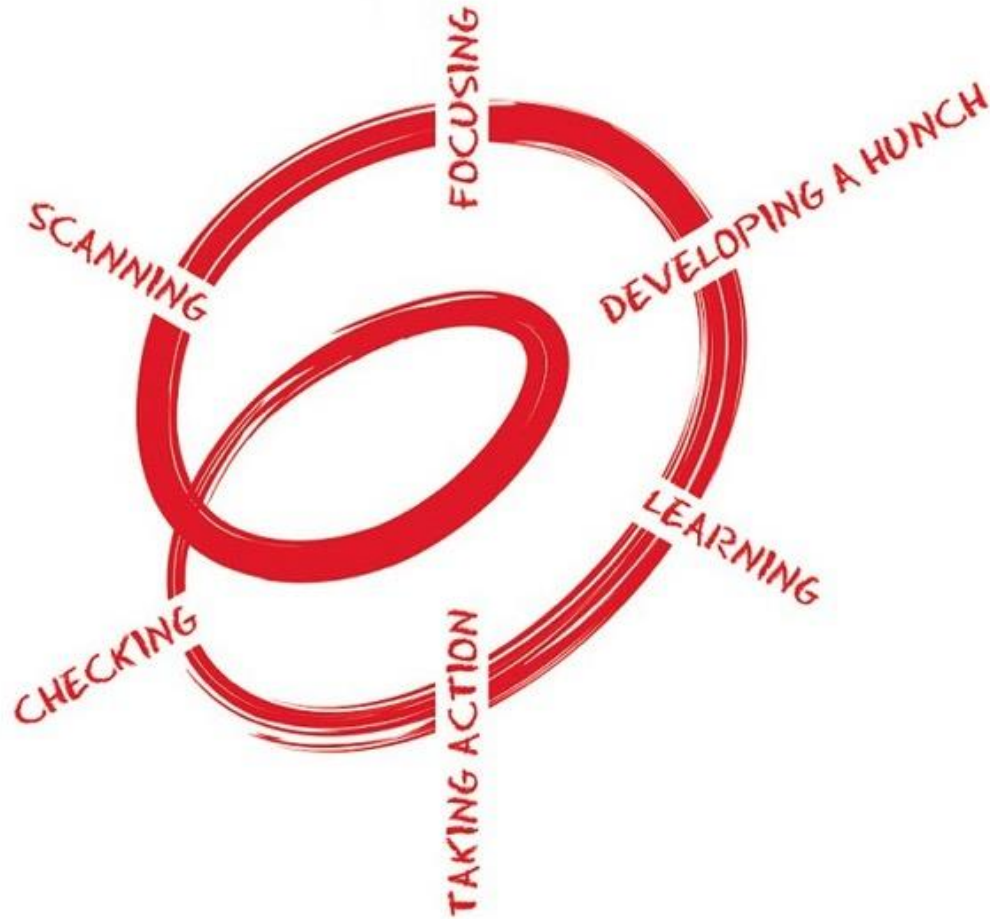




School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) Giant's Head Elementary's School Growth Plan



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



Giant's Head Elementary

Mission Statement – working together to create a respectful, safe place to learn



(updated May 2020)

School Context:

Giant's Head Elementary, located in Summerland, BC, was built in 1970. In 1976, two classrooms were added as well as an addition to the gymnasium and a library resource area. Further additions to the building were made in 1988. In 1999, MacDonald Elementary School in Summerland was closed and several teachers joined the Giant's Head Elementary staff. Due to this closure, there was a significant increase in student population. The school was then reconfigured from Kindergarten – Grade 7 to Kindergarten – Grade 5.

Currently the student enrolment is 389. There is a teaching and support staff of 45. It is a school that:

- is committed to learning and intellectual growth
- focuses on the importance of human and social development
- allows each child to work to his or her potential and beyond
- values and encourages parental support and involvement
- is dedicated to the preparation of caring and responsible learners

The school is supported by several service groups, community organizations and an active PAC. This support provides a meaningful connection to the surrounding environment and offers students the chance for involvement with and service to others.

Inquiry Question: What do you think is driving your plan for student success?

How do we embed the Successful Learner Traits (SLT) / Core Competency (CC) skills into our daily lessons so the students authentically use the language and skills in their daily life? How do we create learning opportunities that promote authentic student metacognition, self-reflection, and goal setting?

As a staff we recognize that the renewed curriculum is grounded in the development of the “whole child” and that the threads that run through all subjects and tie the social, emotional and academic capacities of our students together are the Core Competencies (CC). The core competencies are critical to the development of students because they provide students with the ability to think critically, solve problems, and make ethical decisions. They help students learn to communicate their questions, express opinions, and challenge ideas in a thoughtful, respectful way; and to exercise an awareness of their role as engaged responsible citizens. Further, we recognize that the core competencies are

embedded in the foundation of the curricular competencies. Having students well versed in the core competencies will be key towards the transition as we shift from content-based learning of the old curriculum to skill-based learning of the renewed curriculum.

Over the last three years we have been implementing the “Successful Learner Traits” (SLT) to teach the core competencies. This year we have used the spirals process of our school growth plan to focus our endeavors for best practices around the competencies and how best to support our students. At the forefront of this work is the notion that strong assessment practices are the driving force of all new learning. This in turn will help create authentic learning opportunities. We notice as a staff that students often struggle to include an authentic voice, this will improve with increased opportunities to engage with the competency language as well as other opportunities to engage with self-assessment. Teachers within our school have been accessing and collaboratively planning learning opportunities through the Library Learning Commons framework as well as individually within their own classrooms.

Our goals:

1. To create authentic opportunities for our students to engage with the successful learner traits and core competencies through reflective practices.
2. To create collaborative conditions for our students to engage with their core subjects through a reflective lens and the learner traits language.

Scanning: (What do you know about your students – their successes and challenges - what’s going on for them?)

Since September marked a change in our school growth plan focus to the core competencies, we spent a good portion of the year “scanning” to see where our strengths and areas of growth were. As a staff, we started the year exploring the following questions.

- Why are the CC important?
- What do we want the most out of the CC/SLT?
- How well do the students know the SLTs?
- How often do we have the students self-reflect on the SLTs?
- What do the self-reflections look like, sound like, and to what extent are the students able to fully explain their thinking?

Our initial discussions and observations led to a number of conclusions with respect to where the students were in learning, understanding, and most importantly, adopting the SLT language and concepts in their everyday decision making. Some key themes that came out of our initial scanning were:

- Some students, especially younger ones had some difficulty learning the language
- Some students struggled understanding some of Successful Learner Traits concepts/definitions
- Students struggled self-reflecting authentically and honestly

- Some staff struggle with teaching the student learner traits and core competency language
- The SLT started to create a base for school wide language that was concrete
- Some teachers struggled incorporating the SLT into their daily lessons in general but even more so as a natural flow to the lessons as opposed to contrived isolated lessons.

Focusing: (Identify the most important work you can do to improve the success of your students. On which key areas of learning will you focus?)

Through our scanning and subsequent discussions three key themes emerged which became the areas we focused on for the year. We believed that if we focused on these areas, we would see a marked improvement in student ownership and application of the SLT language and more importantly, student adoption of practices.

Student learning and use of the SLTs.

1. How to clarify trait language?
2. How to establish in class?
3. How to help students be thoughtful and purposeful in use?

Authentic Voice

1. How do we make sure the students aren't just parroting what the teacher says?
2. How do we make sure students are both safe and comfortable enough with the language and concepts that they are truly reflecting on their thoughts as opposed to giving an answer they think the teacher wants to hear?
3. What is the best format to capture student voice where the format itself isn't a barrier? Ex-students who struggle writing their ideas on paper.

Self - Assessment

1. How do we best support students in their metacognition of the SLT?
2. How do students and teachers determine growth and next steps while maintaining strength-based language?
3. How will we know if students are truly aware of where they are?
4. How will we gauge the level of student's adoption of the language and practice?

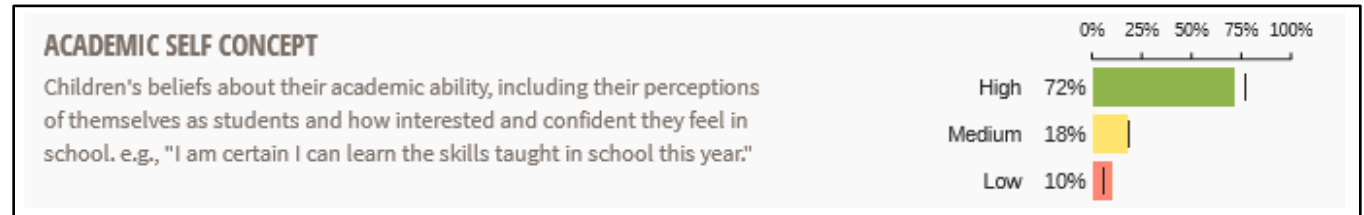
Evidence/Data to Support:

Due to the fact we are just embarking on our new question we have spent the bulk of our year exploring our scanning phase. Based on the barriers we were facing as outlined in the scanning section, we really wanted to focus on how we could best set a direction and create a framework with tools and scaffolds to deal with those barriers. Most of our efforts in the latter part of the year have been on creating and implementing basic responses to the 3 themes that evolved in our focus area.

Interestingly, when we look at the MDI Academic Self Concept response it indicates that most of our students do feel good about their ability to learn which is important when we consider that our first focus area is to make sure we are providing the right scaffolding and support for our students to learn the SLT. If 72% of our learners believe they have a high sense of belief in their ability to learn then we should be able to successfully support the learning of the SLT for all our students at their level.

When we look at the Grade 4 BC student Learning Survey, students also indicated that they both have chances to self-assess their work and also believe they are getting better at it.

Note - Giant's Head is a school that has had a fairly stable teaching staff and who have a strong history of collaboration. Because of this, we believe that even though these two surveys are based solely on the Grade 4 cohort and because of our collaborative nature, these results would be indicative of a general response across all grades.



2020 Grade 4 Student Learning Survey



Developing a Hunch: What is leading to this situation?

As we moved through the year, with our focus on 1) Student learning of SLT; 2) Authentic Voice; 3) Self-Assessment; we continued to develop and hone our formative assessment skills with regards to the SLTs.

1) Student Learning of SLT - Previous to this year, Giant's Head has emphasized the "Name, Notice, Nurture" aspect of implementation. We have had school wide assemblies and daily announcements for each trait with words of the week to support the trait. As a staff we found that both student and teacher use and adoption of the SLTs were, for the most part, still superficial. This year, we looked at being more explicit in co-creating anchor charts/criteria lists with our students. Our belief is that, if

students are involved in the process of creating what each trait looks like, feels like, and sounds like in the classroom, they will have a sense of ownership and deepen their “buy in” and adoption of the SLT practices. As well, by being a part of the process on the ground level, students will develop a deeper understanding of each of the 8 traits and have a better sense of each traits essence which will facilitate productive learning moving forward.

2) Authentic Voice - Over the last 2 years, the staff felt that students struggled with authentic voice for a couple of different reasons. First, we wondered if they truly understood the essence of each trait which would create barriers for accurate responses. Secondly, we wondered if they had enough awareness of language to accurately describe each trait but also in general when expressing their ideas and feelings. Moving forward this year, we wanted to scaffold the language for our students with class derived anchor/criteria charts; dedicate more time to developing class wide appreciation of what each trait looked like, felt like and sounded like and connect those ideas to words the students could access on their own to accurately and honestly describe their thoughts, feelings and opinions. We believe that if we explicitly teach the concept, connecting SLT language and support the development of how students express themselves in general, our students would develop a more authentic voice.

3) Self-Assemsment - We felt that the students were not always capable of the metacognition needed to be aware and honest enough to display an authentic voice. Authentic and honest self-assessment starts with the student being thoroughly aware of what the criteria is along with exemplars that provide clear models and standards that students can compare themselves to. Most students “want to please” so without a clear understanding of the expectation's students will assume that they are doing what is being asked. Given this, we believe that if we set clear criteria and exemplars, students will be better positioned to accurately see themselves in the criteria. A key component scaffolding student self-assessment will be the structured discussions and modelling teachers can provide in both class wide settings and individually.

New Professional Learning: (Summarize new areas for professional learning and how you will go about designing new learning for yourself and your staff that will impact your learners.)

Moving forward, we will look to continue to develop and hone our skills with respect to best practices supporting student learning and self-assessment.

Taking Action: What will you do differently?

As we consider our next steps, we will look to evaluate the difference we are making with students and our effectiveness by collecting data on student success.

Communication Strategies: (How will you communicate your inquiry and your results to the school community?)

Going into the 2020-2021 school year we will target communication with our community more through the use of All About Me and through typical PAC and newsletter lines of communication.

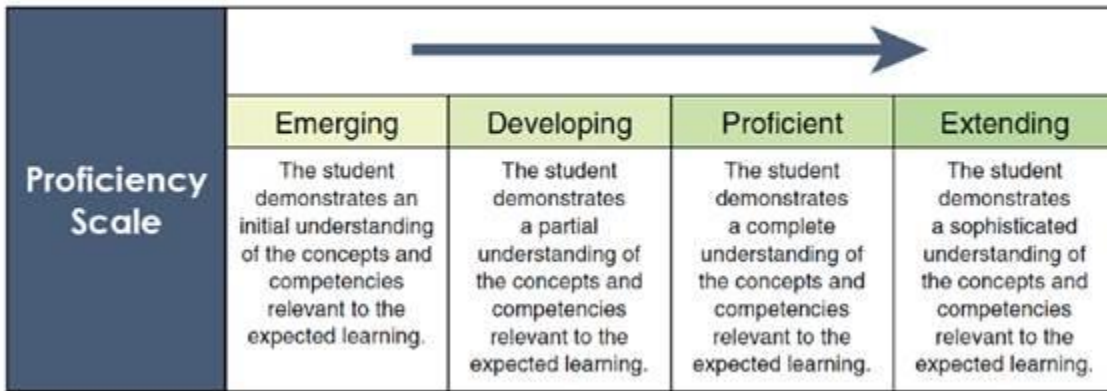
Parental/Community Involvement: (How will you work together as a school community to do this work?)

Connection to the District Goals:

District Inquiry: if we focus on building inclusionary instruction and assessment practices that engage learners, provide choice and flexibility and reflect First People’s Principles of Learning, will we see all students complete school with a sense of dignity, purpose, and options?

Inherent in our school growth plan we are developing and honing our instructional and assessment practices which will support student sense of efficacy as they navigate the core competencies.

The **four-point provincial proficiency scale** is used in K-9 to communicate student progress in all areas of learning. The four points on the scale include Emerging, Developing, Proficient, and Extending.



Proficiency Scale	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Extending
	The student demonstrates an initial understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.	The student demonstrates a partial understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.	The student demonstrates a complete understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.	The student demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning.