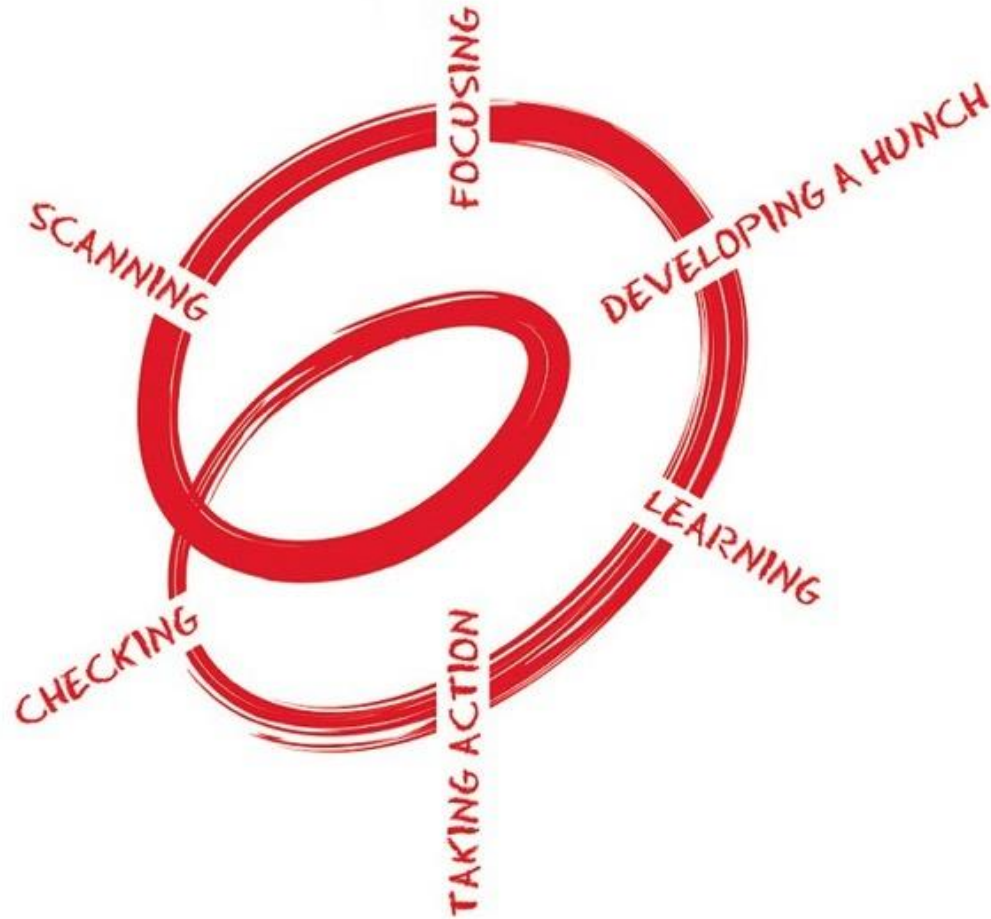




## School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) School Growth Plan



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



## School: Summerland Middle School

### **School Context:**

School District 67 (Okanagan Skaha) and Summerland Middle School wish to recognize the Okanagan (Syilx) People and our local nation, the Penticton Indian Band, on whose territories we live, learn, and do our work. Summerland Middle School is a dual track (English and Late French Immersion) school with 304 students.

Students come from one of our two feeder schools and there is a strong sense of community in our school. Starting in 2016 we started re-visioning our school using the Spirals of Inquiry and began looking at Emotional Intelligence. Each year we learn a bit more and narrow our focus. In 2019-20 we implemented the RULER approach school wide.

***We wondered if teaching emotional intelligence and having students reflect on their choices will increase our students' ability to use, understand and manage emotions in an effective and positive way.***

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

For the last three years our school has been looking at the impact of Emotional Intelligence strategies on our students. We started by focusing on caring, confidence and responsibility from the Personal Awareness and Responsibility Core Competency. We realized that we had bitten off more than we could chew, so we chose to narrow our focus to "Caring". However, we struggled making it meaningful in our context and we were unsure whether the work made a difference.

The 2018-19 year brought new staff to our school and new ideas. About 1/3 of our teachers began implementing the RULER approach in their classrooms.

RULER is based on the following principles:

**Recognizing emotions to obtain valuable information about ourselves and our environment**

**Understand the causes and consequences of emotions to predict behavior**

**Label emotions to describe feelings accurately.**

**Express emotions to communicate effectively in socially appropriate ways**

**Regulating emotions to promote learning, personal growth and healthy relationships**

Throughout the year we developed a Staff Charter. This work set the stage for us to go school wide. In 2019-20 we decided to implement a school charter that would create common language and expectations. More importantly, the application of a school wide charter would engage students in a process of reflection and understanding their emotions and the potential impact on others.

**Our goal(s); we will...**teach emotional intelligence through the execution of a School Wide Charter and introducing the Mood Meter, Meta Moment and Blueprint. We hope to see an increase our student's ability to identify, use, understand, reflect and manage emotions in an effective and positive way.

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

### **Successes**

This year engaged our student leadership team in the developing a school wide charter. We felt it was important to include the student's voice in this process. Creating a charter takes you through the process of understanding "how we want to feel at school". It sets out actionable (SMART) goals that help us assess how we are doing and if there are specific areas we need to focus on.

Looking at data we collected over the course of the year we can note specific areas of success. For instance, according to the MDI data 64% of students have a moderate to high level of thriving. This number is 5% above the district average. According to the survey our students report to being above their peers in SD 67 in the following areas: optimism, absence of sadness and adult relationships. On the same note 80% of our students report to having positive relationships with adults in our building and have more positive relationships with their peers than other schools in our district.

The MDI looks at school culture and defines it as whether "people care about each other". According to this metric we are below the district average. This indicates that our work on managing and understanding emotions is well founded.

Unfortunately, due to COVID and students continuing their learning remotely we were unable to poll our student body on their growth in the RULER skills and their ability to apply the four anchors. This will be something we will continue with in 2020-21.

### **Challenges**

While we definitely made strides this year, we certainly still faced some challenges along the way:

- a. Everyone has not bought in. We are still working on embedding the common language and principles across our school.
- b. We need to work with Advisory teachers to use the recently created Advisory Blueprint lessons so that all students have the opportunity to learn about the

- Blueprint. This will ensure that a common language is being used around the building with staff and students.
- c. Finding time to engage in the proper Professional Development has been challenging.
  - d. Due to COVID-19 we did not have students in our building to collect data in the Spring.
  - e. Some of the data collected through the MDI suggests that we should continue to work on school culture.
  - f. The MDI also indicates that our students have less resiliency than their similar aged peers in the district.
  - g. Our data is not necessarily reflective of our whole school. The MDI data is only based on our Grade 7's and our other data was gleaned from our RULER classes.
  - h. Our students also report slightly lower numbers regarding peer interactions when compared to other SD67 students.

### **Taking Action: What will you do differently?**

Over the course of the 2019-20 year we got a lot done.

- 1) In September teachers were given a binder of activities that would help them introduce the RULER approach to their classes. There were resources on the 4 anchors, community building and how to facilitate a class charter.
- 2) Our planner this year included RULER documents for our school wide Matrix tour in early September.
- 3) During the second week of school students toured the school with their teachers and as a class talked about how they wanted to feel in each area of the school. After the tour each class chose their "top three" emotions and discussed action plans (SMART goals). We used this data to anchor our school charter.
- 4) In October and November, we took the list of emotions generated from the tours and began paring it down. Working with our Student Leaders (Me to We Club) we engaged our students and had them tell us how they wanted to feel. They narrowed it down to 5 – Safe, Included, Supported, Respected and Happy in our school.
- 5) Once we had our Charter Emotions, we needed to define what they meant and how they could be applied in our school setting. Our Me to We club worked with students to create SMART goals. They were able to effectively define and create actionable ways for our students to understand our Charter.
- 6) In January we had posters created for every room in our school, bulletin boards made up and the SMART goals available for everyone. The bulletin boards were designed and created by some of our Grade 6 students. We wanted to incorporate the language into our school. We also used weekly themes on announcements to highlight how we wanted to feel at school.

- 7) We also had a group of teachers apply for a SD67 Grant to go deeper into this work. Specifically, embed the vocabulary into our school culture. Their goals were to:
  - a. Provide teachers with Advisory lessons that incorporate the charter into our school culture.
  - b. Connect emotions to the Core Competencies (Personal/Social Responsibility)
  - c. Create a resource list (videos and activities) to accompany activities
- 8) We also implemented the Blueprint as a tool when students were referred to the office. Before returning to class students take the opportunity to reflect and think how they would manage their emotions differently next time.

**At SMS, we want to feel:**

**Respected, Happy, Safe, Included, Supported**

Some ways to help us feel these emotions:

**Respected**

- Include people but also respect those that need to be alone, give them their space if needed
- Let all opinions be heard in discussion
- Honor each other's individuality, interests, and beliefs

**Happy**

- Treat others the way you wanted to be treated
- Make people laugh
- Have fun

**Safe**

- When you see someone, who is alone or seems distant, walk up and introduce yourself
- Be mindful of others physical and mental boundaries
- Don't pressure others to do things

**Included**

- Be kind
- Do not be quick to judge, ask questions to seek understanding
- Be open and welcoming, invite others to play a game, get to know each other

**Supported**

- Be kind
- Respect individuality
- Help people to be comfortable as themselves



**Check: Have we made enough of a difference? How do we know?**

As already mentioned, our data is limited. However, we do feel that we are making a difference, but we certainly have work to do. Moving forward we would like to see a deeper implementation of charters and engagement with other parts of the RULER approach (Mood Meter, Meta Moment and Blueprint). Ideally, we would see teachers using the Four Anchors in their classrooms on a regular basis.

**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?)**

**Evidence/Data to support:**

We know that emotions are integral to learning. People needed support – professional development and time in order to move to full implementation of this approach. They have asked for strategies and resources to aid implementation.

It will be the work of the leadership team (Admin and teacher leaders) to put a plan in place that includes start up and ongoing resources as we move into full implementation next year.

**Developing a Hunch: What is leading to this situation?**

Our continued efforts in the realm of Social-Emotional learning come down to the fact that middle school students and their level of development struggle in the areas of Self-Regulation and Emotional Regulation.

Often students make similar mistakes over and over again. Developmentally, they are egocentric and do not see how their behaviors and actions impact other people.

Our hope is that by further developing our skills and helping students understand the importance of emotions in learning and healthy relationships we will see a difference in our students and our school as a whole.

**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.)**

As mentioned above our leadership team will work to develop an implementation plan that builds upon structures already in place in our school (behavior matrix assemblies) to deepen the work around our School Wide Charter.

Throughout the year we will continue to work with teachers and develop their knowledge in the other aspects of the process (Mood Meter, Meta Moment, My Blueprint) and provide the tools and strategies to incorporate them into their classroom.

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

We feel we need to do a better job engaging our parents in the work we are doing at school. Next year the principal will continue to send a monthly email home updating parents on the progress the school is making and the themes we are focusing on. Our hope is to increase the amount of dialogue between parents and students, but also between the home and school. We are hoping to increase dialogue and engage our parent community as partners in this work.

**Connection to the District Goals: (How does this plan connect to our district goals?)**

**Connection to the 7 Principles of Learning:  
(How do each of these principles align with your plan?)**

1. **Learners at the centre**
2. **Social nature of learning**
3. **Emotions are integral to learning**
4. **Recognizing individual differences**
5. **Stretching all students**
6. **Assessment for learning**
7. **Building horizontal connections**

Our work ties in directly with the District goal of focusing on inclusionary classrooms (and relationships) that will enable to students to complete school with a sense of dignity, purpose and options. Students who do not have the ability to self-regulate and maintain healthy relationships are at risk of not completing school. The work also ties directly into principle #2 the social nature of learning, principle #3 emotions are integral to learning, and principle #4 recognizing individual differences.

