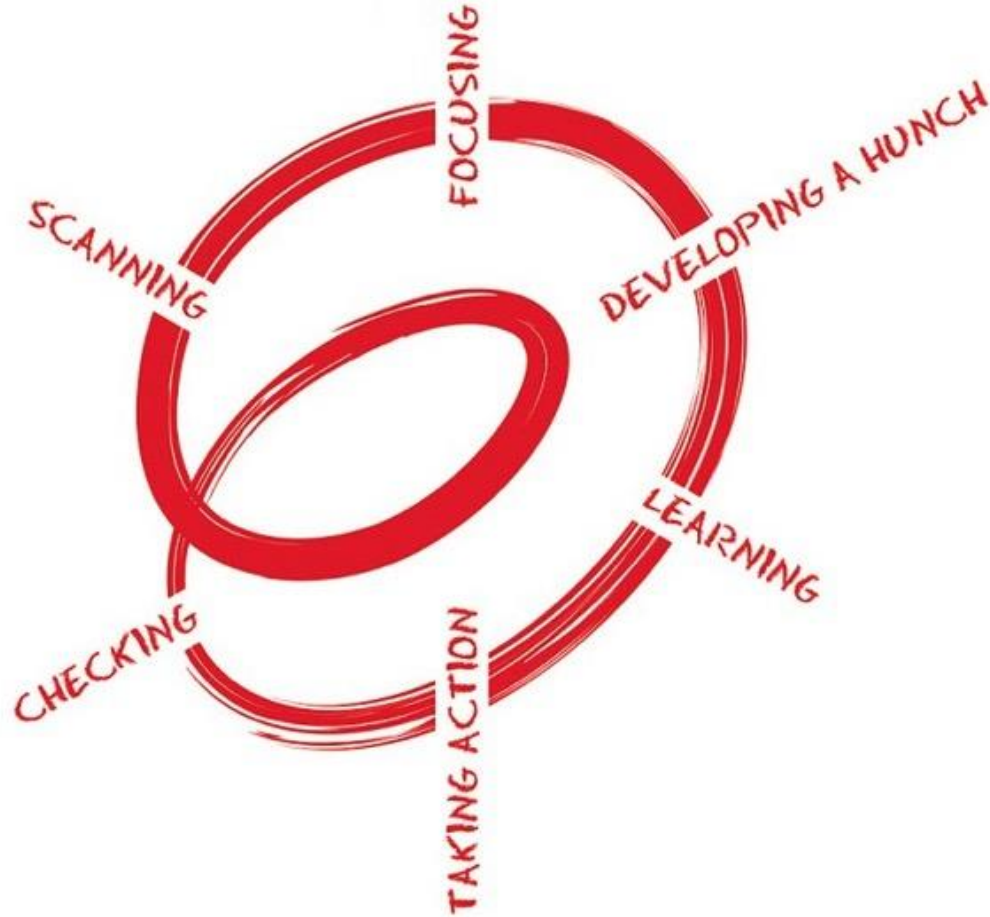




School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) School Growth Plan 2019-2020



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



School: West Bench Elementary

WEST BENCH SCHOOL CONTEXT

West Bench Elementary hosts 105 students from Kindergarten to Grade 5 in five divisions. The West Bench School Community includes students and their families from the West Bench Neighbourhood (Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen 'Area F') and the community at Apex Mountain as well as the Penticton Indian Band. The West Bench student body is comprised of students representing culturally diverse backgrounds. The unique nature and needs of our students provide many opportunities to teach respect: respect for self, others, learning, and the environment.

We believe strongly in creating and maintaining a culture at West Bench that is welcoming, safe, and provides a healthy learning environment. Our 19 staff members (teaching, non-enrolling, itinerant and support) are dedicated to providing a wide range of learning and growing opportunities for our students.

West Bench is privileged to have a very supportive Parent Advisory Council (PAC). PAC provides financial support to subsidize curricular and cultural field trips, which enrich daily learning in countless ways, as well as, extra-curricular activities.

West Bench Elementary values:

- a healthy school climate for all members of the learning community
- the holistic benefits of outdoor learning
- student connectedness and engagement in all areas
- collaborative focus on academic and personal needs
- Social Emotional Learning as part of a fundamental skill set
- the cultural heritage of our students and their families
- parental and family support and inclusion

Inquiry Question:

For several years, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies were the center of our school-wide focus. Staff shifted the lens of focus towards the First Peoples Principles of Learning. This year the connection to nature and outdoor learning is at the forefront. Supporting students in making the connection between the First Peoples Principles of Learning, Indigenous Learning and outdoor learning has been the lens through which we focus.

Our goal(s): To investigate the following Question:

If we embed local Indigenous Learning and Teachings into outdoor learning activities, will we see students gain a deeper understanding of First Peoples Principles of Learning? Will students reflect this learning in their self-assessment of the core competencies?

Scanning:

2017-18

As a professional learning community, the West Bench staff began the school year with collaborative dialogue around First Peoples Principles of Learning. While each of the principles are embedded in what we do, common themes emerged resulting in our focus to be on the specific principles:

- Learning is holistic, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity

This focus is centered on the indigenous perspectives that everything is interconnected in a meaningful way that impacts one's identity. Based on these principles, the research reminds us of some common traditional beliefs about learning. That, where possible, learning should be a part of real-life situations so that the knowledge learned can transfer to the life of the learner.

As such, participants identified a need to explore structures and strategies of outdoor learning through the lens of indigenous perspectives in order to better support the well-being of our students' connectedness and identity.

2018-2019

Based on the work from the past year (see above) our staff felt the next step to move our school forward is the implementation of a school wide social responsibility program that incorporates an indigenous perspective. Through research and collaborative discussions with staff, parents and the community, we implemented a program consisting of monthly themes that incorporate virtues and traditional teachings from the Okanagan First Nation with a focus on the Seven Grandfather Teachings and the Food Chiefs.

2019-2020

Throughout this school year, staff and students have continued with monthly themes (see above) incorporating virtues and traditional teachings from the Okanagan First Nation with a focus on the Seven Grandfather Teachings and the Food Chiefs. Students and staff have completed the full rotation of all the monthly themes. Through discussion with staff and parents it was clear the importance of outdoor learning experiences and the connection to Indigenous Learnings and Teachings for students. Thus, staff moved to enhance outdoor learning experiences by embedding the Indigenous Learnings and Teachings and the First Peoples Principles of Learning.

Challenges

With this focus in mind, the staff engaged in collaborative discussions through the lens of our student demographic. These conversations resulted in a student focus of three questions:

1. Are we embedding Indigenous Learning and Teaching into our outdoor learning experiences?
2. Are we incorporating the First Peoples Principles of Learning in a meaningful way that supports our students?
3. Are students reflecting on the outdoor learning experiences in their self-assessments of the core competencies using My Blueprint?

Focusing:

Evidence/Data to support:

Based on these three questions we conducted three activities. The first activity was to provide students with background knowledge prior to their outdoor learning experience. The second activity was to frontload the students with a specific First Peoples Principles Learning example. The third was to review and reflect using the *Aboriginal Education for All* rubric. The results from these activities allow staff to gauge the level of connectedness of our students to school as well as measure the level of impact our inquiry is having on our students.

Activity 1: School-wide hike

Teachers shared with students an Indigenous Teaching/Learning prior to leaving the school on the weekly hike (February is the Time of Buttercups). Students learned about the significance and importance of the buttercup to the Okanagan First Nation. Teachers found that students observed more closely the terrain around them throughout the hike. Students were excited to point out buttercups they noticed and upon return to the school shared out their observations in their class check-in meetings. Teachers commented that the students engaged in conversations with their peers throughout the hike about the surroundings and that older peers ensured younger peers noticed the buttercups by pointing them out to them. Teachers named the core competencies that students had engaged in during the hike (communication, personal and social).

Activity 2:

Teachers selected one First Peoples Principles of Learning to embed into their daily teachings. For example, one teacher selected *Learning takes patience and time*. This teacher found moments during the school day to name and identify activities that were specific to this Principle. The students in this class spent time working in the school garden, harvesting the crops that they had planted the previous spring. The teacher heard students using the words patience and time while they were working in the garden. Later the students reflected on

their experiences using *My Blueprint* and the correlation to the core competency *Personal Awareness and Responsibility*. Many students made the connection that growing vegetables takes patience and time as does learning at school.

Activity 3:

Staff revisited and reviewed West Bench’s progress on achieving Exemplary on the *Aboriginal Education for All* rubric. As in previous years, the intention of this tool is as a schoolwide self-assessment regarding the implementation of Aboriginal Education. The results below are the averages based on all assessments that were completed. The colour yellow represents 2017 results while blue represents 2019 results if the results were different. Staff agreed that there were no changes in the results for 2020.



Aboriginal Education for All Rubric – School District No.67 (Okanagan Skaha)

	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4
<p>Academic Resiliency <i>To increase the educational success of all Aboriginal students.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -staffs are developing an awareness of their Aboriginal student population. -Visual aspects of Aboriginal culture are evident in 1-2 classrooms. -Aboriginal students are minimally engaged in the classroom. -Aboriginal parents/community are minimally invited to school events. -staffs are thinking about tracking their Aboriginal students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - staffs are aware of their vulnerable Aboriginal students. -few examples of Aboriginal art are evident in school entrance, hallways and classrooms. -some Aboriginal students are engaged and understanding the learning materials. -some staff appreciates the importance of strong personal relationships when working with Aboriginal students, parents and/or community. - staffs are discussing tracking their Aboriginal students and gathering data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -staffs promote additional support of their vulnerable Aboriginal students. -Aboriginal art is evident in school entrance, hallways and classrooms. -some Aboriginal students understand and incorporate the learning materials in their lives. -many staff appreciates the importance of strong personal relationships when working with Aboriginal students, their parents and community. -staffs include a specific Aboriginal objective or target which could include a literacy and/or numeracy goal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -staffs support their most vulnerable Aboriginal students. -noticeable Aboriginal presence in school entrance, hallways and classrooms. -all Aboriginal students are engaged and taking pride in their learning. -all staff appreciates the importance of strong personal relationships when working with Aboriginal students, their parents and community. -staffs include and monitor specific Aboriginal objective or target which could include a literacy and/or numeracy goal.
<p>Cultural Perspective <i>To raise awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history, traditions, and culture for all students and staff in the Okanagan Skaha School District.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -collecting resources and information focused on Aboriginal culture that can be connected to the prescribed learning outcomes. -thinking about inviting Aboriginal role models into the school. -thinking about Aboriginal pedagogy. -minimal authentic resources in schools and libraries and/or outdated resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -direct instruction on anti-racism education and deconstructing biases. -a few Aboriginal role models are invited into the school. -learning about Aboriginal pedagogy. -some authentic resources in schools and libraries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -presence of Aboriginal culture is visual and integral to lesson and activities. -some Aboriginal role models are invited into the school throughout the year. -talking about Aboriginal pedagogy and incorporating it into practice. -several authentic Aboriginal resources in schools and libraries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Aboriginal cultural knowledge is respected and valued, and is taught in any PLO not just ones with specific Aboriginal content. -community role models are involved in classroom practice. -when we are no longer talking about Aboriginal pedagogy—it’s just what we do. -libraries have been culled for stereotypical representation and resources replaced with authentic Aboriginal resources.



Aboriginal Education for All Rubric – School District No.67 (Okanagan Skaha)

<p>Relationships <i>To nurture and foster relationships between the Okanagan Skaha School District and Aboriginal families, communities, and organizations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PAC is developing some understanding of Aboriginal issues. -no direct Aboriginal community involvement in school. -teacher directed Aboriginal themed field trip with minimal involvement with community. -they know the location of a First Nations community. -very little knowledge of community agencies or support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -PAC have some awareness of Aboriginal issues. -Aboriginal parents invited to supervise on a field trip. -Aboriginal presentations in 1-2 classrooms with local resource people. -staff have some Aboriginal knowledge, but not firsthand knowledge of local communities. -community organizations have been mentioned in SBT's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Aboriginal people are encouraged to attend PAC. -Aboriginal parents will come on field trips. -one social/cultural event in the school where Aboriginal parents will participate. -one time visit by the staff in the community. -community organizations have been contacted following SBT's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Aboriginal parents actively involved in the PAC and SPC. -Aboriginal parents taking leadership roles in field trips. -Aboriginal theme - school wide over a period of time. -Parents are cultural resource in schools. (Results based on the past) -Parent information session held in FN community. -community organizations are regularly used to support students and families.
<p>School Connectedness <i>To increase Aboriginal student's sense of belonging, including sense of place, personal and cultural identity, and self-esteem in a caring, safe and inclusive environment.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -discussion about having a cultural event in the school. -learning about the local culture from book and resources. -using Aboriginal resources they already have in their school. -beginning awareness that there are cultural events in their community open for everyone to attend. -principals thinking about acknowledging the territory at school events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -one cultural event per year. -staffs attend a workshop to learn about Aboriginal history, knowledge and of our shared history. -seeking out already created curriculum related to Aboriginal. -having a representative from the school attending one cultural event. -principals discussing acknowledging the territory at school events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -some classrooms have language and culture. -teachers aware of the local culture/protocols so they can integrate into teaching. -developing a curriculum by working together with teachers and cultural resource people. -some teachers attending two cultural events per year. -some schools have an Elder in Residence. -Sometimes acknowledgement of the territory is done. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -on-going cultural events. -culture and/or language in each grade across and throughout the school. -all staff members have clear understanding and respect of the local culture. -staffs attending community events. -dual Okanagan language signs in schools. -Acknowledgment of the territory at school events is a given.

Key Learnings:

Participants have concluded that the power of implementing a school-wide approach with a First Peoples Principles of Learning framework that is supplemented with outdoor learning opportunities is paramount to establishing a healthy learning environment. Based on the data from the scanning process the participants concluded that there is a strong sense of school connectedness in our students and, as a school, a lot of focus and effort by all staff has resulted in meaningful implementation of First Peoples Principles of Learning in outdoor learning experiences. While these strengths have been recognized and celebrated, the participants also noted that there is still a lot of work to be done to enhance our student/school connectedness as well as work towards incorporating indigenous perspectives across all curriculum and the core competencies.

Developing a Hunch:

Self-regulation for students is constant throughout the day. The environment students experience is ever-changing, and students must learn to adapt. In addition, students are faced with stressors outside the school environment. For many students in our demographic, these stressors can compound and become overwhelming which impacts their day to day learning and well-being. As an inquiry group, participants acknowledge the need for a school-wide approach to Social Emotional Learning through outdoor learning opportunities. By connecting

this approach to the First Peoples Principles of Learning students will benefit from land-based, holistic connections. Work over the past few years around Social Emotional Learning has provided a common language for students and staff. Students are now equipped with various strategies to help self-regulate. Participants would like to incorporate these strategies across all aspects of the curriculum and school settings to even better equip our students with self-regulation skills.

New Professional Learning:

- One staff member attended FNEESC conference in Fall
- Ongoing collaboration at monthly staff meetings
- Relationship has been established with En'owkin Center to co-plan hands on learning opportunities for our students
- One staff member applied and received a HCTF GO grant – students went to Locatee Lands and Okanagan Nation Alliance Fish Hatchery
- One staff member applied for the Fish in Schools program through Okanagan Nation Alliance Fish Hatchery (101 Sockeye Salmon) which were released into the Channel which feeds Skaha Lake

Taking Action:

- Continue to embed First Peoples Principles of Learning and Indigenous teachings into students' outdoor learning experiences
- Continue to implement a Social Responsibility Program that utilizes Indigenous Perspective
- Outdoor Kindergarten
- Indigenous Cultural themed events and assemblies throughout the year
- Reflecting on and analyzing the MDI data
- Students organized a schoolwide 'Feast' during our garden harvest
- Cross Country Skiing program (school-wide) with Spirit North
- Social Emotional Learning Strategies: staff will continue the use of Mind Up, Core Practice and Zones of Regulation curriculum
- Aboriginal Education for All: continue to build on experiencing cultural activities
- Okanagan Language Lessons for all students
- Community Summer Garden Project
- Year-round recycling and composting projects
- Community experts in for invasive plants, local animals and composting

Checking:

Measures for next year:

- ongoing reflections at monthly staff meetings
- utilizing the MDI data

- look at student achievement data
- continue to provide students with outdoor learning opportunities with an Indigenous focus
- self-assessment on Aboriginal Education For All Rubric
- Continue to provide opportunities for student voice
- Continue to develop and implement the school-wide social responsibility program with the Grandfather Teachings and Food Chiefs
- Continue to explore the relationship between outdoor learning and student reflections of the Core Competencies using My Blueprint

Communication Strategies:

- School goals, vision and student data are an ongoing topic for discussion at monthly PAC meetings
- Continued use of school website, newsletters and social media

Parental/Community Involvement:

- Parent evening occurred in September 2019
- Parents are invited into our school for various events and school functions
- Parental and family participation in joint programs such as our school garden.

Connection to the District Goals:

- Aligns with district goals around student achievement in literacy
- Aligns with district goals around school completion
- Aligns with district vision around the guiding principles for developing and implementing the RTI Framework:
 - Instruction – central to the success of RTI is high quality classroom core instruction and management
 - Responsive Teaching & Differentiation – focus on differentiating instruction for struggling students
 - Collaboration – dynamic, positive, productive partnerships among professionals to establish common goals
 - Expertise – importance of teacher expertise (Classroom and Learning Support Teachers) in addressing the needs of students