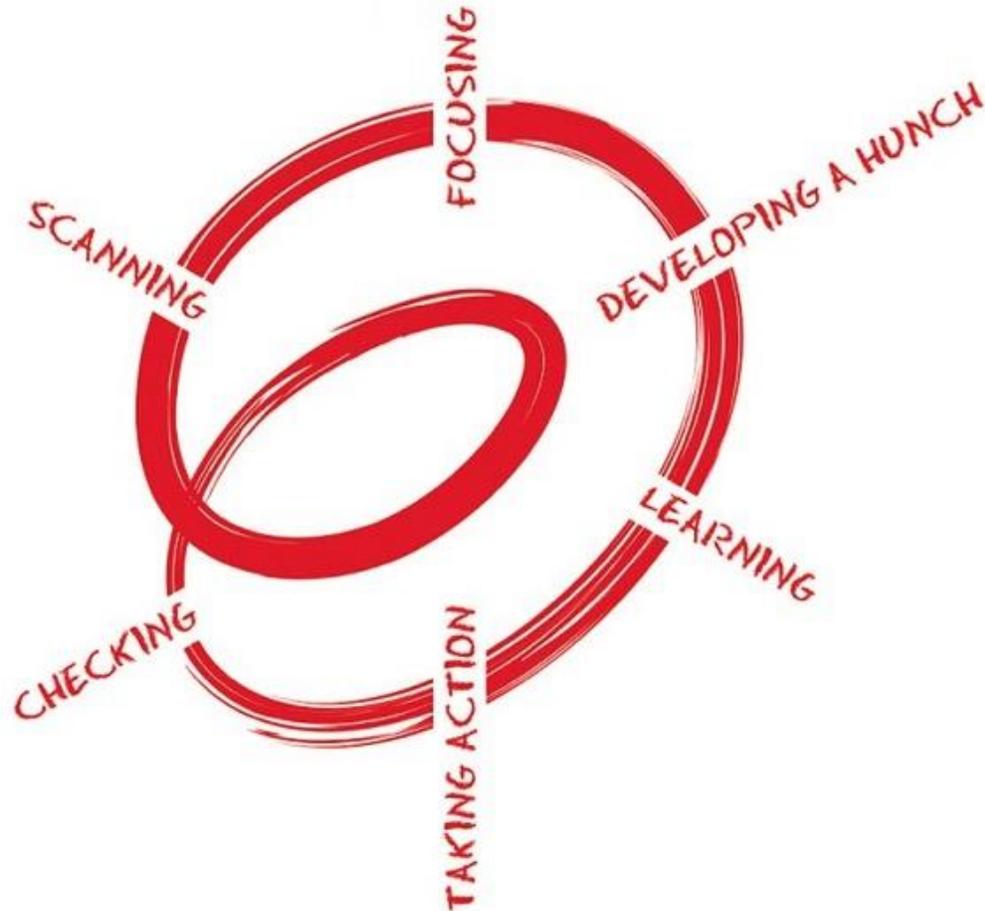




## School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) Summerland Middle - School Growth Plan



*"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 308 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. We have spent the last two years going deeper into the Personal Awareness and Responsibility Competencies. In 2018-19 we narrowed the focus to Well-Being. ***More specifically, we wondered if teaching emotional intelligence 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?

Dating back to 2016-17 we have been looking at the Personal Awareness and Responsibility competency. Based on some of our initial digging we focused on developing Caring, Confidence and Responsibility in our students. Last year we narrowed that focus and worked on the notion of Caring – specifically connecting with students and creating a safe environment.

In 2017-18 we tried a number of initiatives, but did not see the results that we were hoping for. At times things we tried seemed a bit contrived and somewhat out of context. We struggled to find meaningful and genuine ways to foster the notion of caring. Having said that, teaching and assessing “caring” are not simple tasks. As a school we knew we wanted to go deeper, but the pathway was not clear.

The 2018-19 year brought a number of new staff to our school and with new staff there are often new ideas that come with looking at our context with a different perspective. On our initial implementation day one of our new staff members brought up the RULER approach that she helped facilitate at another school. As the conversation grew the concepts began to resonate with a number of our teachers and they were keen to begin implementation.

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

The approach was intriguing and we wondered if it might give us the process we have been struggling to find. We were hopeful it could give us the traction we needed to move forward. Our feeling was that if we centered our learning on how emotions tie into learning and overall well-being we might hit some of the healthy relationship targets we were aiming for at the end of last year.

**Our goal(s); we will...** teach emotional intelligence. We hope to see an increase in our student's ability to identify, use, understand 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 we had 6 classes implement classroom charters and we were able to generate a staff charter. 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 changes we need to make or 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 66% of students have a moderate to high level of thriving. On the same note 93% of our students report to having positive relationships with adults in our building and 84% said they have positive relationships with their peers.

We also collected school data that indicated 90% of students say that they can recognize and name their emotions. Many were able to give examples as to how emotions impact their learning.

***"If relaxed, I can focus. If relaxed, I can concentrate."***

***"If sad, I become stressed and unfocused."***

***"Feeling angry does not help me learn."***

***"If I am feeling competitive I will do well and try my best."***

## Challenges

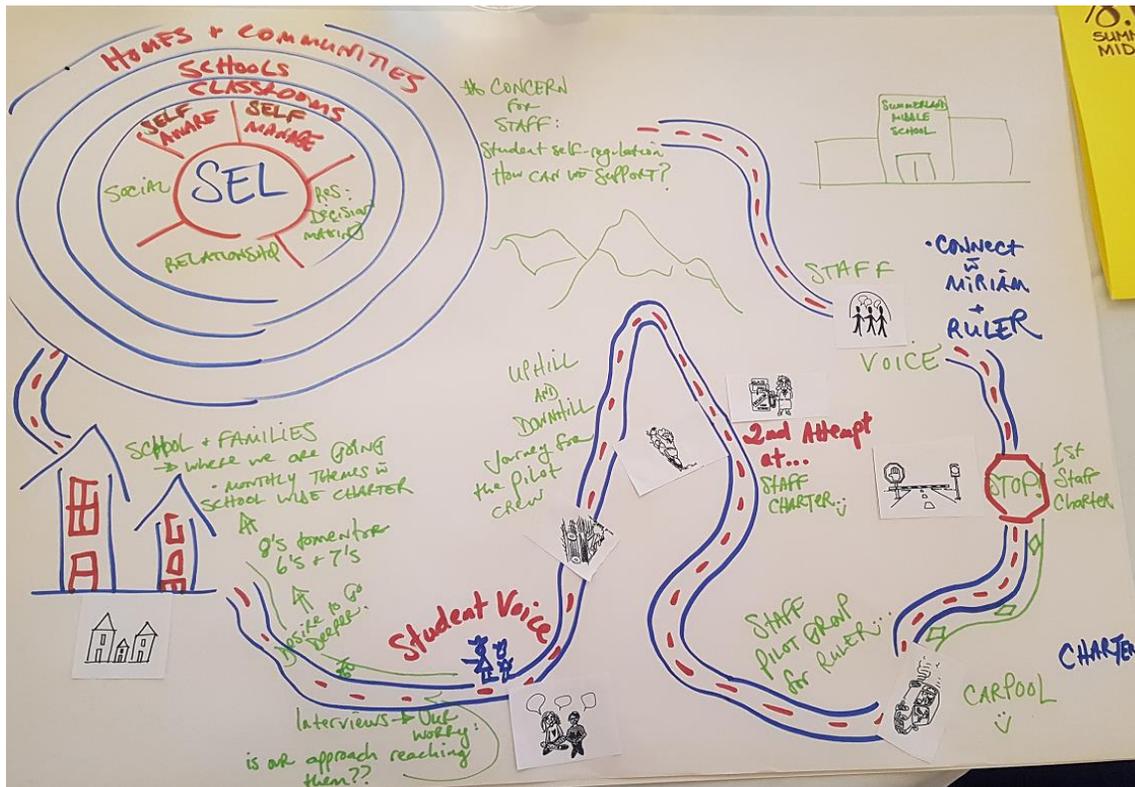
While we definitely made strides this year, we certainly still faced some challenges along the way:

- a. We had ½ of our classes implement class charters.
- b. Initially, staff were not supportive of a charter.
- c. Even though our students report higher on the MDI scales adult relationships at school were lower than District average.
- d. 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.
- e. Our students also report slightly lower numbers regarding peer interactions when compared to other SD67 students.
- f. Our SMS survey told us 90% of students felt they could recognize and name their emotions only 71% indicated that emotions are important in their learning.

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

Over the course of the 2018-19 year we got a lot done.

- 1) Leveraging the work of our teachers we implemented a staff charter in January of 2019. We hope this will help staff understand the process and more teachers will implement a class charter once they see the value. We took meeting time each month to reflect on the SMART goals and bring focus to what we do well and stretches we all have.
- 2) On the October Pro-D day we brought in Miriam Miller, who is the only Yale Certified RULER instructor in BC to work with a large group of our teachers.
- 3) Over the course of Fall and Spring we offered 4 after school training sessions facilitated by Melissa Burdock on the RULER approach. Teachers got training on the Class Charter, Meta Moment and Blueprint. These sessions also were a support for those who have implemented the Charter in their classroom.
- 4) We are working through Team Leaders to create a plan for implementation of a School Wide Charter Process that we will delve into in September 2019. We hope that this will deepen the understanding and commitment of our staff. It will also provide common language for all.
- 5) We will incorporate the language into our student and parent handbooks.
- 6) Three staff (Melissa Burdock, Lana Manuel and Darcy Mullin) attended the Lleyton Schnellert series in SD67 to work on the implementation of our plan. The following image is a summary of our journey.



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

Based on the data cited in the successes and challenges we can see 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).

**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. We polled our staff to see what they needed in order to implement RULER. The message was very clear. People needed support – professional development and time in order to move to full implementation of this approach. It will be the work of the leadership team (Admin and team leaders) to put a plan 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. 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 develop and implement a school wide charter in September. 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).

**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 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 No. 3 that recognizes that emotions are integral to learning.