

STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2023

In alignment with the Ministry of Education's Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, our Strategic Plan outlines the steps we are taking to fulfill our vision for Learning by Design. Our vision outlines our guiding values and beliefs which not only include a focus on learning and engagement, but also highlight our focus on equity and our commitment to truth and reconciliation. Consistent with the First Peoples' Principles of Learning, this is our learning story, and it anchors us in place and in our history.

Learning by Design anchors all of the district's work, and is summarized in three parts: Learning, Structures, and Tools. The implementation of our vision for Learning by Design, is guided by what we call our Priority Practices of Curriculum Design, Instructional Strategies, Quality Assessment, and Social and Emotional Learning. Finally, our priorities of inquiry focus on Student Transitions, Literacy and Numeracy, and Well-Being.

These three components, as a whole form our strategic foundation. Learning by Design is our Vision, Priority Practices are the roots of our instructional design, and Transitions, Literacy and Numeracy, and Well-Being are our District Inquiries which cause us to continually ask three questions:

- How are we doing?
- How do we know?
- How is our evidence informing and adjusting our practice?

We have an enormous array of evidence, context and information in each of our Priority Practices. In a summary Strategic Plan, we want to highlight our areas of inquiry which drive how our vision becomes a reality with supporting evidence.

Literacy and Numeracy

Context

Literacy and numeracy skills are the foundations of lifelong learning and full participation in society. These skills empower students to make meaning, think critically and creatively, and reach their full potential. Throughout the grades, the development of literacy and numeracy skills is embedded across all areas of learning.

The Ministry of Education defines literacy as "the ability to understand, critically analyze, and create a variety of forms of communication, including oral, written, visual, digital, and multimedia, to accomplish one's goals. Literacy helps students apply reading, writing, speaking and listening skills across a variety of subject areas." Numeracy is "the ability to

understand and apply mathematical concepts, processes, and skills to solve problems and make decisions in a variety of situations, including real-life scenarios.”

Our Strategic Plan includes the following steps related to the development of literacy and numeracy:

- Improving and expanding Early Learning opportunities in all schools with a specific focus on schools considered highly complex.
- Continually evaluating the evidence of learning and how it informs adjustments to practice.
- Re-emphasizing our commitment to literacy across the curriculum.

Strategic Goals and Evidence

Our strategic focus in these areas is on the primary years. We want to develop a strong early foundation for learning, which is critical for future success. Our primary assessment tools are the Early Literacy Phonemic Awareness Test (ELPATS) and What Do They Know (WDTK).

The ELPATS is a district-based oral assessment of phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to hear and identify sounds in spoken words. Phonemic awareness is one of the best predictors of how well children learn to read during the first two years of reading instruction. Where assessment results demonstrate limited phonemic awareness, our evidence consistently shows that with careful and intentional intervention, substantial gains are made, even with our most vulnerable learners.

WDTK is used by kindergarten teachers to capture learners’ foundations in numeracy. The WDTK tasks focus on patterning and subitizing. Patterning refers to the ability to recognize and create repeated designs or recurring sequence. Subitizing refers to the ability to immediately identify numbers of items quickly without needing to actually count them. These two skills are essential to helping students learn complex number concepts and mathematical operations.

Our district inquiry is to expand the use of ELPATS and of WDTK as a means to inform and guide our levels of support and interventions required in specific schools and grades.

Transitions

Context

Transitions refers to changes or movement from one stage to another, at significant points in our students’ lives. Transitions are disruptive, and as a result require the provision of extra care and attention to student needs, which in turn further informs our practices and our supports. When we think of transitions, we think of moments in time such as:

The move from early childhood to kindergarten and the formal structures of school.

Ensuring a continuity of play and learning and as students move through their elementary school years.

Changing from elementary schools to secondary schools, where students begin to see more adults and establish more cross-student connections, and when they begin to consider life beyond school.

The Graduation Program in the final years of grades 10-12 is the time when students lay down the foundation for life after they leave our school system.

The emergence into adulthood and life after school are the years when students continue to develop their independence and the seeds that were sown in K-12, now allowing them to pursue their adult passions and interests.

Strategic Goal and Evidence

For Surrey schools, we will examine the evidence of student transitions with a focus on the stories of students who are not successfully transitioning from grade-to-grade in the secondary years. Our evidence shows that there is a stark decline in grade-to-grade transitions beginning in grade 9 as students move to grade 10. The decline is most significant for students with diverse abilities or disabilities, Indigenous students, and students in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

Our district inquiry will examine grade-to-grade transitions specifically between grades 9-12 and to disaggregate the data for the sub-populations of Indigenous, students with diverse abilities or disabilities and Children in Care.

Our inquiry will focus on the evidence we have on the levels of literacy, numeracy and students' sense of well-being as they proceed through the secondary years. Our goal is to unearth the impact of these factors on grade-to-grade transition as a means to inform our practices of intervention and support.

Well-Being

Context

One of our Priority Practices as a district is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Our district has a longstanding commitment to SEL and it is the foundation for much of our work. The pandemic has elevated the importance of our commitment to the social and emotional as well as physiological wellness of our staff and students. As we prepare to manage through this first phase of our Strategic Plan and into the 2021-22 school year, we know that the emotional and mental health needs of our community will be front and centre in our work.

We also want to declare that when we talk about the adults in our system, we are not talking solely about teachers or educators, which would include principals and vice-principals and many district staff. Rather, we are talking about all adults regardless of their role in the system. This focus on staff translates to a focus on students in that they are surrounded by caring and committed adults.

To support our adults in the system, we have a deeply embedded mentorship program. We believe in the power of relationships and the necessary learning that occurs when you are connected to networks with similar values and beliefs.

Strategic Goal and Evidence

The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) is the primary tool for measuring student well-being. The MDI is a self-assessment of student wellness and includes physical, intellectual, and community measures. The Early Years Development Instrument (EDI) is an assessment instrument used by kindergarten teachers to assess students' early development and well-being.

In the 2021-22 school year, we will continue to use both EDI and MDI as pieces of evidence to inform our decisions on staffing and resources in areas of particular vulnerability. We will also use the ELPATS and WDTK evidence to inform our efforts to develop literacy and numeracy competencies. We will annually review and compare our EDI and MDI data to analyze trends and to adjustment programs as required.

To promote staff well-being, we have implemented both coaching and mentorship programs and we use surveys to conduct qualitative assessments to gauge staff well-being. Our early research in this area has demonstrated that those who participate in coaching and mentorship programs have an increased sense of well-being and report being more confident in their daily work.

Our goals are to continue to target staffing supports toward mentorship and coaching and these supports will continue to be monitored by responses to staff surveys. In addition, our instructional strategies and regional SEL teacher leads will continue to work with teachers to develop their specific comfort and competence with SEL and again surveys will be our main instrument of data collection.

Our Focus on Evidence

Context

As a common thread through all of our work, we have a deep commitment to evidence informed practice. Evidence takes the form of both qualitative and quantitative information.

We are fortunate to have a Research department who work hand in hand with our data team who focuses on our student information system. Our top priority is to gather evidence and provide analysis to help inform our district inquiries and direction.

Our evidentiary framework goes beyond our strategic planning. Our goal is to develop a culture that strategically uses evidence to inform practice and we have several initiatives and examples underway. Many of the examples used rely on our use of our internal data warehouse as well as being supplemented by Ministry data.

Current Evidence and Examples of Use

Transitions – We have dedicated analysis dashboards which look at the pathway for students as they move from grades 7-12. These tools can disaggregate data based on a range of demographic features.

Response - These tools have shone a light specifically on the stories of Indigenous learners. We use this evidence, working with our Indigenous Peoples' department and our regions to target interventions in schools down to the individual student level.

Vulnerable Schools – We have a sophisticated tool that examines over 40 factors including demographics, Human Resources, MyEDBC, and Census information to look at the concept of school complexity. We are able to map complexity across the district.

Response – We use this set of tools to identify schools that require additional resources and we specifically tie this information to some staffing and budget adjustments. There are many other uses for this information.

Well-Being – We have collected all the Middle Year's Development Instrument data and are correlating it with our Early Years data to map social and emotional well-being of students across the district. We map the data by school catchment.

Response – there are a myriad of uses for this data including using a partnership with Fraser Health to target Mental Health supports specifically to regions that are showing high levels of anxiety. We are also using the evidence to carefully consider all programs offered by our Community Schools Department to ensure that the outcomes desired are targeted to the areas in most need. This evidence is fundamental to our work on student well-being.

FSA and Marks Analysis – We have done extensive work and have an evidence framework examining the extent to which FSA is a predictor of future success and transitions. Our marks analysis is also tied to student attendance and we monitor attendance as an indicator of student vulnerability.

Response - We cross-reference the evidence on attendance and marks to student transitions. This allows us to follow up with schools on specific student situations and we also use this evidence to inform other structures of support for schools. Our exploration with FSA has found that FSA is not a good predictor of future success or marks and we continue to examine what evidence we can gather specifically at the elementary level to inform transitions and school completion.

COVID Analysis – Surrey has been an epicentre of COVID cases. We have dedicated dashboards and analysis tools to look at trends and we use these trends to directly intervene and provide support where needed.

Response: Our Health and Safety plans are supplemented by additional requirements for Universal, Targeted and Intensive schools as identified by emerging exposures. These responses go as far as looking at cumulative lost instructional days for students and staff and inform how we provide support.

Ministry Data Analysis – We continue to monitor the Ministry provided required evidence as part of the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (FESL). This framework includes nine required measures and there is a generic report that is provided for all districts in BC. That Report is attached to this Strategic Plan.

Response: This report can and should be supplemented by the evidence contained in the Ministry's Data Warehouse. Specifically, the evidence that we use as a focus is the Completion Rate information and how it, combined with the Ministry's Completion Rate Dashboard, can help inform our transitions work and, specifically, our continued examination of the transitions and completion rates for Indigenous students, for children with special needs, and for Children in Care.

Sense of Belonging – Learning is deeply connected to a sense of belonging. As a district we should be working to examine any instances of discrimination and injustices in our system. From individual instances to systemic discrimination, the heart of equity is a sense of belonging and our collective responsibility for all children.

Response – We are currently in the process of documenting the lived experiences and stories of students, staff, and community members about their experiences with Surrey Schools. We want to make meaningful connections to systemic inequalities, and we want to ensure systemic and sustainable racial equity and social justice. We have over 30 listening circles currently underway and we anticipate a report back to the district by June 30th which will inform our needs and direction forward.

Current Evidence Partnerships

Hybrid Models and Equity - University of British Columbia. We are currently engaged in a research partnership to examine the hybrid/transition models that were developed during the pandemic with a specific focus on how these models did or did not support vulnerable learners. The research will conclude by December 2021.

Structures that support Equity in Surrey Schools - Asia Society and Policy Study Associates. We are engaged in a research project that takes a deep look into the educational structures in our school district and how our vision, structures and programs focus on equity at the heart of learning. This analysis emerged as a result of ongoing work with the National Centre for Education and the Economy and the Global Cities Education Network which is part of Asia Society. Surrey was the case study for Social and Emotional Learning in their Global Symposium this past April and we continue this research and partnership with them. This research is due to be completed by September 2021.

Student Success and School Leavers - Social Research and Demonstration Corporation/Education Policy Research Initiative. We have engaged with SRDC and EPRI in a year-long research partnership that has three specific threads. The focus areas are transitions including school completion, student success including the roles that literacy and numeracy play, and school leavers – what factors contribute to students leaving school and where do they go in the labour market or education after they leave? This project will include external Labour market and K-12 provincial data. In each of the focus areas, there will be a specific examination of Indigenous learners, children with special needs and Children in Care. This is an ongoing project that also includes guidance and advice on the optimal way that Surrey as an organization can keep track of, organize and use evidence to support student success.

The Public Face of Strategic Planning and Evidence

In the coming weeks, we will add specific links to data analysis in this section. Examples of data to be included :

- Completion rate (5 year);
- Evidence disaggregated by Indigenous, students with special needs;
- Children in Care examples depending on cohort size;
- Grade to grade transitions – disaggregated;
- Ministry extract for required Framework for Enhancing Student Learning measures;

This report will be finalized for June 30th.