



# **NECHAKO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

## **School Growth Plan**

**Principal: David Mills**

**Spiral of Inquiry Planning Process  
To Superintendent of Schools: Katherine McIntosh and School  
Trustees**

**2018- 2019 School Year**

**Nechako Elementary School Mission Statement:**

**“Together We Succeed”**

## **2018/2019 SCHOOL GROWTH PLAN Nechako School**

### **School:**

Our Mission Statement: "Together We Succeed"

Nechako Elementary School is located in Kitimat, British Columbia and offers Kindergarten to Grade Six programs. The projected population for 2018/2019 is 220 students. Currently, twenty-three percent of our student population is First Nations. Nechako is a welcoming, warm, friendly, energetic, and enthusiastic school and we pride ourselves on creating a positive learning environment. We pride ourselves on having a connectedness with our students.

There are 11 classroom divisions within the school supported by an experienced Teacher Librarian and Resource Teacher. Nechako School also has a full-time LINK (Learning Includes Nutrition and Knowledge) worker who works with at-risk students and their families. This program is designed to promote social growth, self-esteem, and personal development while making connections with the community and families.

Our school counsellor also provides emotional, social, and academic support for a number of students. Our First Nation Worker has been helping us build connections with the Haisla Village so that we can provide more cultural and language experiences for our First Nation Students.

There is a very active Parent Advisory Council which meets monthly with the Principal. Our PAC just finished raising \$90,000 for our new Accessible Playground. Our PAC is big part of our school team and our relationship is a strong one.

### **Scanning:**

It must be noted that the dynamics of the school shift and change from year to year and throughout the school year effecting levels of performance in each grade. Every year we have a lot of movement and this of course effects our data results. However, when we delve deeper into the numbers and look carefully at the targeted groups over the last three years we see a lot of improvement. Scanning our school, we also recognize that there are areas of need and we'll continue to target these needs with our students.

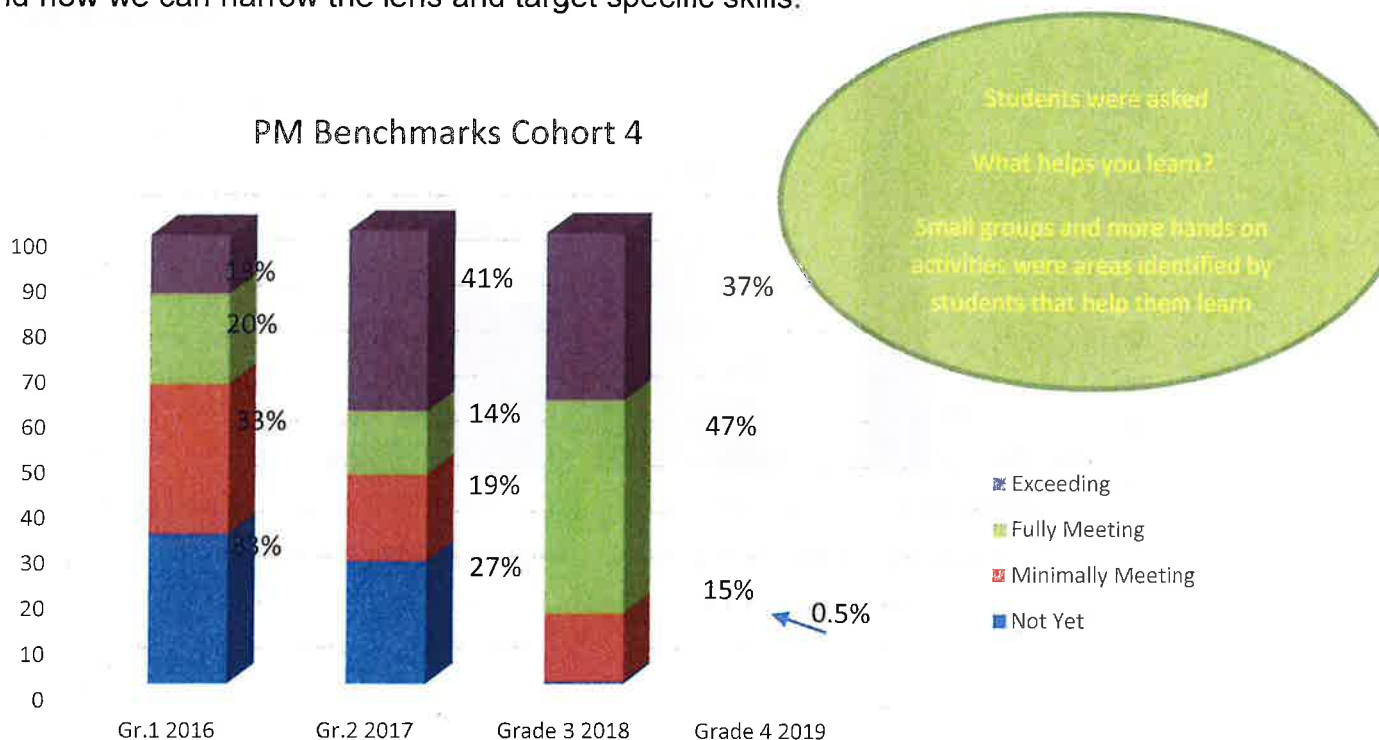
Moving forward we won't be tracking one of our four cohorts this year as most of the students are meeting or exceeding and are now independent readers. We'll be creating another cohort targeting students in grade one in 2018-19.

When looking at FSA results we noticed that many of fluent readers are having difficulty making inferences. Helping students understand when information is implied, or not directly stated, will improve their skill in drawing conclusions and making inferences. These skills will be needed for all sorts of school assignments, including: Reading, Science, Math and Social Studies.

### Cohort 4:

We've tracked this group close to 4 years now and were pleased to say that most of Cohort 4 is at reading level.

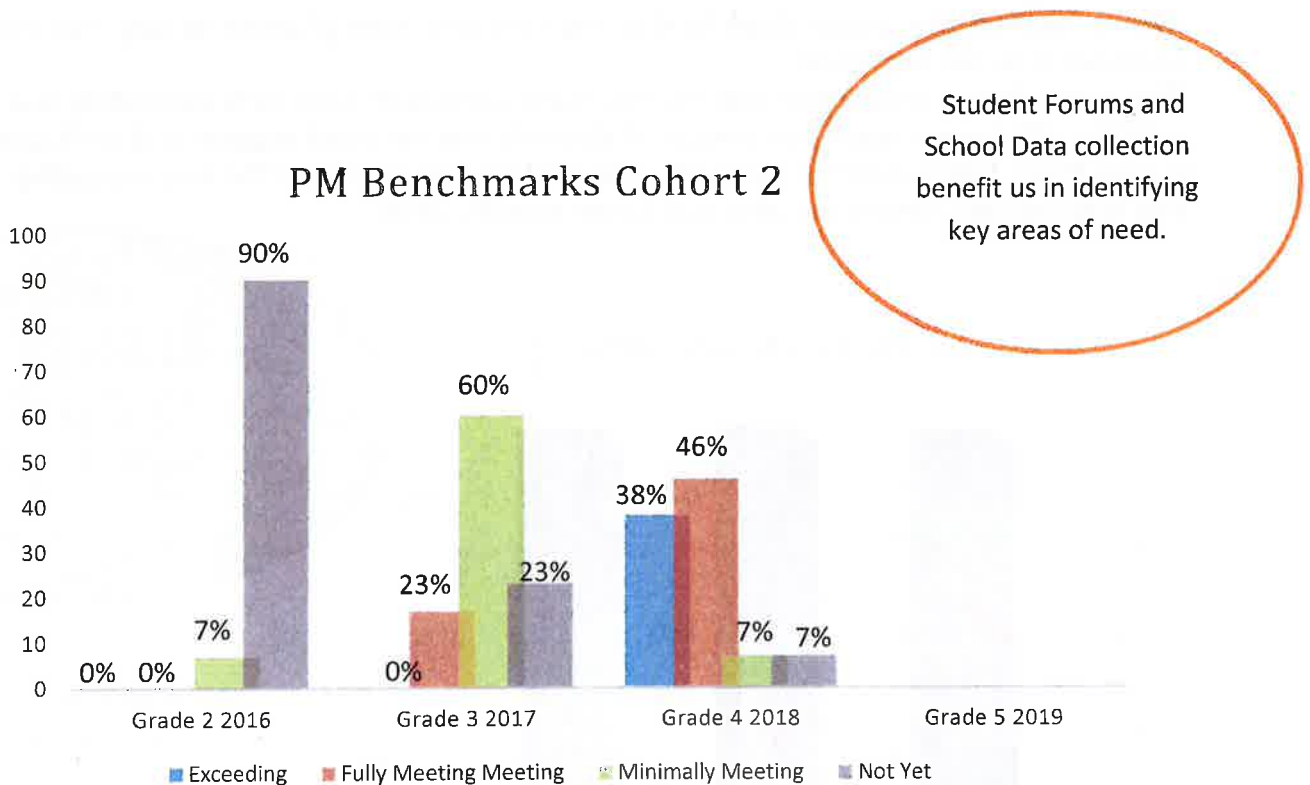
The graph below shows just how far they have come with over 37% exceeding and 47% meeting. We have a small percentage of students that still need support and we'll continue to give them that support in 2018-19. The District has improved the way we gather data and now we can narrow the lens and target specific skills.



The school data and student forums have given us valuable information about our students needs. When asked students "What helps you learn? ", many children in over the last several responded by saying small groups and hands-on games or activities were important to help them. It's obvious we're making progress but we need to continue to support all students to raise literacy scores. Not all our students receive resource or literacy support many benefit from differentiated instruction in the classroom.

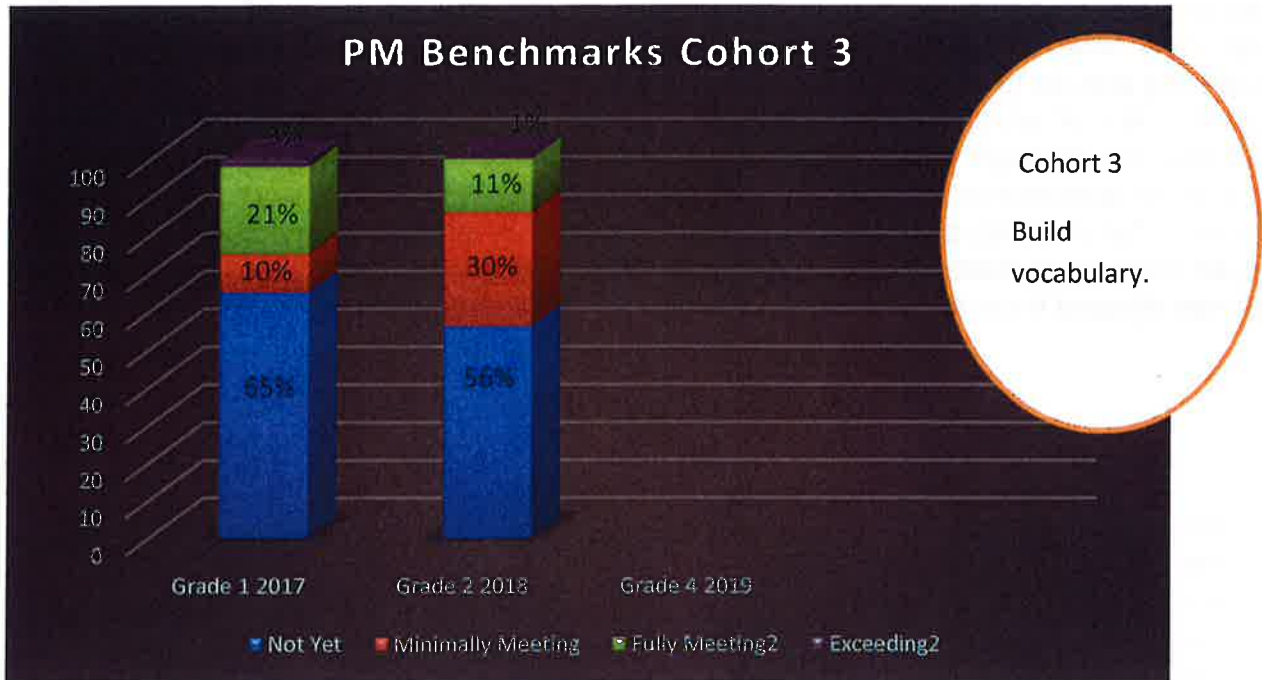
## Cohort 2:

This Cohort is doing well and they continue to make gains. In 2016 most of this group was not even reading, but when you look at the scores in 2017 and 2018 you can see how much they've moved. Much of their success can be attributed to our resource team and classroom teachers who use a variety of literacy strategies games and small group work. This has been our most successful cohort to date. We're going to continue to track this group as we look at their comprehension skills and their ability to make inferences.



## Cohort 3

We will have challenges in this Cohort 3 -Grade 2 in 2018-19.

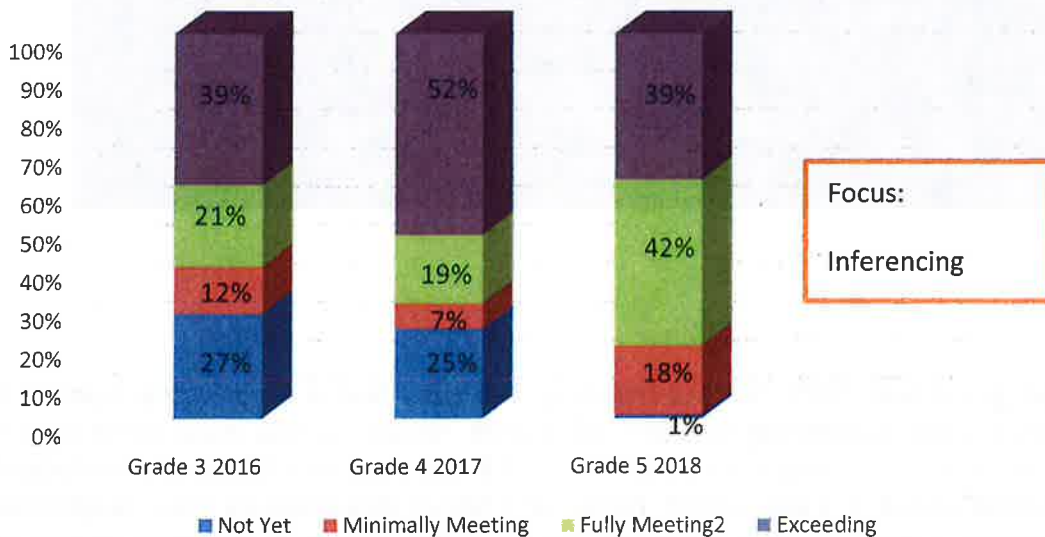


This is a large group with 56% not yet meeting. We also had a drop in the number of students (2) that were exceeding in 2017-18. **We're reviewing this data carefully and working with primary teachers to help better support these students.** Many of the students in Cohort 3 talked about the classroom noise and being disturbed by their neighbours which effected their ability to concentrate. We have collaborated with teachers on how we can lower classroom noise by using common language around the Five Point Scale and Zones of Regulation. We're also going to introduce more sensory opportunities in the classroom including a sensory corner to help students with self- regulation.

# Cohort 1

This group of students continue to thrive with over 75% reading at or above grade level. Over 42% now meeting! We do have hunch that the drop in the number of students exceeding was do to the comprehension level expected for grade 6. **Staff recognized that students lack of experience or background knowledge is an area of concern for these students. So although we're seeing more fluent readers we still have work to do in the area of comprehension specifically making inferences. (How will we approach that as a school?)** Our students often described that working in in small groups and with a partner helped them learn better. Further, students found success in learning because they felt routines allowed them to put more effort into their work and made them more successful.

### PM Benchmarks Cohort 1





### **Focusing:**

Based on our data derived from AMS, classroom and resource assessments, we'll continue to focus on:

**Grade 1-3(primary) phonemic awareness skills and vocabulary development**  
**Grade 3-6 -Comprehension-retelling and inferencing**

### **Developing a Hunch:**

Although, we assess and target students, our hunch is, that if we get better at identifying specific problem areas earlier in reading and adapt instruction accordingly, then we can target the specific areas of need. This is something that we believe we get better at each year. We identified inference skills as a specific area that needed improvement.

Teaching inference skills playfully in the classroom helps us bring literature to life and connects our students with writers. Making an inference involves using what you know to make a guess about what you don't know, or reading between the lines. We believe that our readers although very fluent readers need support using the clues in the text along with their own experiences to help them figure out what is not directly said, making the text personal and memorable. Improving our students Inferencing skills will develop over time and with experience.

*How will we do this?*

Teachers also will continue to:

- ✓ make explicit the structure of stories
- ✓ discuss the role and usefulness of a title
- ✓ emphasize that fiction allows multiple interpretations and inference making.
- ✓ students ask questions
- ✓ ask questions about relationships between characters, goals and motivations
- ✓ more questions by students
- ✓ activate prior knowledge
- ✓ provide listening comprehension activities
- ✓ Choose good fit books

One key area that our staff discussed was the need to have more speech therapy intervention for all our students that need support in this area. We have a growing number of students who require this service. This is something that we hope to improve in 2018-19. *(The District team has also recognized this as an area of need and have responded by hiring Speech Language pathologists to fill this void. This is very encouraging!*

### **Haisla Connection:**

We have followed the districts long standing goal to improve school success for all Aboriginal students. To do this requires the inclusion of the voice of Aboriginal people across all areas of the curriculum. We continue to encourage First People's Principles of Learning to be valued and celebrated at Nechako.

We've reached out to one of our Aboriginal partners in the village and they have been very supportive and helpful. The Haisla Village partnership has grown extensively with our school as they have visited our school numerous times and are helping us expand the Haisla Language.

There are opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing through celebrations, field studies, story-telling, Art, and Music. For example, this year students actively participated in shared cultural events with our Haisla partners by attending Haisla Cultural Day down in Kitimat Village in the spring of 2018. Furthermore, our First Nation Workers actively promote the First Nations culture throughout the school and play a prominent role in the delivery of the services.

### **Professional Learning:**

The professionals in our building need to learn explicit instruction practices in order to best guide the learners. Furthermore, they need to continue to use our school data to drive classroom instruction. After much collaboration and discussion, we selected the following New Learning areas for Professional Learning:

- Big Focus on Daily Five and CAFÉ
- **Adrienne Gear resources focus on making connections to the text and inferencing**
- 6 Traits of Writing
- C.A.F.E. (Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, Expanding Vocabulary)
- Mindset – the New Psychology of Success – Carol Dweck
- The First People's Principles of Learning
- The Principles of Learning
- Zones of Regulation
- 5 Point Scale for noise level
- Review and monitor Reading comprehension strategy document at staff meetings
- Monitor and adjust use of common assessments-ongoing



- Continue using Nechako common Language for phonemic awareness and phonics by supplying each teacher with a common language binder.

We will build in multiple opportunities for learning by providing professional and collaborative learning communities monthly, and at staff meetings.

### **Taking Action:**

Action was taken to organize innovative collaboration ideas to support RTI initiatives for Reading.

Our assessment procedures have become more focused, making it easier to track students. This process is something that we've referred to as "narrowing the lens." In this journey moving towards having our assessments inform our instruction and guide our next steps. We want to help all staff monitor students' progress towards their learning goals. Students will be encouraged to be leaders of their own learning and should know what they need to work on and use that language when they learn. We've identified phonemic awareness and inferencing skills as areas of need.

To improve student inferencing skills research points to the importance of:

- Teacher modelling of inferencing:
- Teachers "thinking aloud" their thoughts as they read aloud to pupils
- teachers asking themselves questions that show how they monitor their own comprehension
- teachers making explicit the thinking processes that result in drawing an inference.

Our **Phonemic Awareness Data Wall** will help us:

- exchange ideas for interventions and teaching strategies to make instructional decisions,
- Identify trends for strengths and weaknesses
- facilitate team engagement and learning
- encourages self- reflection.

**Literacy Bins:** We expanded the use of our bins and trained more support staff so that literacy games and hands on activities can be to be used in the classroom. Small groups and hands on activities were important to our students and helping with their learning.

Because many students indicated that some of the barriers to their learning included classroom noise, peer distractions and hunger, we are taking the following action

So were taking the following actions:

- **Sensory Room:** Last year we created a Sensory Room Committee to address the anxiety and stress issues that were identified in our survey. The committee reviewed and discussed the use of our sensory room and made several recommendations. One of those recommendations was expanding the use of sensory room to include more children in smaller groups. Another suggestion was creating a sensory space (corner) in classrooms and asking teachers to incorporate daily self- regulation routines and activities in the classroom to address anxiety and stress issues. We're going to invest more monies into our sensory rooms. We intend to expand its use to a larger number of students who have difficulties in class. Our sensory rooms can help students who have learning difficulties, developmental disabilities or sensory impairments by meeting sensory needs and allowing students breaks to process learning. Our hope is that by expanding the use of our rooms we can engage different areas of the brain, helping children absorb and retain more information and better meeting the needs of the individual.
- **WITS Program-**We'll continue to use this program, however, many of our students had difficulty solving problems so we've developed a list of common responses students can use to solve conflicts with others.
- **5 Point Scale and Zones of Regulation:** Last year we introduced the 5-point scale and Zones of Regulation. We we're very successful with the 5-point scale, One goal in 2017-18 was to implement a school-wide focus on self-regulation. Our hope was to reduce the noise and distractions in classrooms. We're are teaching our students to use particular tools to help them monitor and improve their emotional states so that they are able to optimize their ability to learn.

- **Breakfast Club:** We changed the way we managed the breakfast Club and in our student survey's it wasn't a major theme in 2018-2019. Food was more readily available.
- **Communication with Parents:** We'll continue to work with parents about the early years learning gap and try to find the right mix of support for parents. This is something we started with our PALS sessions with our kindergarten parents. In these sessions we discuss what the research says and we talk about asking the right questions about their child's learning when meeting with the teacher.
- **Collaboration-** Teachers agreed that they need more collaboration opportunities were beneficial and needed to continue and my hope to support this request introducing new ways to release the teachers i.e. creating an intramural league giving them more access to the gym.

Teachers, Support Staff, the Principal, and the Vice-Principal are all involved in the Inquiry process. All stakeholders understand the stages of the Spiral through informal and formal meetings at the school and District level. With this knowledge, these stakeholders are becoming more actively involved to the process of Inquiry. The Spiral will keep moving.

**Checking:**

We will check daily, weekly, monthly, and at each reporting term. We will continue to encourage a growth mindset. We know that when individuals are open and collaborative great discussions occur and a deeper understanding and accountability to the process evolves. When data is collected and discussed, adjustments will become apparent.

School Principal Signature: *David Mills*

Teacher Michele Frater Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

