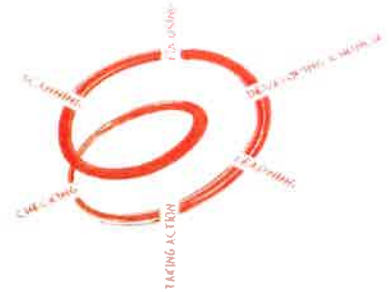




Hazelton Secondary School Growth Plan 2022 – 2023



1. School Context:

Our **mission** at Hazelton Secondary School is to create a safe and welcoming learning environment that honours and respects the diversity of all students and strives to improve their emotional, social, and mental well-being so that all students will realize their full potential. Hazelton Secondary School is an 8 to 12 secondary school that sits on the unceded territory of the Gitksan People, and it serves seven area First Nation communities: Gitanmaax, Gitanyow, Gitsegukla, Gitwangak, Glen Vowell, Hagwilget, and Kispiox. We have a school population of approximately 400 students and 90% of our students are First Nation.

2. Scanning: What's going on for your learners? How do you know?

- ⇒ Our scores on standardized tests and other achievement markers are significantly below both Provincial and District levels. The six-year completion rate is something we strive to achieve by having school counsellors, intervention programs, and alternate pathways in place (e.g., Adult Dogwood, Stekyodon, Connections) to help learners complete their studies. Despite this, many students do not graduate in the six-year time frame. Graduation rates for the 2020-21 school year were: District Non-Indigenous 95%; District Indigenous 63%; and Hazelton Indigenous 56% (**Executive Summary - HSS Think Tank, April 2022**). Indigenous students who attend Hazelton Secondary School are almost half as likely to graduate when compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts in the District.
- ⇒ During a recent **District In-Service** entitled, **“Walking Together with Hearts, Minds & Spirits,”** we gathered in the HSS gymnasium to listen to Indigenous elders, knowledge holders, and story weavers talk about the richness of the Gitksan culture; the trauma that continues to haunt Indigenous children today because of the Indian Residential School System (IRS) and other forms of colonization; and the kind of education they want for their children.

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- ⇒ These First Nations stakeholders talked about the necessity for staff to understand that the children are still feeling the effects of the harm that was done and that interferes with their ability to achieve academically. We need to listen to these traditionally unheard voices, so that together we can make the changes necessary to improve Indigenous student outcomes. A Residential School Survivor (RSS) shared his story, and he expressed the need for staff training on **Trauma-Informed Practices** in order to better understand the children and to provide them with the education they need.
- ⇒ These students need staff who are “trauma-informed”; staff that know the students are hurting and asking for our help to allow them to reach their full potential. In meeting with Elders, and community members at the district-wide In-Service they are asking us to care for their children; to understand that when students are displaying trauma-induced behaviors; often unknowingly; they want to be seen and cared for. Indigenous students cannot achieve academically if they do not attend school; but they need to feel safe, welcomed, and supported to do so.

3. **Focusing: Where does your focus need to be? What is your specific inquiry question?**

District Staff, the Board of Education, parents, rightsholders, students, staff and Ministry of Education and Child Care representatives gathered, in person, at Hazelton Secondary School on Thursday, April 14, 2022, to address the following question:

What can we do collectively to make Hazelton Secondary School a better environment for students to achieve their full potential?

The full day session was co-facilitated by Denise Augustine, Superintendent for Indigenous Education, Ministry of Education and Dr. Leyton Schnellert, Associate Professor, University of British Columbia’s Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy (**Executive Summary - HSS Think Tank, April 2022**).

4. **Developing a Hunch: What practices in your school are leading to this situation?**

- ⇒ Poor attendance is related to a lack of understanding by staff of the challenges our students face at home and in the community due to the impact of Intergenerational Trauma. Tracking attendance is a time consuming and overwhelming task that falls upon staff who have many other issues to attend to during the school day. Often there is little follow up to determine the reason(s) for the absence.
- ⇒ Greater effort needs to be made to establish meaningful school, home, and community connections. That would allow staff to better understand the reasons for poor attendance and allow them to establish collaborative relationships with parents and guardians in an effort to improve the situation.

5. Professional Learning: What do the professionals in your building need to learn?

Trauma-Informed Practices will establish a better environment for learning and help students to achieve their full potential:

- ⇒ Principal and Vice Principal to provide in-service to staff at staff and department head meetings on trauma-informed practices using the resource, **Classroom180: A Framework for Creating, Sustaining, and Assessing the Trauma-Informed Classroom** (2019), by Heather T. Forbes
- ⇒ Teachers will implement strategies based on the Classroom180 framework that go beyond consequences
- ⇒ Principal and Vice Principal will consult District Principal, Phillip Barron, and other principals in the district who have had success implementing the Classroom180 framework in their schools
- ⇒ It is hoped that this resource will lead to a change in teaching practice creating a better learning environment and ultimately improving student attendance rates and achievement at Hazelton Secondary School
- ⇒ We will communicate to parents/guardians and other stakeholders about our professional development focus on trauma-informed practices during the 2022/2023 school year indicating that we listened to the feedback we received during the District In-Service on September 23, 2022

6. Taking Action: What are you doing about it?

Attendance monitoring by a designated staff member who can provide follow-up and support.

- ⇒ Designate an Indigenous Support Worker to track lates, truancy, and absences. Have this worker make phone calls to parents/guardians to discuss the issue and problem solve around possible solutions. The worker will be a trusted First Nations member from one of the communities we serve. If needed the Indigenous Support Worker will conduct home visits and outreach in the communities.
- ⇒ Weekly and monthly reporting of attendance measures will determine if designated staff allocation to address this issue is increasing attendance rates.

Building Relationships

- ⇒ Continue to provide an Indigenous Support Room in the school that gives our students a safe space to go to receive support from Indigenous Support Workers who understand the challenges they face
- ⇒ Continue to provide programming and supports that are already in place to provide social, emotional, and academic support
- ⇒ Principal to continue to attend First Nation Advisory Committee meetings
- ⇒ Principal to arrange monthly meetings with First Nation Education Coordinators to determine community needs and to hear concerns. This will also allow the principal to make connections to these communities and determine if there are Elders, Knowledge Holders, and community members who would be willing to share their knowledge about Gitxsan culture, language, and land-based practices. These forms of engagement will be a focus for future growth plans
- ⇒ Consult Robert Clifton, Director of Instruction for Indigenous Education for support and advice about Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being. In addition, for direction regarding areas of concern

7. Checking: What evidence will you be seeking to know you are making a difference?

- ⇒ Classroom observations to determine if trauma-informed practices are being employed by staff
- ⇒ Encourage staff sharing at in-service about successful implementation of trauma-informed practices; also encourage staff to discuss problems of practice and seek advice from their colleagues and administration
- ⇒ Staff have already reached out to the presenters and there seemed to be a desire to learn more about trauma-informed practices at the District In-Service; two staff members asked the RSS to share his presentation in their Humanities classes
- ⇒ Steady improvement of attendance rates as measured by weekly and monthly attendance reports
- ⇒ Student surveys to determine if students are more satisfied with their learning environment
- ⇒ Parent and community feedback regarding our efforts
- ⇒ Improved performance on standardized tests and other achievement markers. Improved graduation rates
- ⇒ An improvement in the social, emotional, and mental well-being of students as evidenced by lower suspension rates, a reduction in school counsellor caseloads, fewer students who are engaging in high-risk behaviors, self-harm, substance use, and violent incidents
- ⇒ A qualitative difference in the learning environment based on student and staff feedback
- ⇒ Parent/Guardian and stakeholder report greater confidence in the school's ability to meet their children's' needs
- ⇒ Regular updates to the Superintendent Aaron Callaghan and to the Board of Trustees

School Principal Signature: Christine Duncan