

**COAST MOUNTAINS BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**School District 82**  
**School Growth Plan 2022-2023**

**MOUNT ELIZABETH MIDDLE SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
**1491 Kingfisher Avenue**  
**Kitimat, B.C.**  
**V8C 1E9**



## **School Mission Statement: "Success for All Learners"**

We at Mount Elizabeth Middle Secondary School believe in an environment in which self-respect and respect for others are developed as we strive for personal and academic excellence. We are committed to:

- Building capacity for all learners in a collaborative culture intended on maintaining positive connections
- Supporting student centered strategies that promote engagement, excitement, inquiry, and a love of learning
- Honouring and respecting culture and diversity for all members of our school community

Mount Elizabeth is a dual track (English/French Immersion) school: Grades 7-9 Middle School and Grades 10-12 Secondary. We are located in Northern British Columbia in the city of Kitimat, on the Traditional Territory of the Haisla Nation.

Mount Elizabeth receives students from four elementary schools: Nechako Elementary, Kildala Elementary, St. Anthony's, and Haisla Community School. We also welcome new students from outside of our community.

Our student population in September 2022 is estimated at approximately 460 students with 55 staff members. Our population of Indigenous learners is 28% and approximately 80 identified learners. We are starting to notice an influx of families with school age children that are associated with the industrial nature of our community coming to register their children at our school. Our estimated student population may be lower than previously anticipated as a result of industrial population growth.



Our school provides many educational programs and extra-curricular activities. Programs include but are not limited to: Academic, Outdoor Education, Physical Education, Home Economics, Technical Education, Robotics, French Immersion, Fine Arts, Youth Train/Work in Trades, Special Education, Modern Languages, Career Life Education, First Nations Support, Personal Wellness Initiatives, and various Clubs and Teams.



## **2. Scanning:**

Mount Elizabeth Middle Secondary School strives to meet the needs of all students from Grades 7 to 12 in the

community of Kitimat, including the first inhabitants of the area that are in a village known as Kitamaat Village. Haisla students are proud, strong advocates for their traditions and language and are willing to share their knowledge with the school community.

**The evidence we consider includes:**

Student Voice — Student Forums

Informal and formal conversations with students and parents/guardians (For example, students at MEMSS collaborated with staff in developing the Dress Guidelines)

Teacher Voice – Staff provides feedback and responds actively to Student Voice forums

Year-end IEP reviews and Student Intervention tracking

Attendance

School Based Team meetings

Student Learning Surveys

Report Cards

Graduation Rates

Numeracy Assessments including Foundations Skills Assessment (FSA)

Middle Years Development Index (MDI)

Literacy Assessments

Office Referrals

Inter-Agency meetings

Kitimat Situation Table

Upon scanning of the school, it has become evident that although the population of the school is 28% Indigenous, it is not being reflected in the school as such. Meaningful changes need to and will be made to remedy this oversight. There are two cultural rooms in the school, one for grades 8 – 12 and the other for the grade 7 wing. The idea of the cultural rooms is a good one but at present, it is being taken advantage of and students that go there during class time are missing valuable instructional/work time in class.

Since COVID hit as a worldwide pandemic, attendance in our school has plummeted because of fear of the new normal. We also believe there is a fear of coming back because of the amount of school that students have missed. We believe many fear admitting or displaying their lack of learning over the past couple of years.

Basic academic skills have been missed during the pandemic. This is becoming evident in the academic abilities of our student population. Staff have noticed a lack of drive to achieve high scores, complete work, hand in assignments, and at times attend classes.

## **Focusing:**

“Take Mount Elizabeth School Back”, is a saying that was coined by a staff member and brought up at our most recent staff meeting. Staff were excited by this because they want more for our students. They want a plan to fall back on in September so we can set the bar high, stick to expectations of the students, and feel that sense of school community again. Based on that, we have come up with *three main goals for the coming school year:*

- **Attendance:** We believe that if students feel like they belong and are truly seen at a school, they will want to come. I would like the staff at our school to focus on developing a comfortable working relationship with the students. As the Principal, I would also like to lift the school spirit and the morale of students and staff. I want students and staff to feel a sense of being part of something bigger than compartmentalized classrooms, subjects, and departments. This will be done with Monday morning announcements with events of the week, trivia, recognition of student/staff accomplishments and a weekly draw. I will also do daily learning walks as well as daily supervision to learn more about the students and staff of Mount Elizabeth.
- **Academics:** A huge misconception among students at MEMSS is the belief that grades 7 – 9 don’t matter because students know they will pass anyway. Staff are committed to changing this mindset by emphasizing that those grades are building blocks to grades 10 – 12 when students must pass to achieve the credits in order to graduate. We are also committed to meeting students where they’re at since the pandemic has created an academic divide from lack of attendance.
- **Racial Literacy:** Students and staff at Mount Elizabeth have indicated that racism is alive and well in our school. This is unacceptable not only in a school, but anywhere. The best way to address racism is through education. I have been researching videos, readings, inspirational speakers to educate both students and staff with knowledge of what racism is, what it looks like, what it feels like, and tools to use against racism. This will be addressed during school assemblies and at staff meetings.

## **Developing a Hunch:**

I feel that making Mount Elizabeth a more welcoming, warm and cohesive environment where all staff are on board to create this feeling, attendance will improve. With this improved attendance, I hope that a mutual trust is developed with staff and students where students will want to learn and succeed. If all students feel respected and seen for who they really are we will be able to build a strong foundation for a healthy school community.

## **Professional Learning:**

Professional learning will happen at each staff meeting as well as throughout the school year. I'd like to have guest speakers come to MEMSS to teach about Indigenous cultures and Truth and Reconciliation. Brad Marsden, Monique Gray-Smith, Jo Chrona, and others are very knowledgeable speakers that don't intend to lay blame but to educate without guilt. This is important when beginning a journey of reconciliation.

I'd also like to find professional learning opportunities around healthy working relationships with students in the classroom. The idea around "every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be". ~Rita Pearson

## **Taking Action:**

Mount Elizabeth staff have already begun the journey to 'take back Mount Elizabeth' by attending a voluntary meeting in June. It is here we discussed attendance, academics, and lack of motivation in the student population.

We are committed to welcoming students when they arrive, establishing a comfortable relationship with students, learning our students' stories, and building a safe, non-threatening, and welcoming learning environment.



## **Checking:**

Periodically throughout the year it will be important to do a check-in with students and staff about how they are feeling in the school. We will continue to track attendance and hopefully see a decline in absences. We will also be looking at interim reports and flag students who need to meet the Principal, counsellor and parents to hopefully get each student with I-plans back on track.

If/when necessary, it is important upon 'checking' that changes to the SGP be revised, updated, or in some cases when accomplished, create new goals. I reserve the right to claim

that this is working document that can be revisited throughout the year to either keep us on track or to celebrate successes with both students and staff where warranted.

I am looking forward to a productive new school year for Mount Elizabeth Middle Secondary School. I wish only the best for our students and staff.



Julia Jacobs

Principal, Mount Elizabeth Middle Secondary School

