



Enhancing Student Learning Report September 2023

In Review of the Board's Strategic Plan - Engage, Ignite, Empower 2022-27



*Approved by Coast Mountains School District
Board of Education – September 27, 2023*

Table of Contents

- Introduction:** District Context..... 1
- Section A:** Reflecting Back: *2022-23 Student Learning Outcomes*.....3
 - Educational Outcome 1: Literacy 3
 - Relevant Additional/Local Data and Evidence 5
 - Analysis and Interpretation: What Does this Mean? 9
 - Educational Outcome 2: Numeracy 10
 - Relevant Additional/Local Data and Evidence 13
 - Analysis and Interpretation: What Does this Mean? 15
 - Analysis and Interpretation: What Does this Mean? 17
 - Educational Outcome 3: Students Feel Welcome, Safe, and Connected..... 18
 - Relevant Additional/Local Data and Evidence 20
 - Analysis and Interpretation: What Does this Mean? 21
 - Educational Outcome 4: Students will Graduate 23
 - Educational Outcome 5: Life and Career Core Competencies..... 23
 - Relevant Additional/Local Data and Evidence 25
 - Analysis and Interpretation: What Does this Mean? 25
- Section B:** Moving Forward *Planning and Adjusting for Continuous Improvement*..... 27
 - Current Strategic Plan Priorities..... 27
 - Celebrating our Successes for the Past Year..... 27
 - Existing and/or Emerging Areas for Growth 29
 - Strategic Engagement 29
 - Adjustment and Adaptations: Next Steps..... 31
 - Alignment for Successful Implementation..... 33
- Conclusion**..... 35

Introduction: District Context

Coast Mountains School District lies on the ancestral, traditional and unceded territories of the Gitksan, Haisla, Nisga'a and Ts'msyen Nations. The school district employs close to 800 people who are in service to 4,300 learners attending 19 schools across the main communities of the Hazeltons, Kitimat, Kitwanga, Stewart, Terrace and Thornhill.

Through its mission, Coast Mountains School District is committed to supporting all learners in achieving their full potential while aspiring a passion for lifelong learning. We value learner engagement, culture, diversity, relationships, equity and well-being and are growing our capacity around these daily. With learners at the centre, our district is focused on improving the quality of our programming and supports while honoring and respecting culture, diversity and inclusion. This includes a commitment to developing and delivering culturally responsive and respectful learning experiences and environments.

Approximately 50% of the learners in Coast Mountains School District are of Indigenous ancestry. The school district works in partnership with 10 local First Nations. They are:

- Gitanmaax First Nation
- Gitanyow First Nation
- Gitsegukla First Nation
- Gitwangak First Nation
- Hagwilget First Nation
- Haisla First Nation
- Anspayaxw First Nation (Kispiox)
- Kitselas First Nation
- Kitsumkalum First Nation
- Sik-e-Dakh First Nation (Glen Vowell)

In the year ahead, Coast Mountains School District anticipates the development of new Local Education Agreements (LEA) as we work alongside the local Nations to best meet the learning and well-being needs of Indigenous learners from the ten communities. As well, the school district's partnerships with Metis Nation of British Columbia (MNBC) and Kermode Friendship Society, and well as with new partners, serve and support a large urban Indigenous population particularly in the communities of Terrace and Kitimat.

Coast Mountains understands its responsibility for sustained and ongoing action that will contribute to the healing that must occur between non-Indigenous people who are guests on the unceded territories of the Gitksan, Haisla, Nisga'a and Ts'msyen Nations as well as fostering better relationships with the diverse Indigenous Peoples who are represented in Terrace and Kitimat. Part of this commitment is to ensure that we engage with all rightsholders to ensure their voice is centered in this work.

We are enhancing how local First Nations ways of knowing and being, knowledge systems, culture, language, and history support a pathway to Reconciliation and contributes to every student's learning. Doing this in an intentional way will mean investing in the time and resources dedicated to ongoing learning so we build capacity across the system. Nurturing and fostering positive personal and cultural identity is essential for all learners, and through each student's knowing the story of who they are, will contribute to appreciating and valuing the diverse stories of others.

Not unlike other rural and remote school districts in British Columbia, Coast Mountains has experienced significant staffing challenges in recent years. By the end of the 2022-23 school year, approximately 10% of the district's enrolling teachers were uncertified, operating on a Letter of Permission (LOP). As well, several school and district positions have remained unfilled, including those that provide counselling and specialist services, instructional support, and even administration. On top of this, close to 50% of the teachers currently working in our schools are approaching retirement, compounding the issue significantly going forward. Many of these challenges themselves represent inequities in the provincial context, and they have had a negative impact on school and district climate and on the success of our learners.

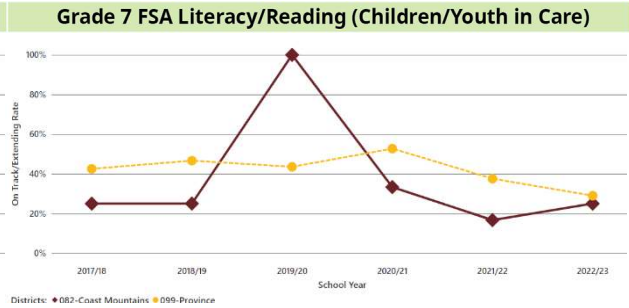
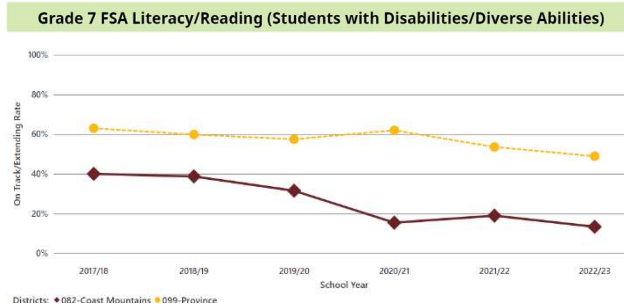
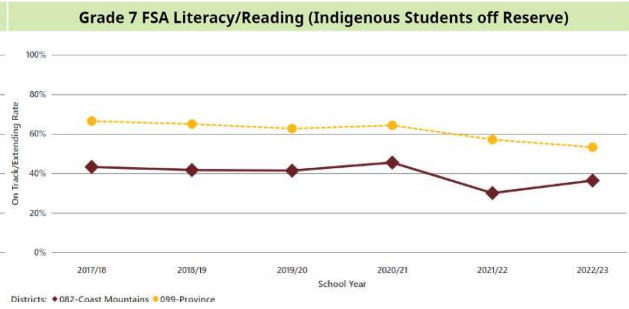
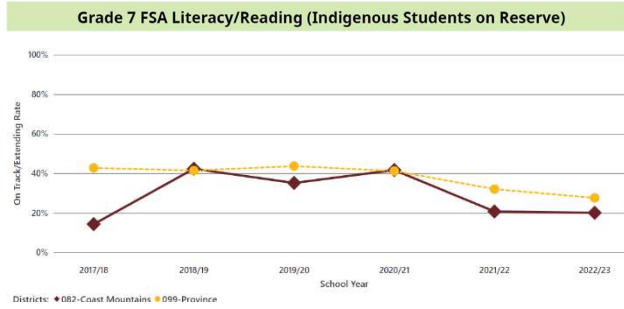
Section A: Reflecting Back: 2022-23 Student Learning Outcomes

Intellectual Development

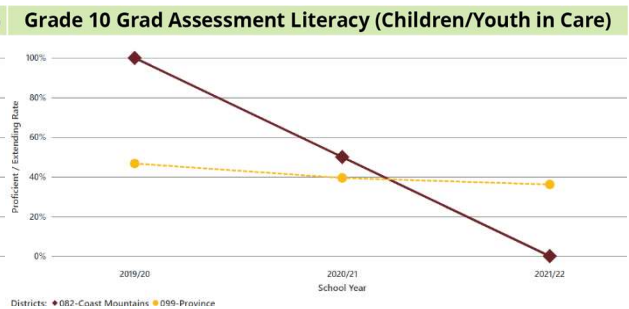
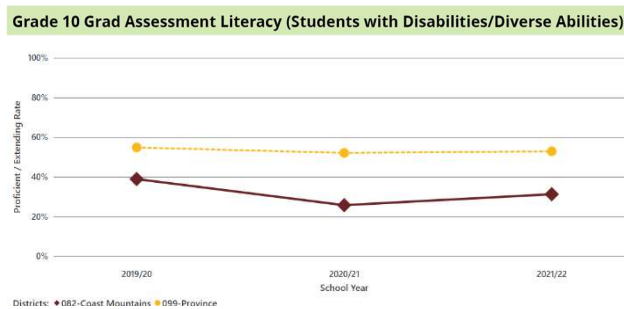
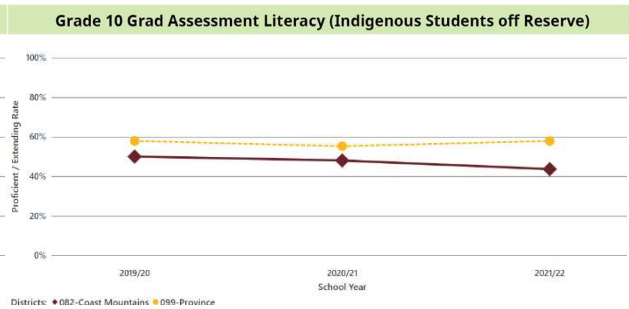
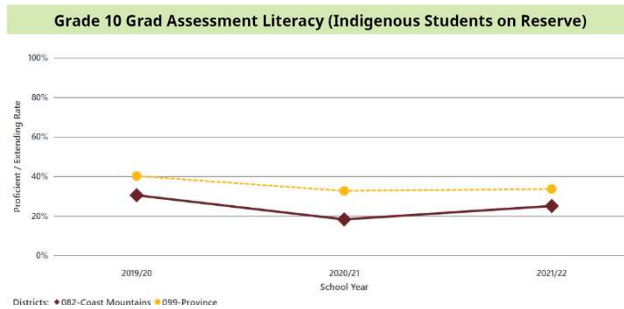
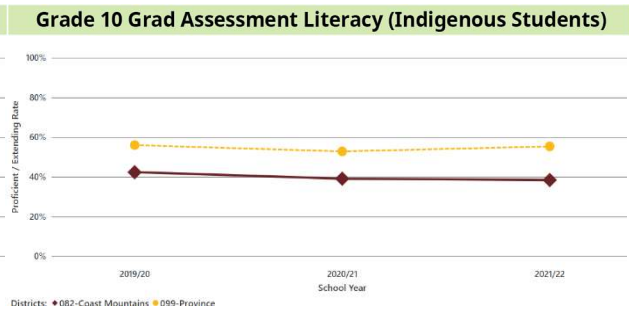
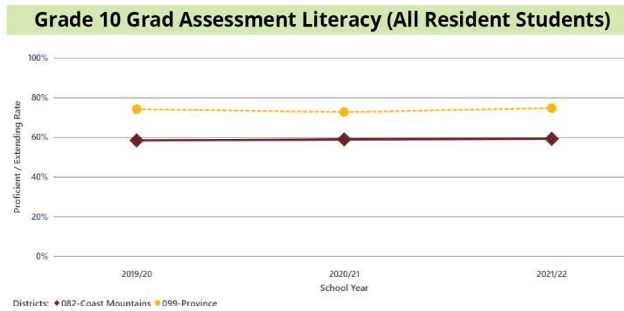
Educational Outcome 1: Literacy

Measure 1.1: Grade 4 & Grade 7 Literacy Expectations



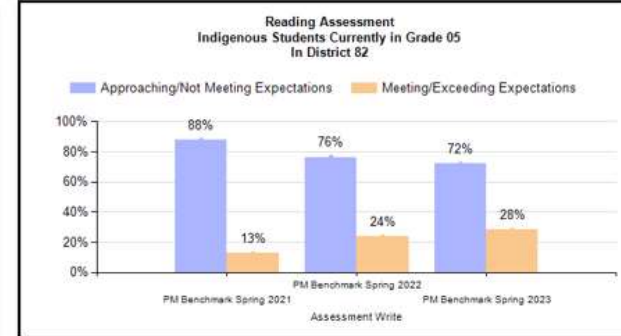
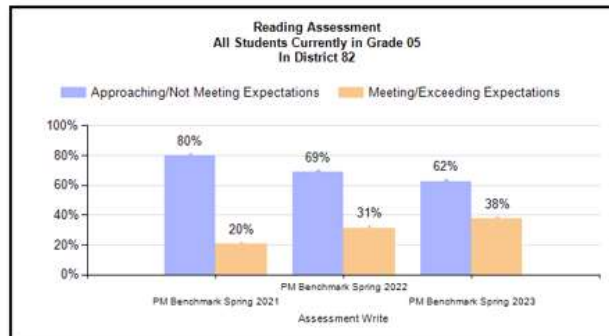
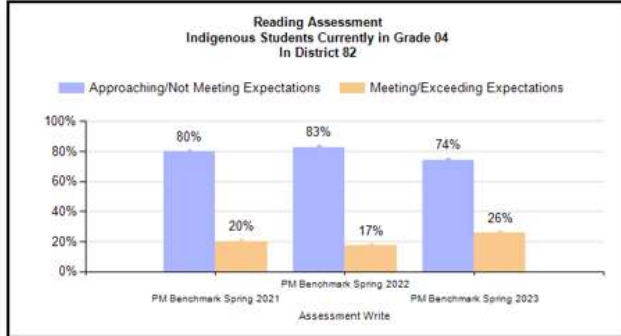
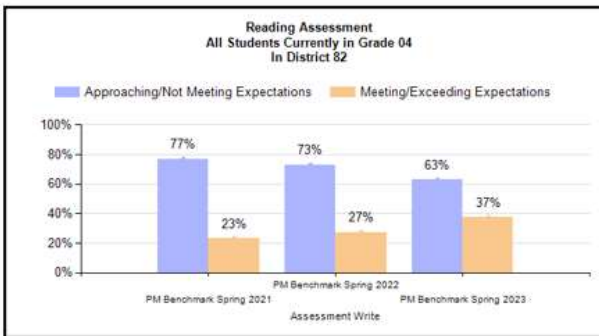
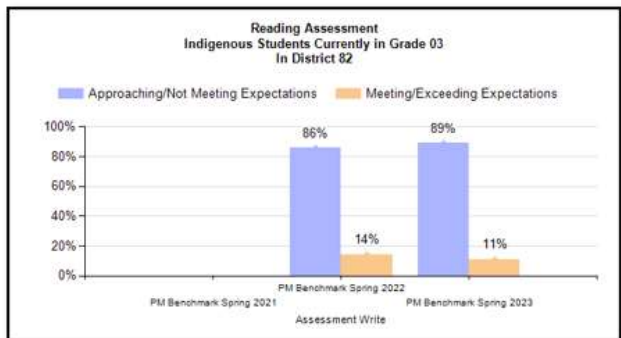
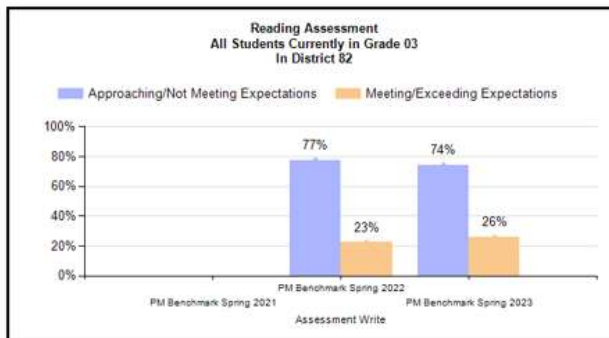
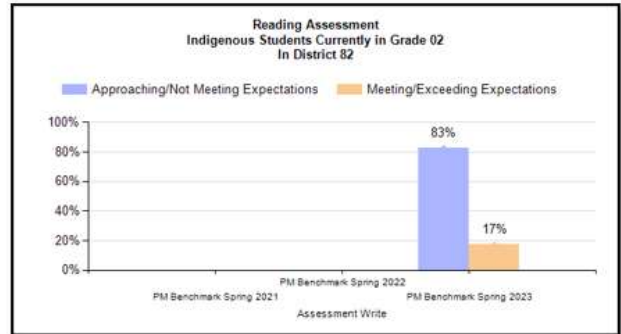
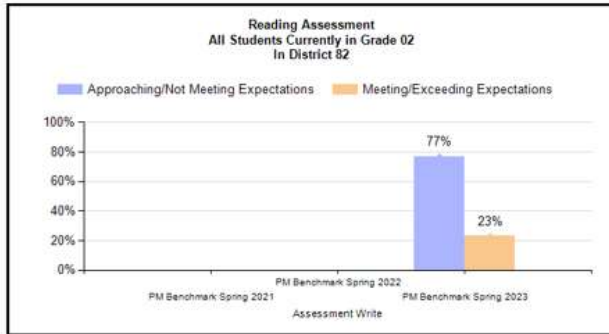


Measure 1.2: Grade 10 Literacy Expectations

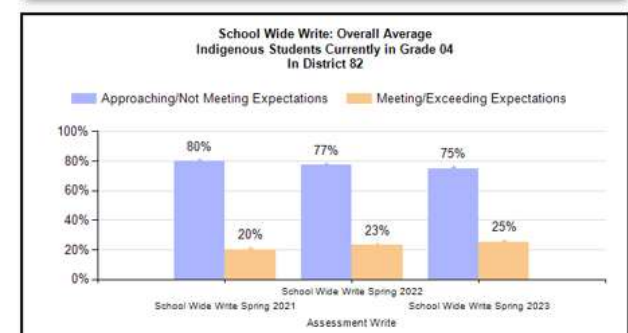
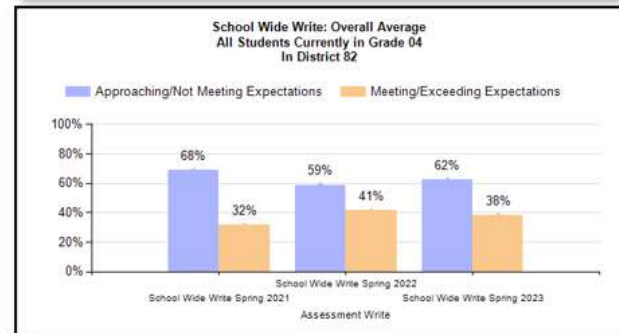
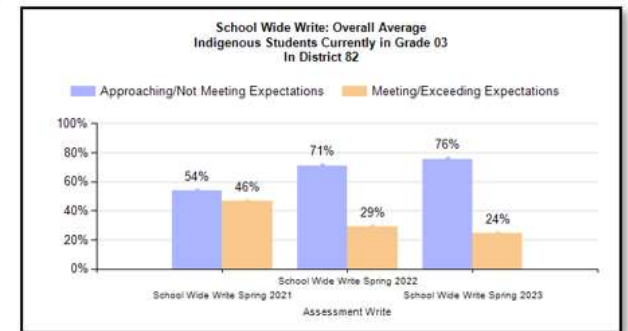
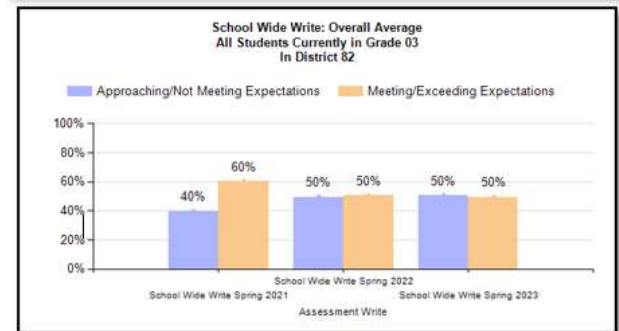
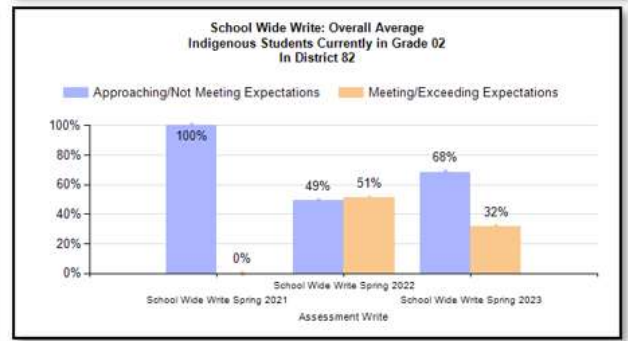
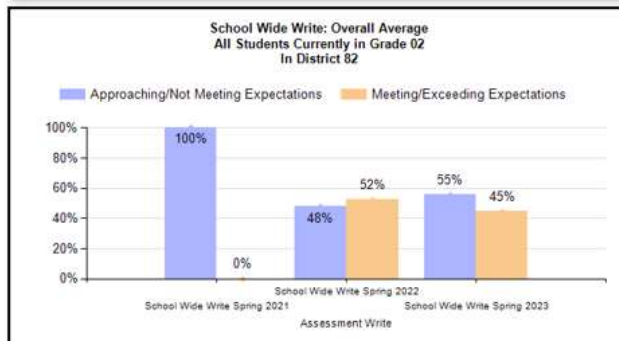
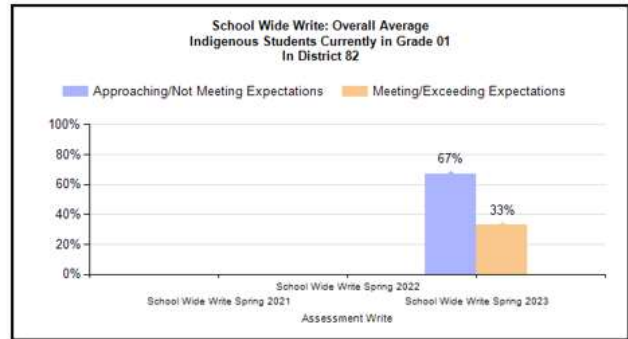
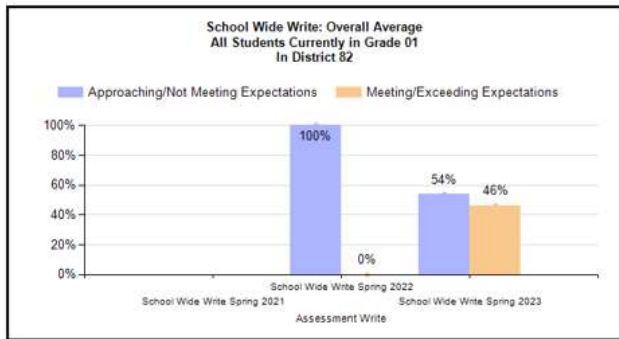


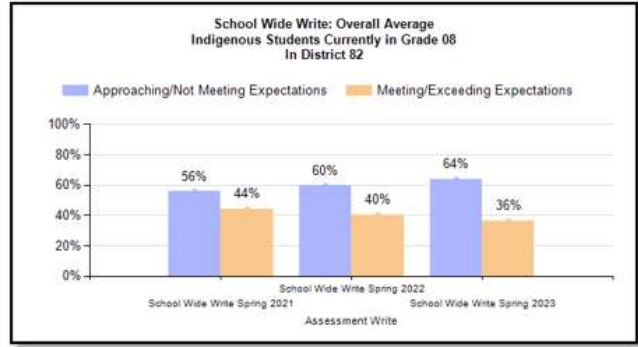
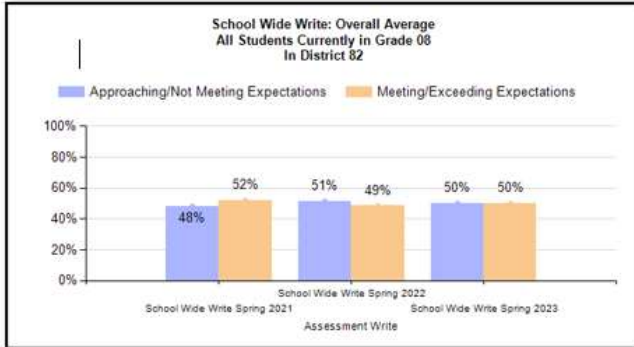
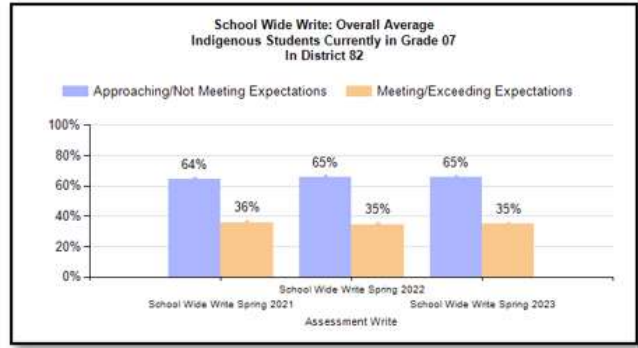
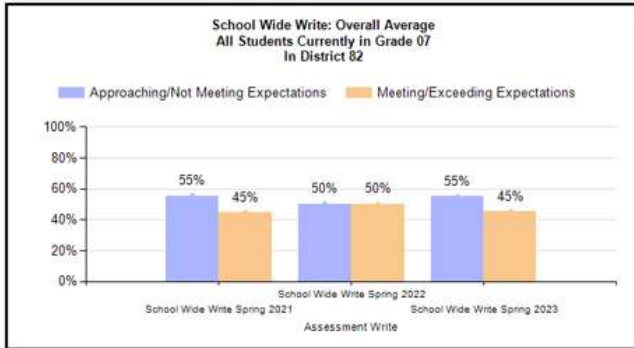
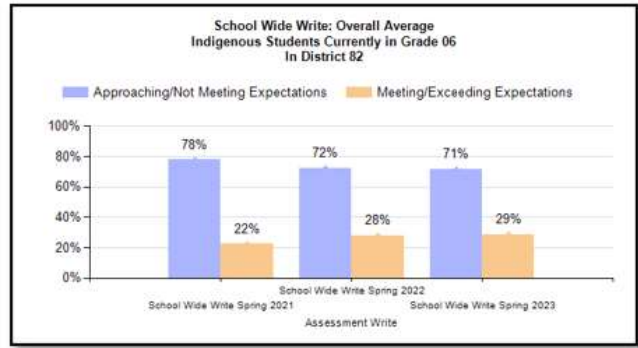
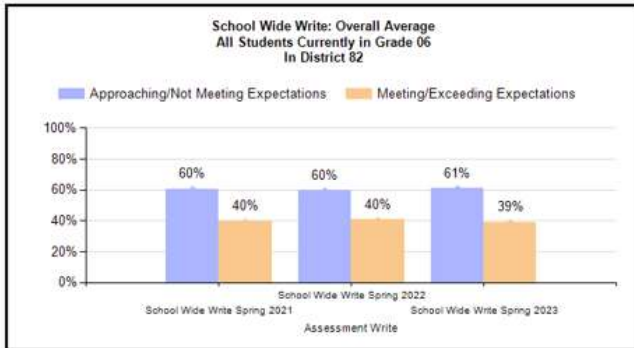
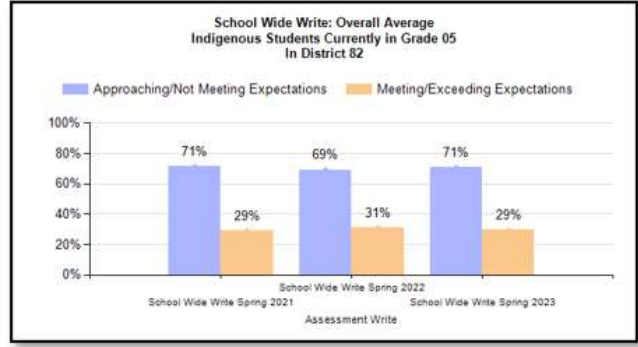
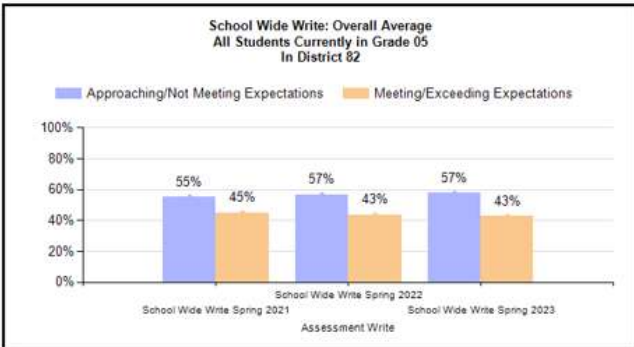
Relevant Additional/Local Data and Evidence

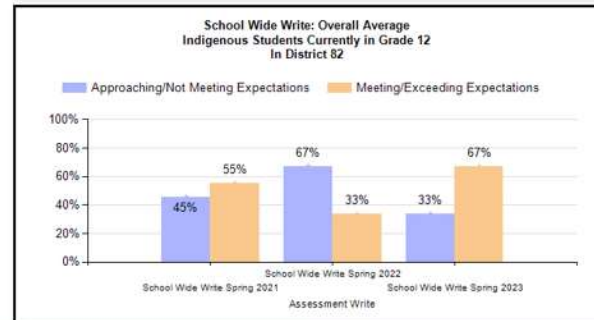
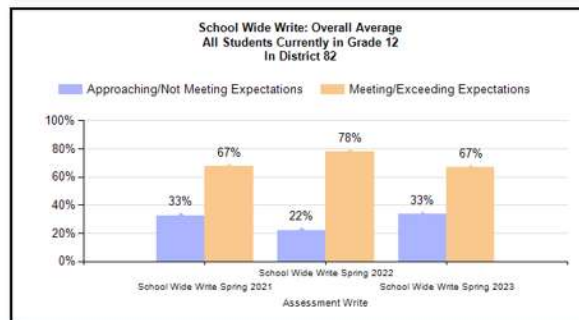
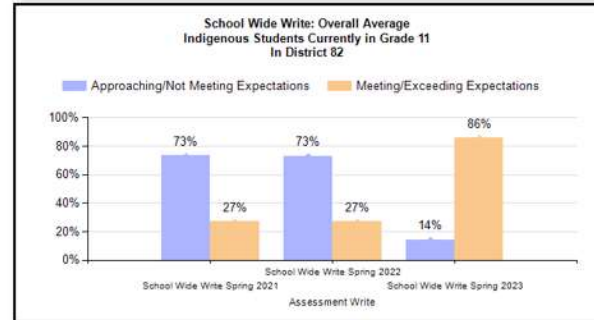
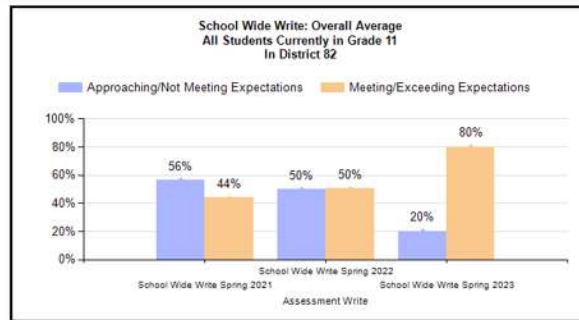
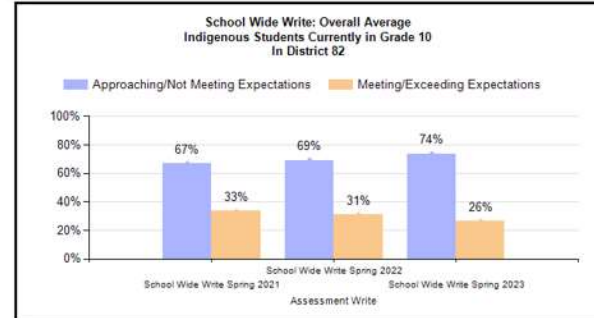
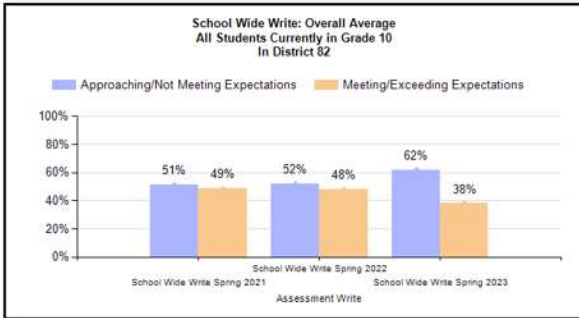
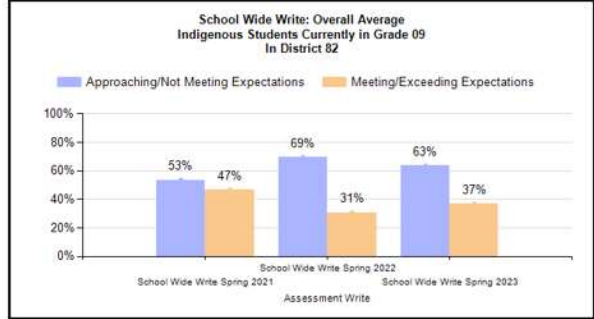
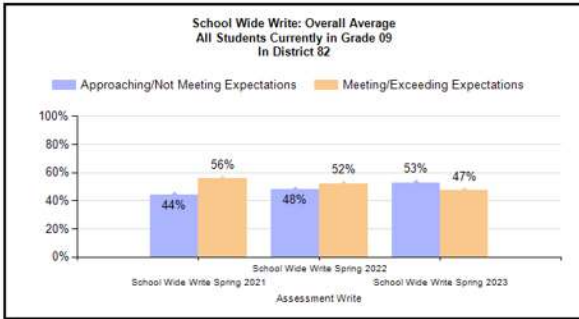
PM Benchmarks Grades 1-5 (Learner Enrolment as of September 2023)



School Wide Writes Grades 1-12 (Learner Enrolment as of September 2023)







Analysis and Interpretation: What Does this Mean?

Literacy continues to be a top priority in Coast Mountains, and it is our goal to increase the literacy levels of all students. Literacy provides the essential foundations for students to read, comprehend, interpret, articulate, and express their thoughts. Literate learners are able to think creatively and critically, make thoughtful decisions, and can communicate their thinking to others.

Specifically, upon analysis of the evidence, the following key observations were made across highlighted data sets:

FSA Literacy/Reading (Grade 4) Most recently, the results for Grade 4 students in literacy/reading are approximately 15% below the provincial average. Indigenous on reserve learners regularly outperform those off reserve.

FSA Reading (Grade 7) The results for Grade 7 students in literacy/reading are approximately 25% below the provincial average. Indigenous off reserve learners regularly outperform those on reserve.

Literacy 10 Provincial Assessment The results for Grade 10 in Literacy are consistently 15% below provincial average. Status Off Reserve students regularly outperform those on reserve students by 20%.

PM Benchmark District Reading Assessment For all learners currently in Grades 2 through 5, approximately 30% are on track in relation to grade level expectations for reading. In comparison, roughly 20% of Indigenous learners at the same grade levels are on track. Learners in Grades 4 and 5, both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous, have made gains in the last 3 years. Of primary concern are Indigenous learners currently in Grade 3, with 11% on track with reading proficiency.

School Wide Write District Writing Assessment Across Grades 1 through 10, approximately 45% of all learners are meeting writing expectations as measured by the School Wide Write district assessment. For Indigenous learners, there is a gap of 15% with roughly 30% reported to be on track. No grade level cohorts at these levels have demonstrated growth over the last 3 years. Learners currently in Grades 11 and 12 have higher levels of success.

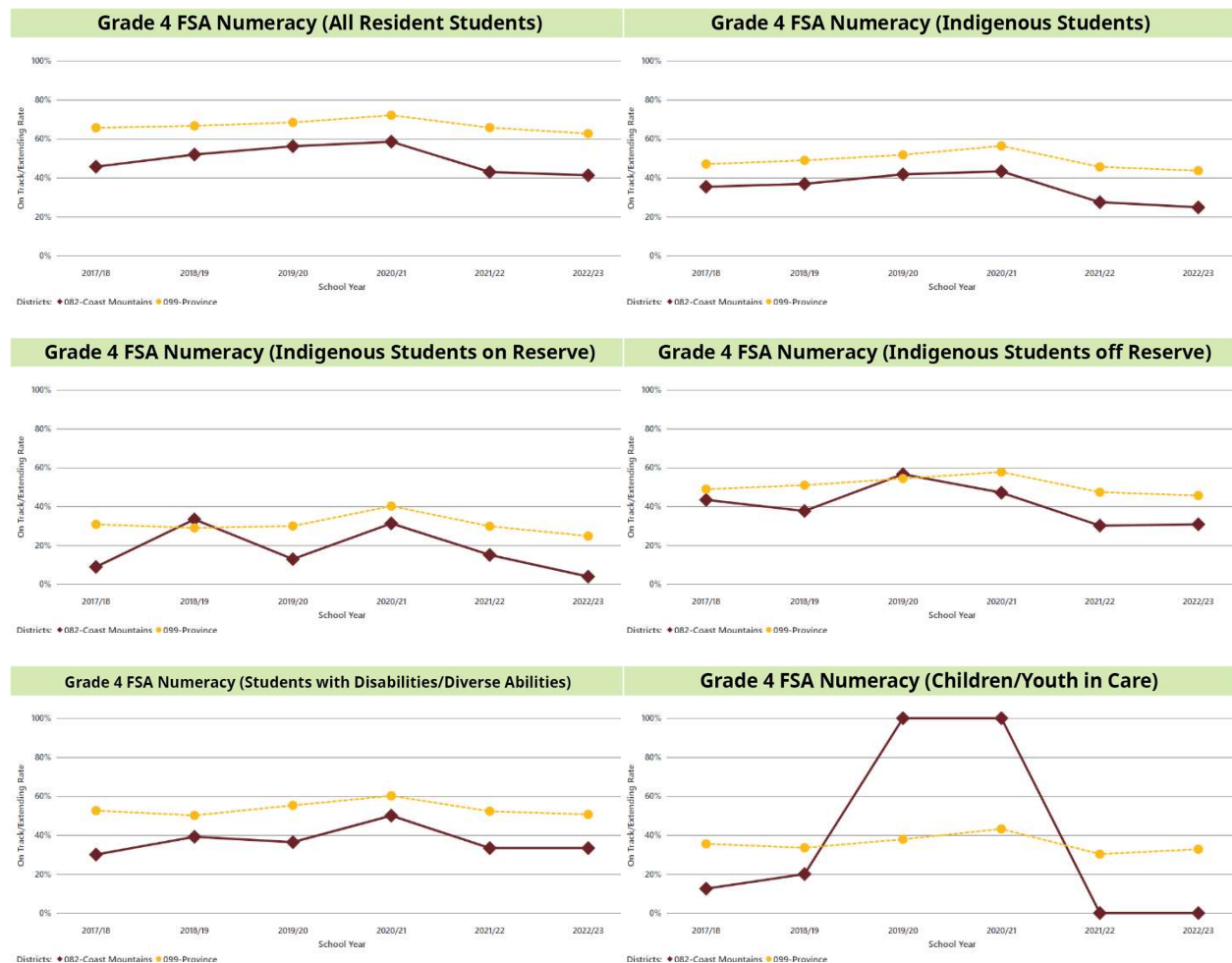
Overall, we continue to notice the literacy/reading results as measured by the FSA at Grades 4&7 and Literacy Graduation Assessment at Grade 10 indicate that a large percentage of learners are not meeting grade level expectations. This has been a multi-year trend, and in comparison to provincial evidence, the district is lagging significantly across these measures. Upon review of disaggregated learner evidence, we are particularly concerned with the results of Indigenous learners, both on and off reserve,

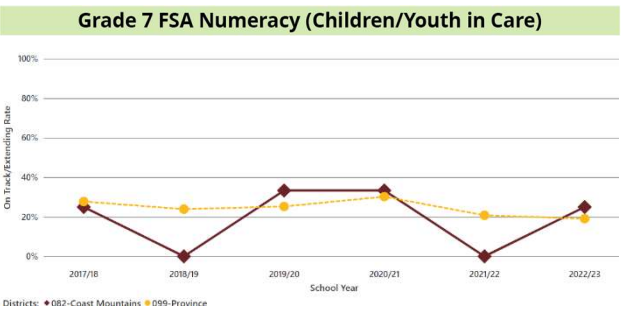
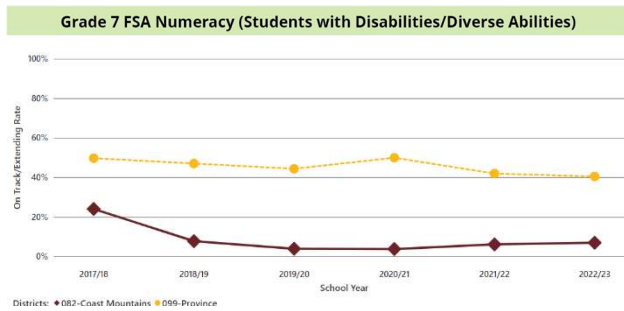
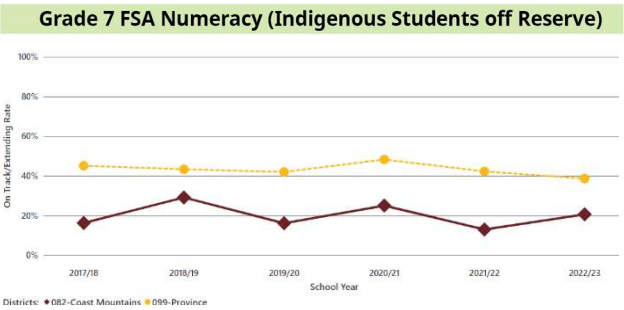
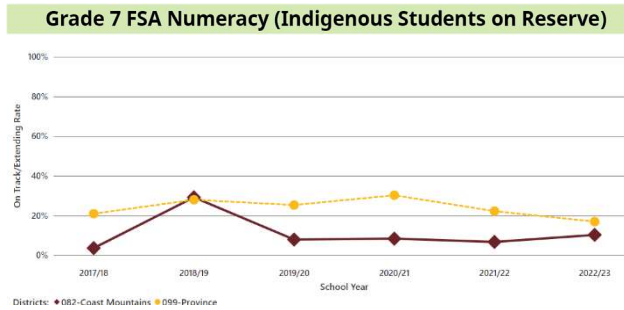
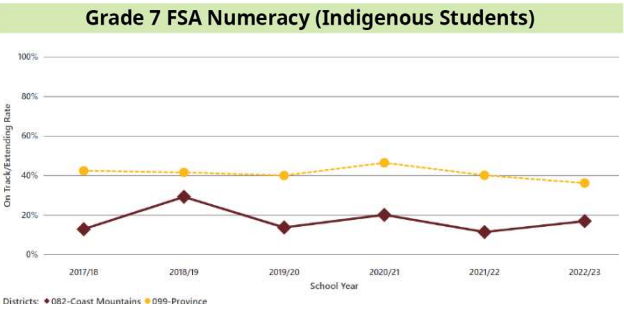
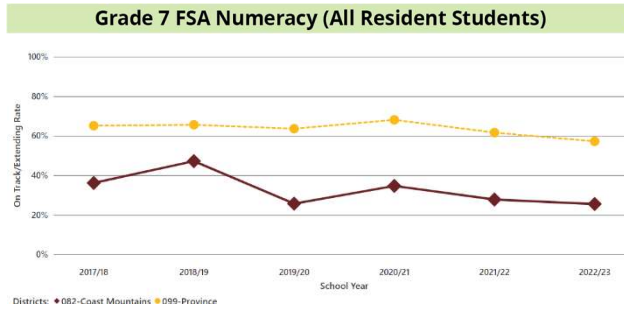
CYIC and students with diverse abilities /disabilities. Certainly, the evidence indicates, across all identified groups, there exists an inequity of learner outcomes.

When considering literacy evidence from a variety of sources, district and classroom level evidence are congruent with provincial evidence. Learners by-and-large are not meeting expectations in Literacy. The evidence reveals that recent approaches to supporting literacy teaching and learning, especially pertaining to equity deserving groups, has not had the intended impact. As a school district, we must build the professional capacity of those adults supporting literacy learning and ensure appropriate interventions are in place across a multi-tiered system of supports to meet the needs of those struggling learners.

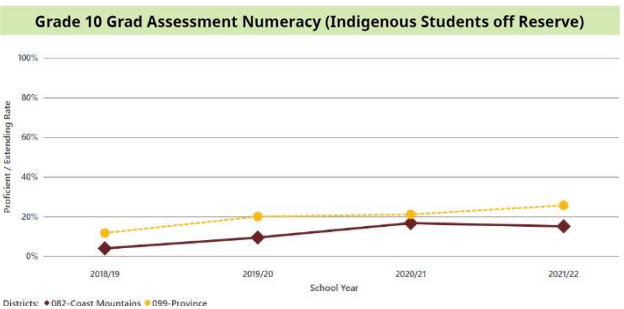
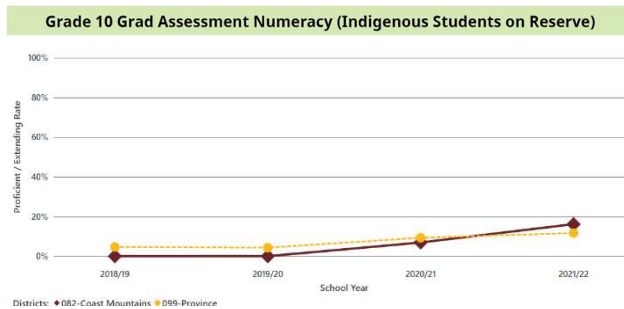
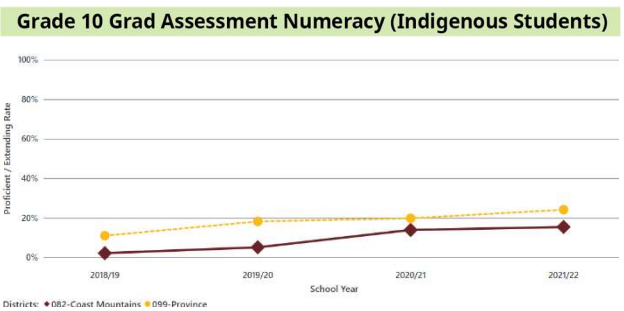
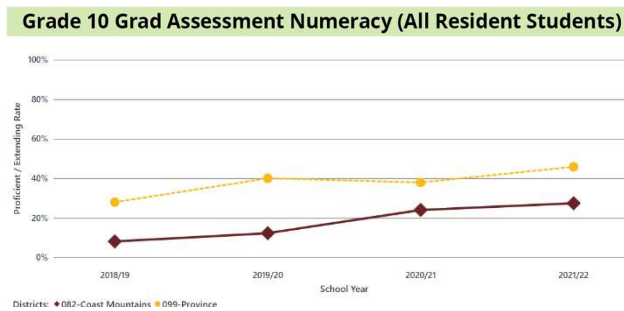
Educational Outcome 2: Numeracy

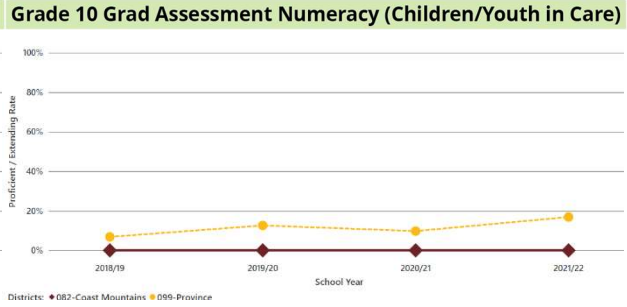
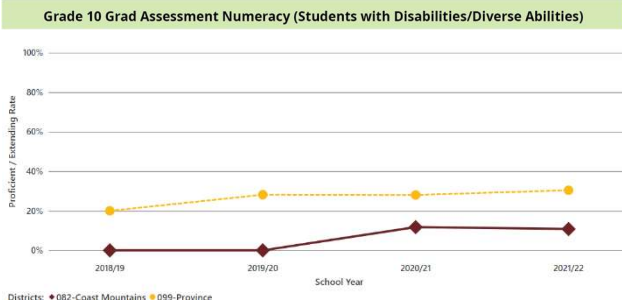
Measure 2.1: Grade 4 & Grade 7 Numeracy Expectations





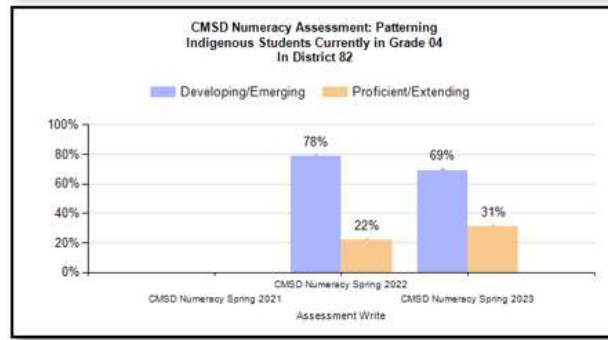
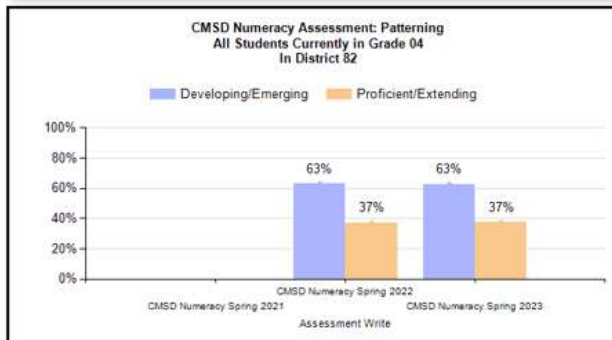
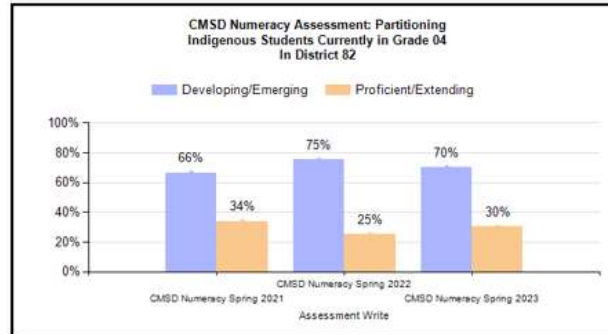
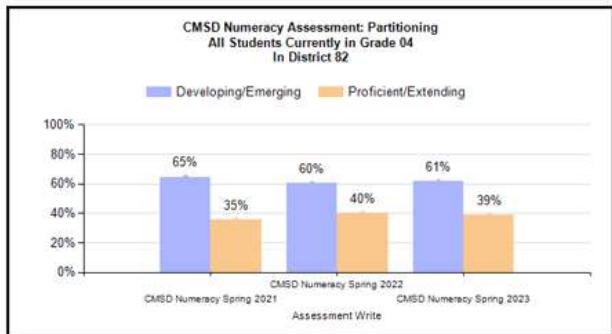
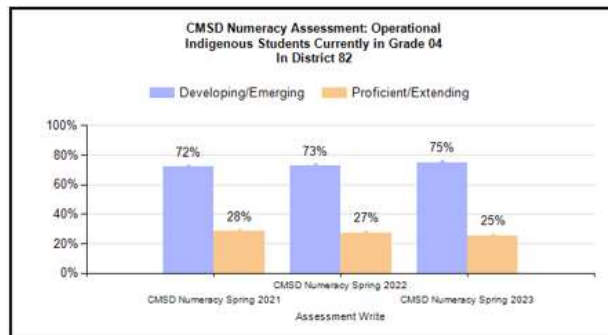
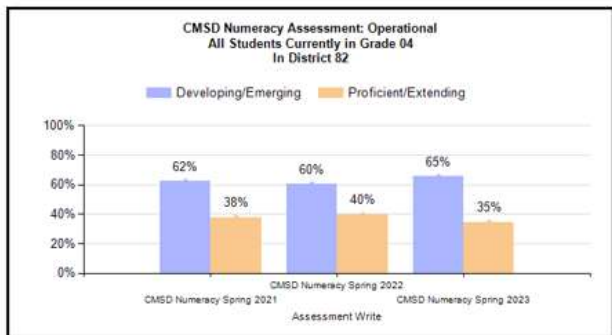
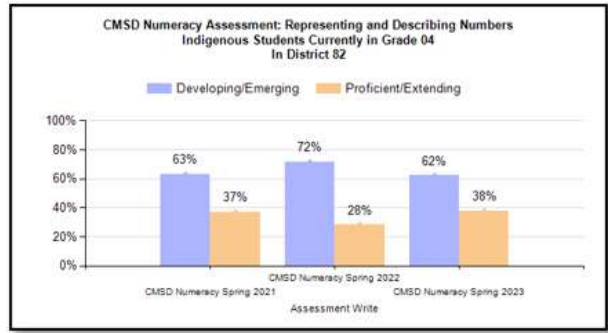
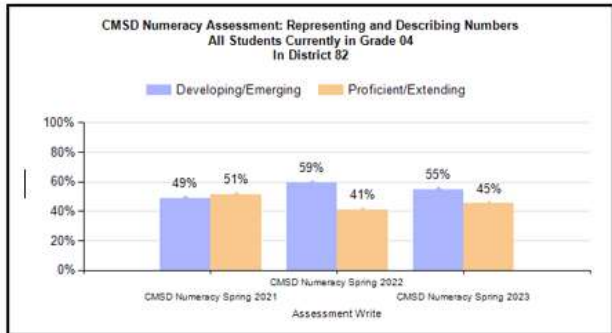
Measure 2.2: Grade 10 Numeracy Expectations

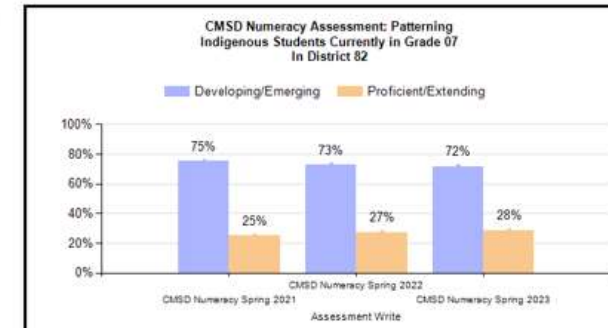
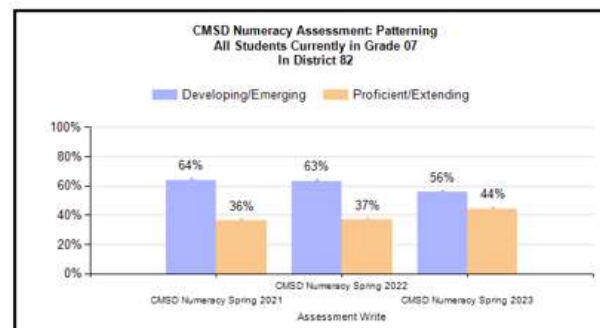
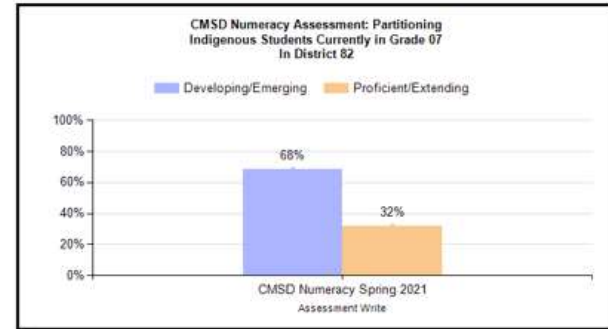
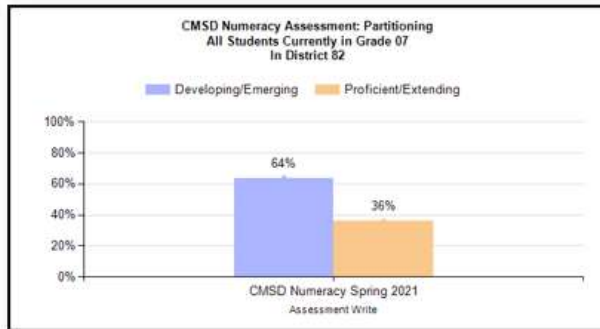
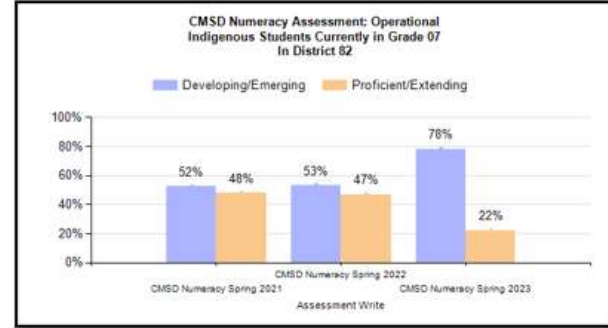
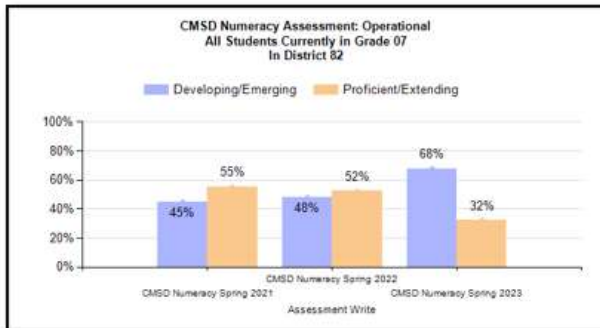
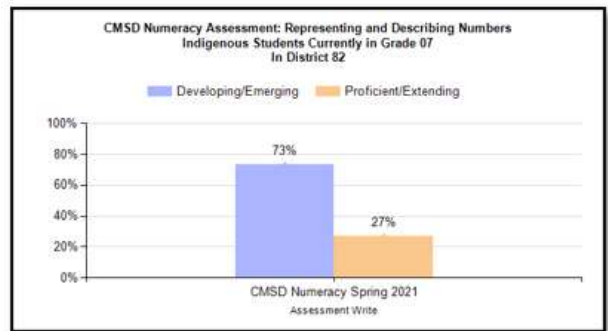
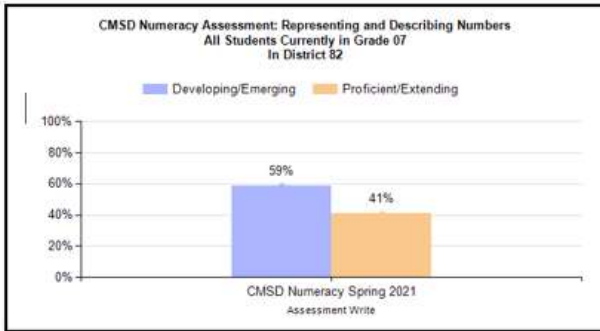




Relevant Additional/Local Data and Evidence

District Numeracy Assessment (Sample Data Set – Grades 4 & 7 Only)





Analysis and Interpretation: What Does this Mean?

Similar to Literacy, review of Coast Mountains students' achievement in Numeracy stems from the analysis of both provincial and district level evidence of learning. Disaggregated evidence from the Foundational Skills Assessments for Numeracy at Grades 4 and 7 as well as the Numeracy Assessment at Grade 10 were used, along with district numeracy assessments used at Grades K through 9.

Specifically, upon analysis of the evidence, the following key observations were made across highlighted data sets:

FSA Numeracy (Grade 4) The results for Grade 4 students in Numeracy are 20% below that of the province and are declining over time. The achievement of Indigenous learners, children and youth in care, and those with disabilities/diverse abilities is significantly lower still.

FSA Numeracy (Grade 7) The results for Grade 7 students in Numeracy are more than 25% below the provincial average and declining over time. Indigenous learners and those with disabilities/diverse abilities are achieving at lower levels.

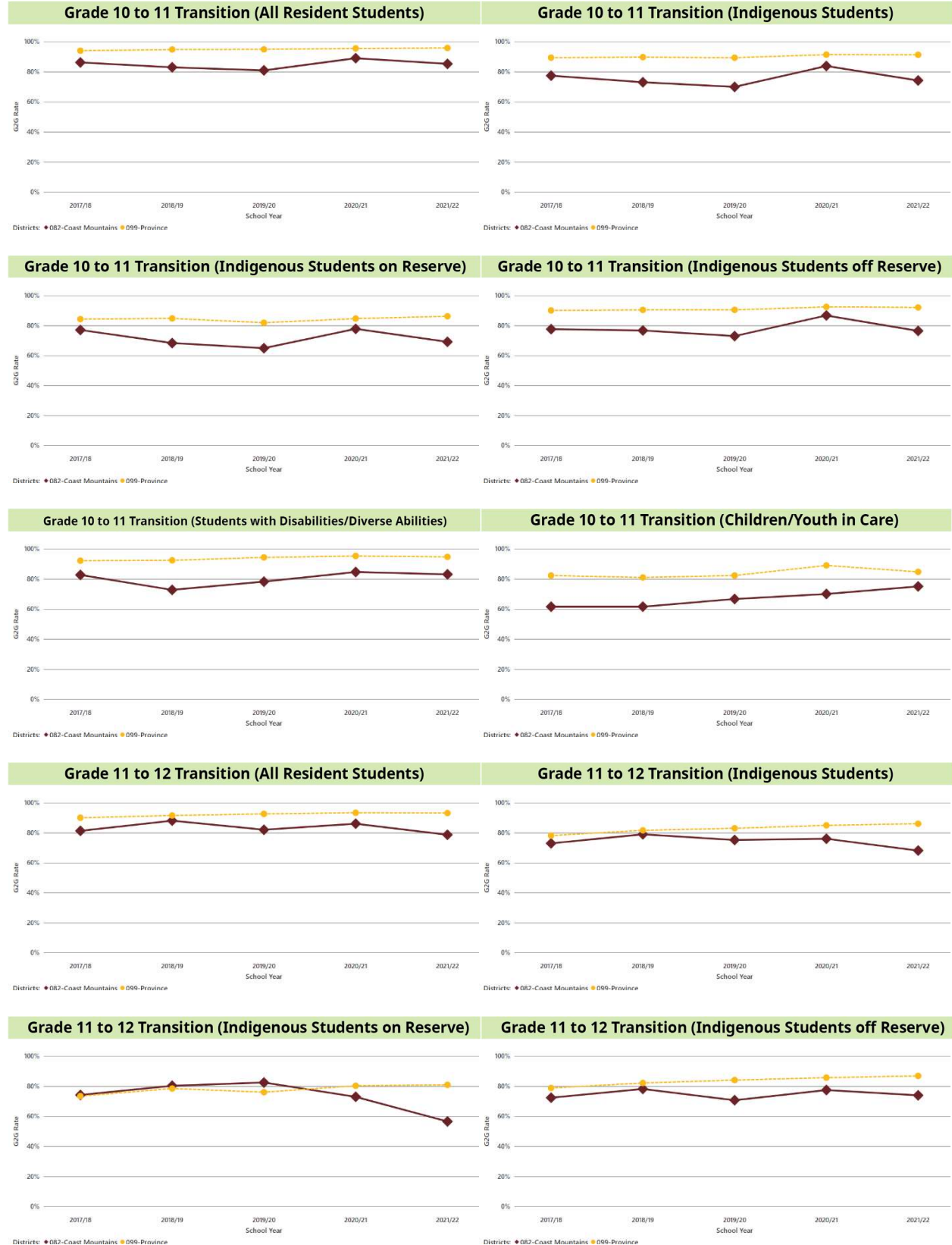
Numeracy 10 Provincial Assessment There is an upward trend for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students on the Grade 10 Numeracy assessment. However, the overall results indicate that fewer than 30% of learners are meeting expectations, with the results still lower for all identified groups.

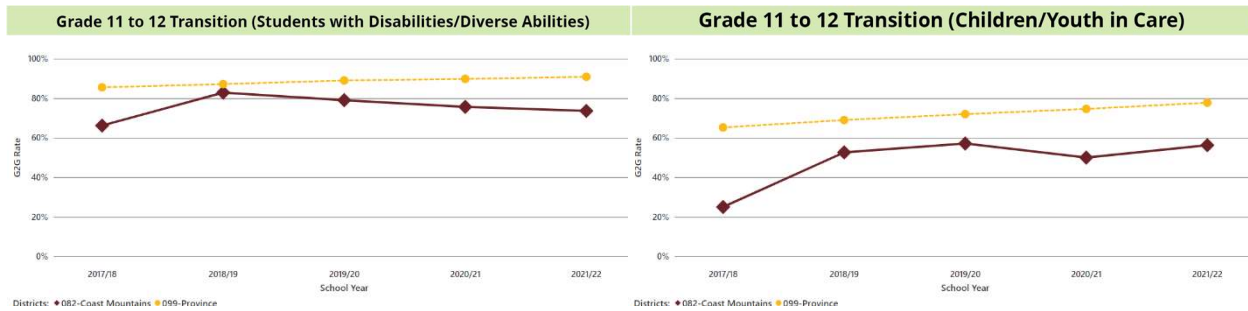
District Numeracy Assessments In reviewing the current Grade 4 cohort, approximately 40% of all learners are demonstrating proficiency across multiple mathematical domains, compared to roughly 30% of those learners self-identifying as Indigenous. Achievement levels have remained static in this cohort over the last 3 years for both groups. Similar results are observed with the Grade 7 cohort, with roughly 38% of all learners hitting the mark compared to 27% for Indigenous learners.

Again, similar to student evidence for Literacy, overall the vast majority of learners in Coast Mountains School District are not meeting expectations in Numeracy across both provincial and district based assessments. Equity deserving groups, as seen through disaggregated data, are achieving at lower levels still. This continues to be a great concern.

As a school district, it is clear that the Numeracy learning needs of many children are not being met, regardless of ancestry, designation, or family circumstance. The evidence indicates the need for a more thorough review of Numeracy programming at K-12 leading to a district wide strategy for improvement.

Measure 2.3: Grade-to-Grade Transitions





Analysis and Interpretation: What Does this Mean?

Specifically, the grade-to-grade transition evidence was reviewed at the secondary grade levels 10-12 for all learners as well as equity deserving groups – Indigenous learners both on and off reserve, children and youth in care and those with disabilities/diverse abilities. The following key observations were made:

Grade 10 to 11 Transition Coast Mountains learners have consistently transitioned from grade 10 to 11 at a rate approximately 10% lower than that of the province. Indigenous learners, specifically those on reserve, are transitioning at much lower levels. Children/youth in care are seeing improvements over time.

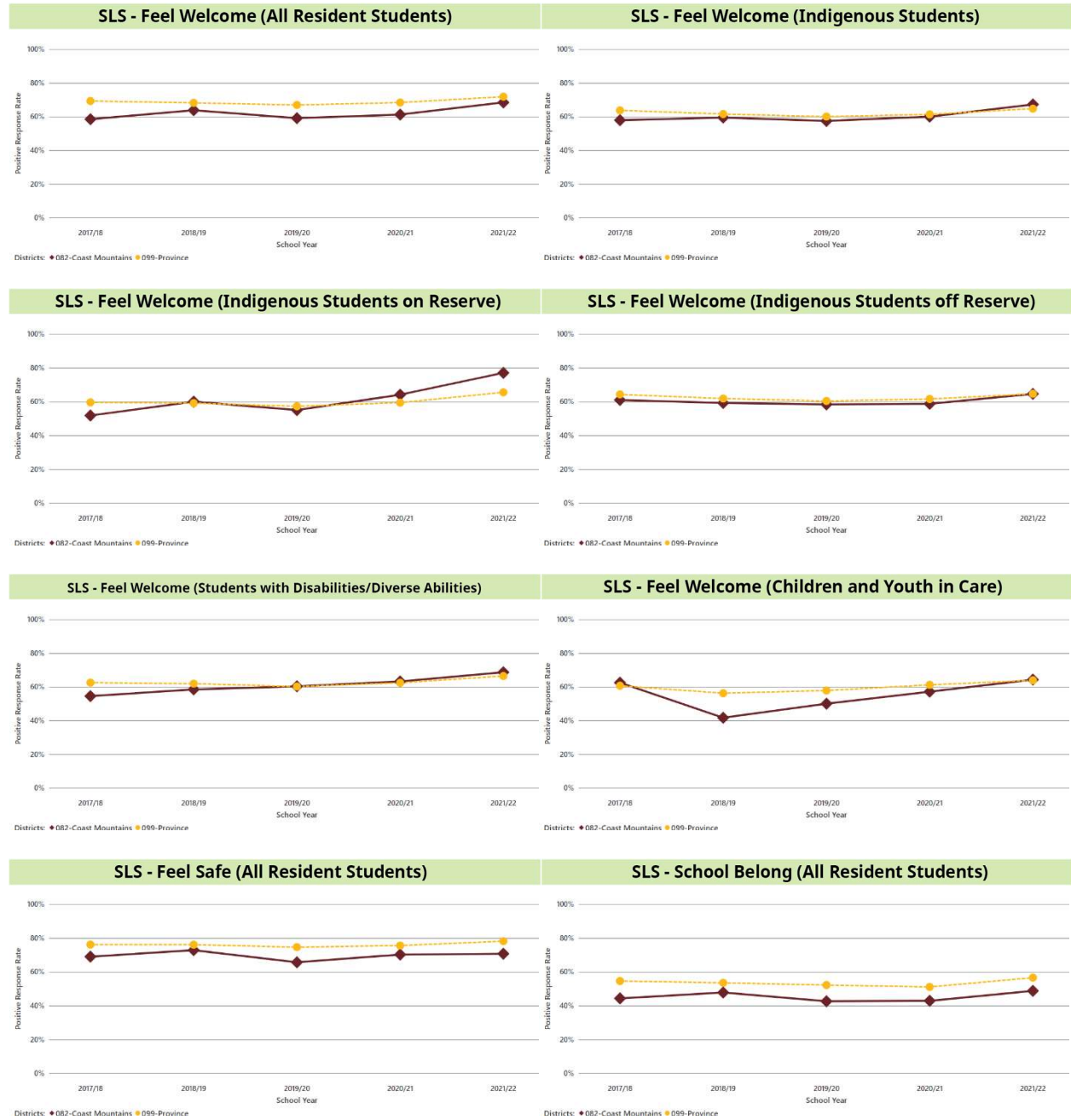
Grade 11 to 12 Transition Learners again are transitioning at a rate approximately 10% lower than that of the province, with far lower levels being realized by those Indigenous ancestry. In particular, Indigenous learners residing on reserve are experiencing the lowest levels of success, and are declining over time.

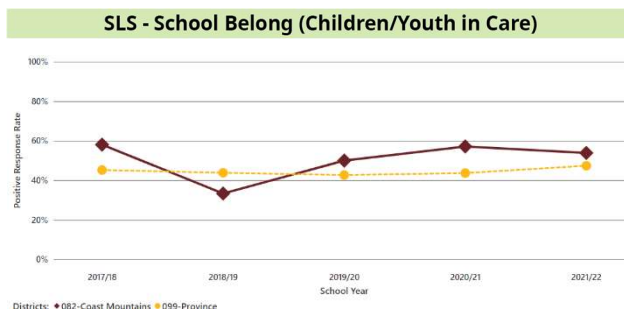
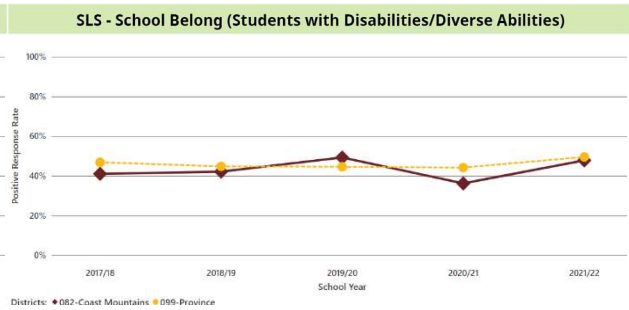
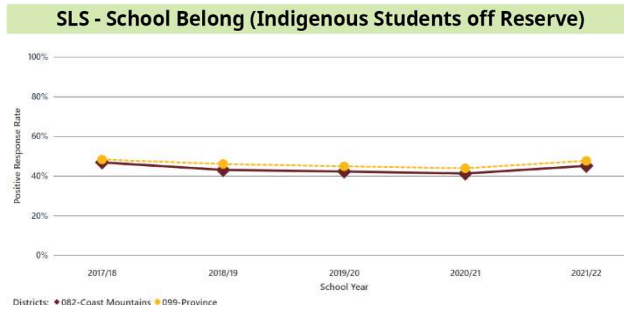
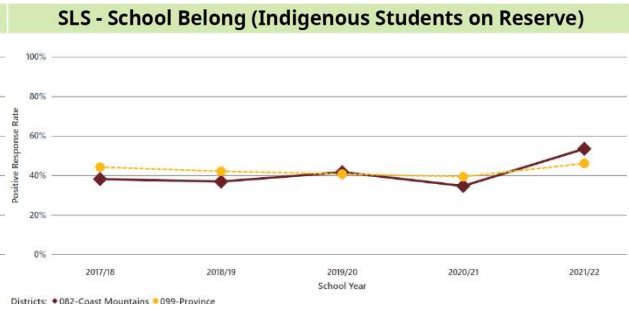
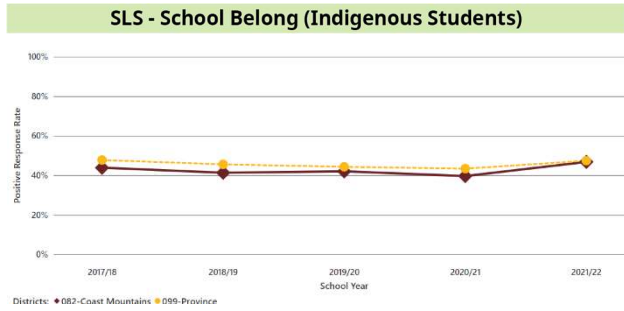
Certainly the evidence of grade-to-grade student transitions at high school highlights the need to examine school-based supports targeting Indigenous learners at grades 10 and 11. Additionally, the importance of relationships with families and the Nations is accentuated, enabling schools to share in the responsibility of meeting the unique needs of on reserve learners as they move through the high school grades.

Human and Social Development

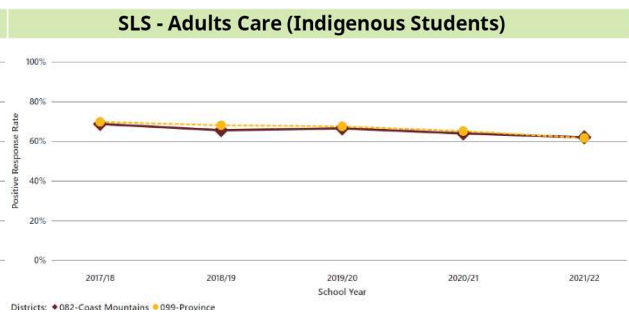
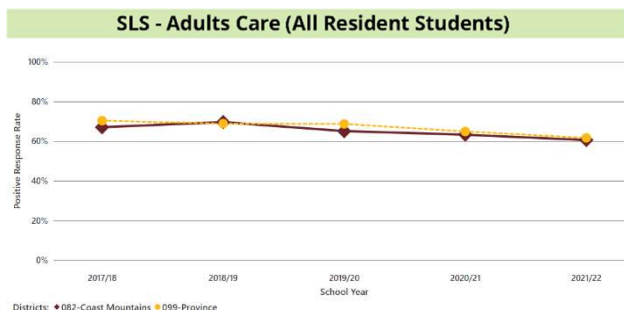
Educational Outcome 3: Students Feel Welcome, Safe, and Connected

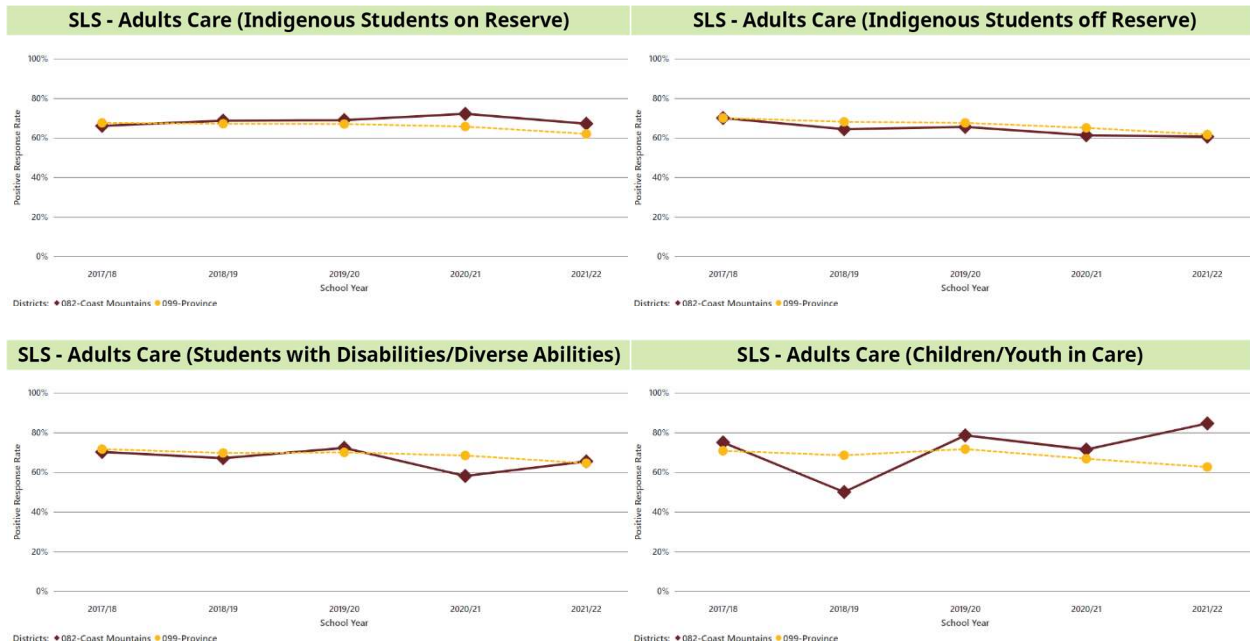
Measure 3.1: Student Sense of Belonging





Measure 3.2: Two or More Adults who Care About Them





Relevant Additional/Local Data and Evidence

Middle Years Development Instrument Summary Data (Key Indicators)

	Thriving High Well-being		2 or More Caring Adults		High School Climate		High School Belonging	
	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23
Grade 5	34%	23%	69%	69%	68%	62%	58%	61%
Grade 8	17%	17%	49%	45%	30%	16%	27%	19%

See full school district reports online at: <https://earlylearning.ubc.ca/>

School District Student Voice / Spring Forum Events

Key highlights included:

- Every participant had at least one positive thing to say about school
- Participants attend school for a variety of reasons, including extracurricular clubs & teams, school activities, and food programming
- Most participants felt connected to peers and/or adults at school
- Many participants found school to be a welcoming place
- Almost all participants indicated they had someone in their life who believed in them
- Many participants want to have more input in their school experience, like bell schedules and course offerings

Analysis and Interpretation: What Does this Mean?

Coast Mountains School District places relationships (*between learners, their peers and their teachers and other adults*) as foundational to the overall success and well-being of students. The core values outlined within the Strategic Plan point to the importance of a *compassionate system* that prioritizes the well-being of learners, and the right to a safe, welcoming, and caring environment established through both respectful and meaningful relationships.

As a district, evidence from both the provincial Student Learning Survey and the board-administered Middle Years Development Instrument were reviewed, along with quantitative responses from students stemming from school and district 'student forum' events. The information gathered collectively supports the learner experience in our classrooms across the school district.

The following key highlights were identified from the specific data sets:

Student Learning Survey Across all demographics, there is a trending increase in the percentage of students feeling welcomed in our schools and classrooms. When considered disaggregated evidence, on reserve Indigenous learners report feeling both the most welcome and a high sense of school belonging, outperforming the district and province in these measures. Children / youth in care, too, are trending upward in their perspective of having caring adults at school, as well as feeling welcomed at school.

Middle Years Development Instrument Approximately 20% of participating students identified as having high well-being, representing an overall decline from last year. Primarily this has resulted from students reporting increased feelings of sadness, as well as from the way they described their overall health. This is a concerning piece of evidence that is in alignment with the national trend. Also on the MDI, noticeable declines were observed from grade 5 to 8 across all measures, and at Grade 8 fewer participating students reporting feelings of belonging in their school, as well as their satisfaction with the school climate, since last year.

Student Voice Forums Learners representing diverse demographics and life experiences participated in the Student Voice Spring Series. Restorative circles and a carousel approach were used to illicit responses related to students' feeling of focus topics of belonging, safety and engagement in school. Across all key inquiry areas, the majority of participants identified positive aspects to their school experience, including their connectedness to others and finding schools to be welcoming places.

It can be challenging to effectively tell the story of the learners' experience in school as it pertains to human and social development. Adults in Coast Mountains schools are working diligently to ensure classrooms are safe, caring spaces where every child feels they belong, however the reality is that learners do not always perceive this to be the case, so work remains.

As a school district we remain committed to honouring the history, culture, language and knowledge of local Nations, and in so doing, improving the sense of safety and belonging. With respect to Indigenous learners, both on and off reserve, it is promising that both qualitative and quantitative evidence indicates growth in this area.

Career Development

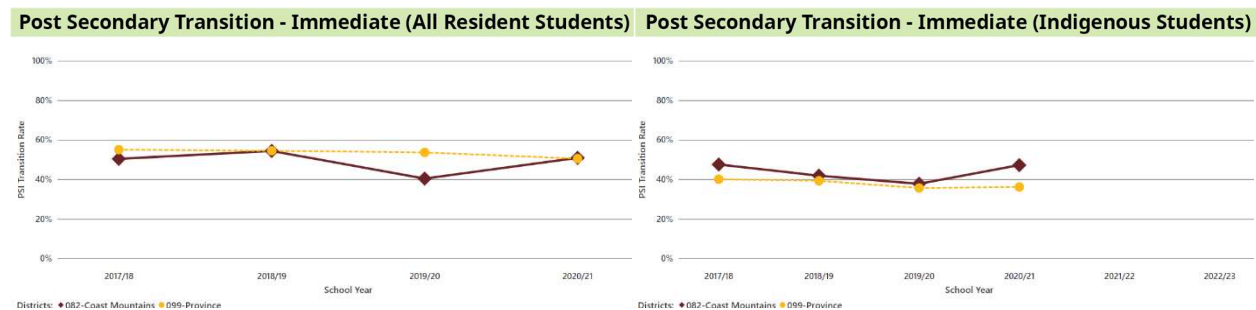
Educational Outcome 4: Students will Graduate

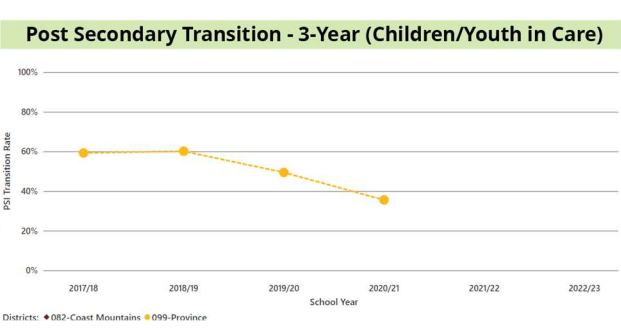
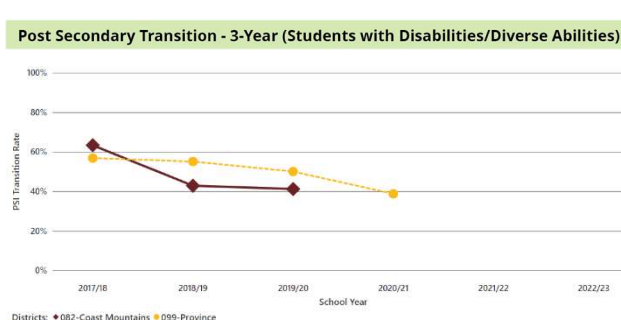
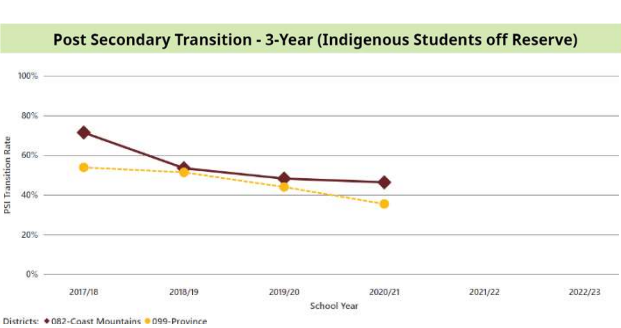
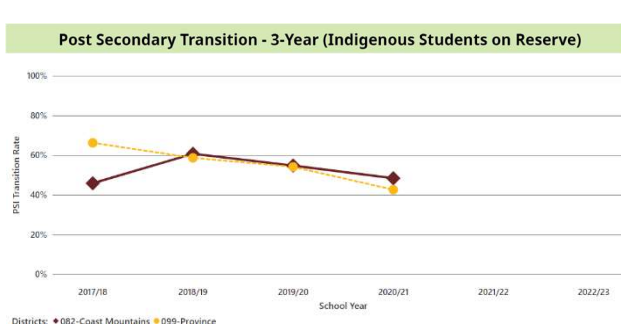
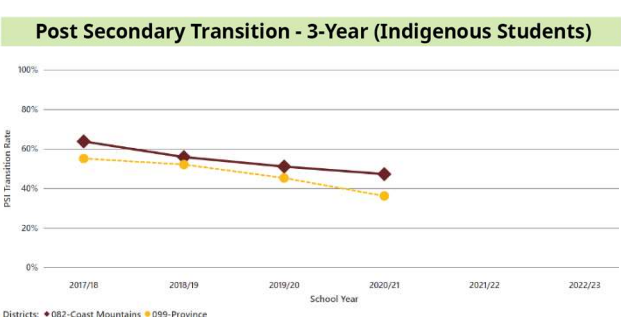
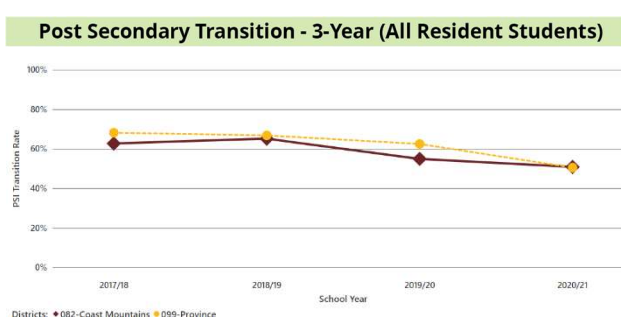
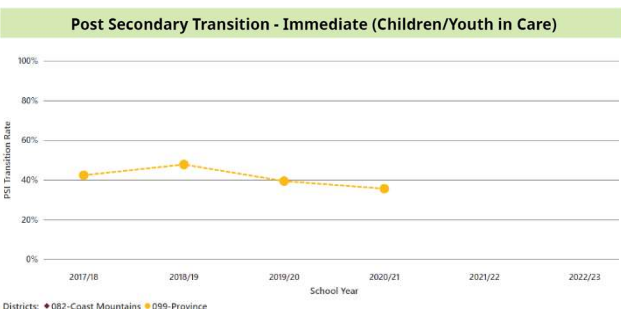
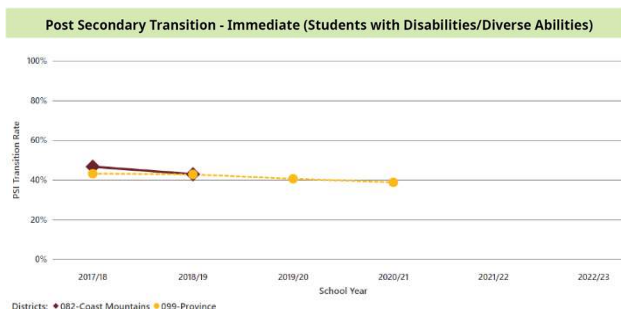
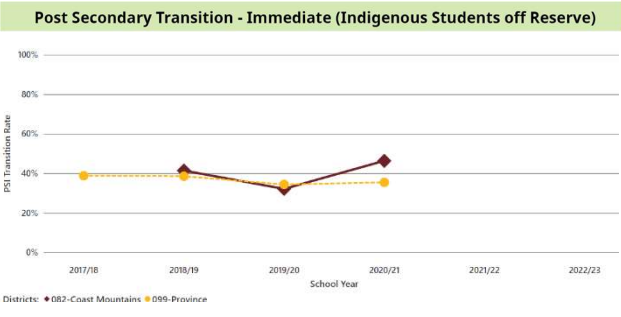
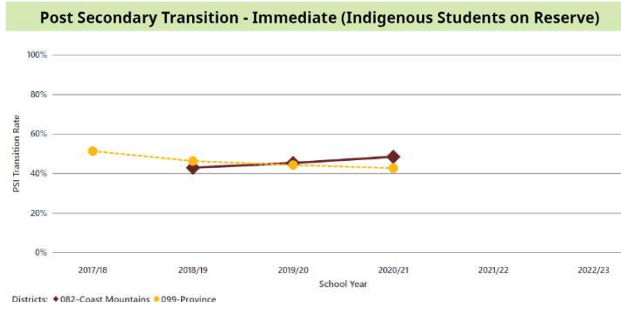
Measure 4.1: Achieved Dogwood Within 5 Years



Educational Outcome 5: Life and Career Core Competencies

Measure 5.1: Transitioning to Post-Secondary

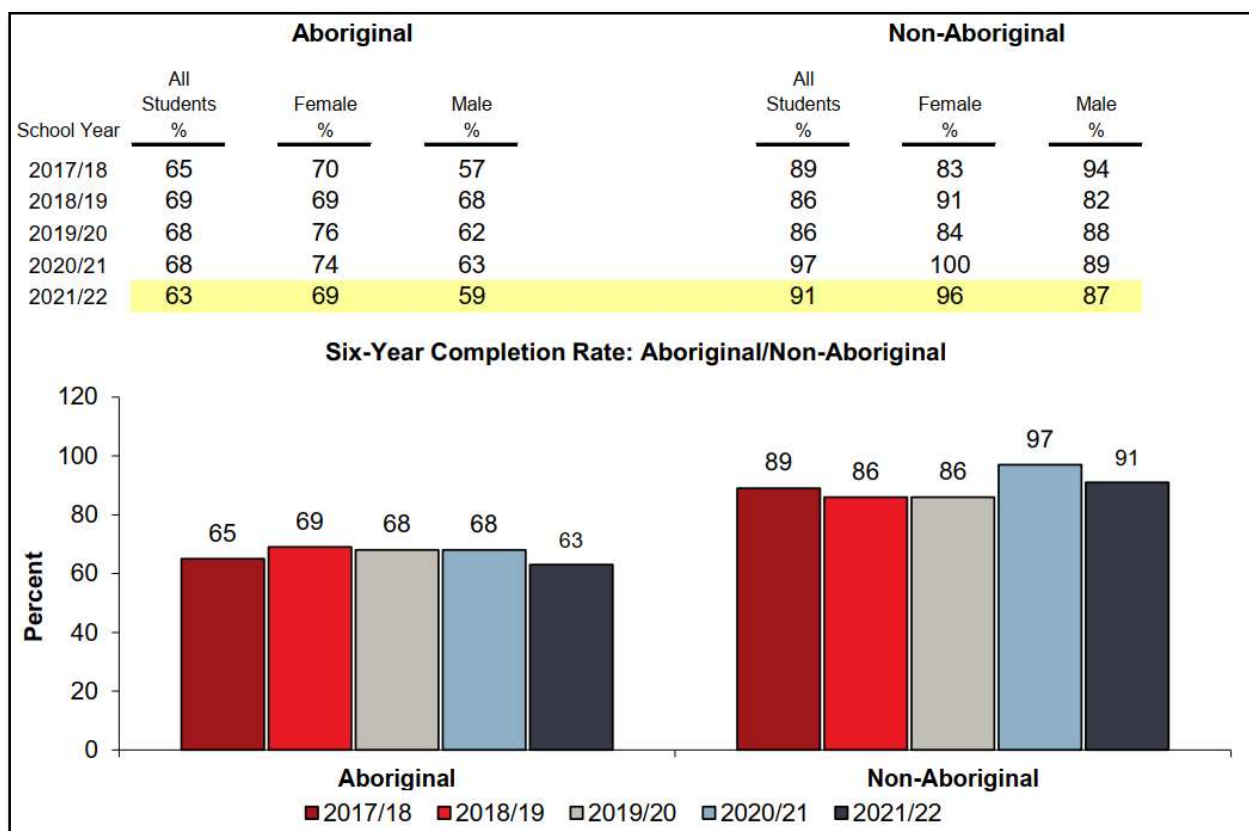




Relevant Additional/Local Data and Evidence

Achieved Dogwood within 6 Years (Taken from 2022 How Are We Doing? Report)

The six-year completion rate is the percent of Grade 8 students who graduate, with a B.C. Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood) or a B.C. Adult Graduation Diploma (Adult Dogwood), within six years from the first time they enroll in Grade 8.



Analysis and Interpretation: What Does this Mean?

Coast Mountains School District, along with its many partners, is committed to supporting learners in the successful completion of secondary school, resulting in the achievement of their Certificate of Graduation, the Dogwood Diploma.

The following key highlights were identified from the specific data sets:

Achieved Dogwood Within 5 Years The 5-year graduation rate has declined slightly for all learners, averaging 65%, roughly 20% lower than the provincial rate. For Indigenous learners, the rate mirrors that for all learners, averaging 45%, roughly 20% lower than the provincial rate. On reserve Indigenous learners are experiencing lower levels of success than off reserve

Indigenous learners in this measure. Learners with disabilities / diverse abilities have experienced little change over the last 5 years and are approximately 25% lower.

Achieved Dogwood Within 6 Years In 2021-22 the 6-year graduation rate for all Indigenous learners was 63% while that for non-Indigenous learners was 91%. Over the past 5 years, the 6-year graduation rate has remained fairly consistent for both groups – roughly 67% for Indigenous learners and 90% for Non-Indigenous learners.

Post-Secondary Institution (PSI) Transition Rates: Immediate Transition Over the last five years, Coast Mountains graduates are transitioning to public post-secondary institutions in BC immediately following graduation at roughly the provincial rate. In 2020-21 this number was 50%. For Indigenous learners, the rate has mirrored that of all learners and is above the provincial average. On reserve and off reserve learners are experiencing similar levels of success on this measure.

Post-Secondary Institution (PSI) Transition Rates: Within 3 years There has been a slight decline in recent year in the number of students transitioning to post-secondary within 3 years of graduation, mirroring the provincial rate. Despite the decline, Indigenous learners continue to outperform the provincial measure, with both on and off reserve learners experiencing similar levels of success. For both groups, the 3-year transition rate in 2020-21 was approximately 50%. The evidence indicates that more learners are transitioning to public post-secondary BC institutions within 3 years of graduation.

Post-secondary transition rates account for those learners who choose the path of enrolling in a BC public post-secondary program, and do not consider those who choose to pursue apprenticeships, private and out of province institutions. Recognizing that many learners are not transitioning into post-secondary, there is a need to support a variety of career pathways for learners, including maintaining a robust work experience program, supporting youth work in trades, and establishing a variety of dual credit offerings throughout the district.

Learner evidence from the domain of Career Development supports the commitments made within the district's newly launched strategic plan, including increasing the 6-year completion rate for all learners, eliminating the gap between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous graduation rates, and ensuring all students demonstrate proficiency in education, career and life planning.

Section B: Moving Forward

Planning and Adjusting for Continuous Improvement

Current Strategic Plan Priorities

Coast Mountains School District is entering the second year of implementation of its new Strategic Plan – Engage, Ignite, Empower (<https://cmsd.bc.ca/strategic-plan>). With strong connections to the Board of Education’s *mission* and *values*, and guided by the First People’s Principles of Learning, the strategic planning process resulted in the identification of three overarching goal statements.

- **All learners will realize their full potential**
 - Learners are engaged in their learning, making clear connections to their personal interests, strengths, and passions.
 - Learners are developing essential skills in numeracy and literacy.
 - Learners are building 21st century competencies, including critical thinking and communication skills.
 - Learners are demonstrating proficiency in education, career and life planning.

- **We will honour and respect culture, diversity & inclusion**
 - Learners appreciate contributions of Indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as experience Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.
 - Learners understand how cultural identity shapes world view.
 - The Coast Mountains School District workforce reflects the rich diversity in our local communities.
 - Inequities of outcomes are identified and barriers to learner success are removed.

- **We will facilitate well-being across the district**
 - Learning environments are welcoming, trauma informed and culturally safe for all learners.
 - Learners are developing strong relationships with peers and caring adults.
 - Learners are developing both socially and emotionally.
 - The well-being needs of learners are met by professionals working in collaboration.

Again this year, operational plans across all departments define both the efforts and resources necessary to meet the Board of Education’s bold vision over the next several years.

Celebrating our Successes for the Past Year

In response to the launch of the Board's visionary strategic plan, the 2022-23 school year saw the beginnings of a multi-year action plan aimed to positively impact the well-being and achievement of every learner in Coast Mountains School District. With an increasing focus on equity, creating safe, caring and welcoming learning environments, and classroom instruction that is engaging, culturally responsive and impactful, the school district is positioned for growth over the next several years.

In this first year of implementation, some of the successfully realized strategies include:

- the collaborative development of a district K-3 literacy strategy focused on building professional capacity related to evidence-based practices. Components of the strategy include delivery of teacher professional learning, acquisition of resources necessary to support effective literacy instruction, and service delivery across a multi-tiered system of supports, all guided by sound assessment evidence.
- the procurement and design of an online dashboard accessible by school and district staff to support conversations related to learner success. The dashboard supports the district in meeting responsibilities for reporting on learner success as per Local Education Agreements (LEA).
- engagement in a robust district teacher recruitment and retention project, in partnership with other Northern BC School District and Ministry, addressing teacher shortages impacting the success of learners, particularly in communities with high populations of Indigenous learners. In 2022-23 approximately 10% of the district's teachers were uncertified operating on a Letter of Permission (LOP), and still other key support and service positions remain unfilled. Recruitment efforts secured many new educators, primarily from outside of the province.
- purposeful collaboration and dialogue with Indigenous communities regarding supports, services and learner success, with planning underway for increased engagement in the year ahead.
- the design and implementation of a focused approach to service delivery and clarification of enhanced services to best meet the needs of all Indigenous learners, including the re-design of both structures and processes that create impact.
- an intentional yearlong focus on growing the professional capacity of Inclusion Teacher Mentors, supporting their school-based colleagues in meeting learners' needs and celebrating all forms of diversity in their schools.

To date feedback on the strategic actions undertaken within the district noted above have been positive, and there is acknowledgement that much more work is required to transform the system and realize the intended impacts for learners.

Existing and/or Emerging Areas for Growth

Without question, a number of existing areas for growth were confirmed through the review and analysis of learner evidence across multiple data sets. Key measures of system progress, both local and provincial, indicate significant numbers of K-10 learners are not achieving grade level expectations in Literacy and Numeracy. Across both curriculum areas, levels of success in Coast Mountains School District typically fall well short of the province, and there are very few instances of recent growth. Learners identifying as Indigenous, both on and off reserve, as well as those in care or with disabilities/diverse abilities are also lagging behind provincial measures. Given the evidence of success at the elementary and middle level grades, it is also not surprising that high school transition rates, as well as the 5- and 6-year graduation rates for all groups of learners, are also lagging.

It is evident that given the long-term record of academic achievement, especially when examined through a lens of equity, that the district's approaches to supporting teaching and learning have not consistently had the necessary impact.

Some key initiatives are currently being undertaken in actioning the Board's strategic vision for growth to address some of these realities. Targeted professional learning to build capacity at K-3, for example, will support the literacy learning needs of our youngest learners, while the re-imagining of roles/responsibilities within the Indigenous Education Department will attend to improved service delivery and support across the system, including the monitoring of progress towards graduation for Indigenous learners at the secondary grades.

Not unlike other areas of the province, new emerging challenges have also had an impact on the overall achievement and well-being of learners across Northwest communities. These include increased levels of substance abuse and mental health struggles among youth, and decreased levels of learner engagement and attendance, particularly noted among Indigenous students. These, coupled with ongoing workforce challenges, are presenting additional barriers that require our attention.

Strategic Engagement

Strategic engagement is the targeted and meaningful involvement of district partners in addressing a specified need with the ultimate goal of improving student outcomes. Coast Mountains School District values the active engagement of all partners who are invested in the success of our learners - including parents, guardians, caregivers, local Indigenous peoples, community members, educators, partnering agencies, learners themselves, and still more. Recent examples of strategic engagement in the district included:

- **School District Working Groups**

During the 2022-23 school year, a number of short-term working groups, primarily

involving school district employees and community partners, were established. Working groups with mandates closely tied to learner outcomes included District Food Programming, Early Literacy Learning, Data Dashboard, Employee Wellness, and School Improvement Planning. The 'All My Relations' working group, with membership inclusive of rightsholders, Indigenous peoples, and more, launches Fall 2023 to create a culturally responsive and respectful framework for systemic change in Coast Mountains School District. Working groups operated by consensus to make decisions tied to their area of focus.

- **Northern Inquiry Project**

As part of the Northern BC Teacher Recruitment & Retention initiative, consultations took place in the Hazeltons with school district employees, learners, First Nations representatives, and community partners. Input continues to support the efforts to establish a full complement of qualified teachers in Hazelton area schools.

- **Annual Budget Consultations, Including Survey**

Consultations took place in Spring 2023 related to school district priorities and the creation of the annual budget. Participants included partner groups, Trustees, Indigenous peoples, and learners. A full community survey was administered in advance of the gathering of the Budget Working Group, providing an opportunity for all interested parties to help shape the budget priorities for 2023-24.

- **Whole Staff Professional Learning Survey**

A survey of all school district employees was implemented in Spring 2023 to inform district staff in the ways employees wished to grow professionally in the 2023-24 school year. Input from participants has been used to shape professional learning opportunities planned for the school year aligning with priority areas including Literacy, Numeracy, Well-being, Indigenous Education and Truth & Reconciliation.

- **District Education Committee**

The school district's Education Committee, a standing committee of the Board, has a very broad and inclusive membership including staff, DPAC, learners, local First Nations and more. The committee meets monthly with Trustees and senior district staff to discuss matters related to learner achievement, learner support and school district issues. All meetings in 2022-23 had a focus on learner outcomes, including the analysis and interpretation of the provincially issued Aboriginal How Are We Doing? Report leading to discussions on changes necessary to improve outcomes for Indigenous learners throughout the school district. End-of-year feedback from the committee membership has shaped the agenda for meetings in 2023-24.

- **Student & Family Affordability Fund Consultations**

With approximately \$500,000 one-time funding from the provincial government, extensive partner consultations took place in Fall 2022 to receive input on the best use of funds to support learners and families in Coast Mountains School District. Consultations occurred with First Nations, DPAC, community partners, and district employees, and an open Thought Exchange was used for further input. As a result, equitable and targeted funding distribution decisions were made, and feedback with all partners ensured they were aware of how their contributions influenced the process.

- **School Student Forums**

Annually, the district works collaboratively with schools to promote student voice through learner participation in Student Forum events. In Spring 2023 input from diverse groups of learners was solicited on themes relevant to their lived experiences in classrooms, including belongingness and safety. Learner feedback was shared with school staffs and reported back to the Board and community via the regular public Board meeting.

Overall, school district strategic engagement was well utilized to gain timely input on several matters related to learner outcomes. Improvements to this important work can be made in 2023-24 with increased attention to the planning process, with more intentional dialogue related to a planned annual schedule for engagement with our educational partners.

Adjustment and Adaptations: Next Steps

The 2023-24 school year represents the second year of the Board’s Strategic Plan – Engage, Ignite, Empower 2022-27 – developed with extensive community and partner consultation in 2021-22. The school district will proceed with a number of action plan commitments across the three overarching goal areas, several of which were initiated during 2022-23 as multi-year steps to improve outcomes for all learners served in Coast Mountains School District. With consideration of resources at hand and the accomplishments realized in 2022-23, key next steps have been identified, including:

- **K-3 Literacy Strategy Implementation**

Following last year’s development of an evidence-based approach to district wide literacy instruction across a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework, early teacher adopters, including on-site Literacy support teachers, will begin to engage in professional learning and ongoing coaching using Acadience, a universal reading diagnostic tool, to guide instruction that builds learner skills and confidence across foundational, scaffolded literacy outcomes.

- **Enhanced District Services for Indigenous Learners**

In response to learner evidence, a re-imagining of the district’s Indigenous Education Department has led to the collaborative creation of refined roles and responsibilities for team members, as well as the creation of new positions to support the monitoring of success for Indigenous learners K-12. Regional team members will provide wrap around support in relation to Indigenous youth outreach, while Indigenous Education Graduation Advisors will operate as a small team across 6 district schools to ensure learners are on track for success in Grades 8-12.

- **Teacher Recruitment & Retention**

With both a shortage of educators in British Columbia and a local teacher population largely approaching retirement, the district has continued to prioritize teacher

recruitment and retention in 2023-24. Our team will continue to work with Ministry, local communities and Northern BC partners with this focus, as well as look to strengthen relationships with post-secondary institutions where we have experienced past recruitment success.

- **Electronic Dashboard**

Development of a virtual dashboard began in Spring 2023 and continues into the 2023-24 school year. With an intuitive, user-friendly interface, the dashboard will allow for school and district staff to securely access and engage with online information, including attendance and achievement evidence. Modules will be added over time that are responsive to the data needs of the adults using the evidence to guide decisions related to instruction and resource allocation, for example. The tool also provides for the generation of progress reports on Indigenous learners in support of the agreements that exist with local First Nations.

- **Culturally Respectful and Responsive Practices**

Coast Mountains School District has prioritized professional learning for all employees related to cultural awareness, especially pertaining to local First Nations, to best meet the needs of learners within our remarkably diverse, culturally rich school communities. This learning supports employees in acquiring the knowledge and cultural capacity to engage with learners and families in a manner that is both culturally respectful and inclusive.

- **Anti-Racism Learning & Action**

The provincial K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan provides the framework for addressing racism and discrimination in education, creating inclusive and caring climates where all learners and school community members feel they belong. Being anti-racist is more than having an awareness of racism - it's a call to support anti-racism through action. This priority area for 2023-24 represents the school district's commitment to expand our collective understanding of racism in all its forms while empowering our learners to act through targeted school actions grants.

- **Indigenous Worldview & Knowledge Systems**

Coast Mountains School District is fortunate to have abundant resources and partnerships to support learners' understanding of Indigenous worldview and knowledge systems. For the 2023-24 school year, the district has prioritized enhancements to school programming that provides opportunities to learn on the land from First Nations Elders and Knowledge Holders, as well as further develop outdoor learning spaces that incorporate Indigenous language and cultural teachings.

- **K-12 Mental Health & Wellness Strategy Development**

With emerging needs identified across all school communities, district staff will engage with key partners, including Northern Health and BC Children's Hospital, to systematically plan for the health and wellness of learners K-12. For 2023-24 these efforts will align with school plans and include funding opportunities for learner-led health and wellness Action Grant initiatives.

- **Healthy Food Programming**

In response to feedback from partner groups and local First Nations, Coast Mountains School District will work collaboratively to develop and implement practices and standards that increase learners' access to healthy and culturally responsive food programming across all schools. With the support of community and national sponsors and the BC Feeding Futures Fund, the district will look to boost nourishing breakfast, snack, and lunch programming options for learners in a stigma free environment.

Alignment for Successful Implementation

In Coast Mountains School District Strategic, key priorities associated with the strategic plan were presented to the Budget Working Group in Spring 2023, along with budgetary requests to realize anticipated action plan commitments. Some of the priorities shared at that time included:

- **Teacher Recruitment & Retention** With aspirations to improve educational outcomes for children while experiencing a teacher shortage, the priority of recruitment and retention represents a cost pressure. Funds must be prioritized for not only finding teachers, but ensuring there is ongoing mentoring support, especially for those individuals hired operating on Letters of Permission (LOP).
- **Data Dashboard** Seen as a district tool to inform, communicate and simply elevate conversations related to learner outcomes, the dashboard is a new cost pressure shared by district and Indigenous Education Department.
- **Enhanced Supports and Services for Indigenous Learners** In response to learner evidence, both qualitative and that received through story, a re-imagining of roles, responsibilities and service delivery is unfolding with the Indigenous Education Department, funded internally by means of departmental funding.
- **Reconciliation, Anti-Racism & Mental Health Actions Grants** Learner-led initiatives centre students in meaningful, action-oriented and relational learning that has great potential for both empowerment and genuine impact in local school communities.

For 2023-24, third party sponsorship is playing a significant role in allowing the school district to proceed with priority action items related primarily to learning and Indigenous culture. With the generous financial support of local community donors, Coast Mountains School District has been fortunate to support the following:

- **K-3 Literacy Strategy** Targeted donations are enabling educator professional learning, procurement of classroom instructional resources, and enhancements to literacy service delivery across tiers of support.
- **Outdoor Learning Spaces & Experiential Learning** The creation of spaces and experiences incorporating Indigenous language, culture and knowledge are being

supported in a limited number of schools, with aspirations for expansion over the remaining years of the strategic plan.

A final but critical component for system improvement, supporting the success of each child, are local school growth plans. To have impact, these plans must be grounded in the school's context and centred on the needs of its learners, while at the same time, aligned with the school district's priorities. In Coast Mountains School District, this means local plans that are crafted by school staff in pursuit of equitable outcomes for all learners, specifically focused on student learning, wellness, and Indigenous culture and Inclusion.

In Spring 2023 a district working group met to discuss a collective approach by schools to engage meaningfully in the school improvement process. The group reviewed school planning processes around the province and identified promising practices for exploration over the 2023-24 school year with alignment of goal areas. It is anticipated schools will be transitioning to an improved process and will also be making explicit their plans for schoolwide engagement as it relates to both Indigenous Education and Mental Health.

School improvement efforts, arguably, has been an area that has not had the full support of all professionals working in our education system. School plans at times have been more of a checklist line item, rather than the meaningful roadmap for growth and improvement in educational outcomes for children and youth. At the district level, it is believed that more dialogue and planning is required to support the meaningful engagement of all school staff members in the work, including intentional conversations regarding evidence-based instruction and assessment practices, fueled by disaggregated evidence of learners' academic achievement and well-being.

Conclusion

With its sights firmly set on the Board’s visionary Strategic Plan – Engage Ignite Empower – the Coast Mountains School District is committed to improving educational outcomes for all learners, with a special lens of equity focused on those who have been historically marginalized and continue to experience lower levels of success. It is clear that there are great opportunities ahead for the meaningful engagement of all educational partners as they collectively build the capacity to best meet the needs of the learners and families served by our school district.