



New Hazelton Elementary School Inquiry Plan 2023-2024



1. **School:** Our mission at New Hazelton Elementary is to provide students with positive learning and social experiences to enable them to participate successfully in society.

- ⇒ New Hazelton Elementary is a K-7 school on the traditional territory of the Gitksan people and is located in the District of New Hazelton
- ⇒ The larger school community is comprised of several small townships and seven reserves from two separate nations: the Gitksan and the Wet'su'wet'en.
- ⇒ We have a diverse student population, with many talents in art, technology, sports, music, and other areas of interest
- ⇒ Seventy percent of our students travel to school by bus
- ⇒ The student population is projected to be approximately 100 students, 80% of whom are Indigenous.
- ⇒ Fifteen percent of our students are Ministry-identified.
- ⇒ Parents and families have traditionally been strong supporters of school events, such as concerts, assemblies, fundraisers, and activity nights.

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

Staff states that attendance continues to be a significant area of concern. Prior to the pandemic, data showed that 30% of students missed 30 or more days of school and 44% arrived late 20 or more times during the year. Improvements have been noted, after engaging staff (FNSW and principal) and enlisting the support of Education Coordinators to be more pro-active in directly contacting families where attendance concerns were significant.

Teachers express concern about filling in the gaps in learning for students who have sporadic attendance throughout the past few years. Parent engagement has declined in comparison to engagement prior to the COVID pandemic.

What is currently in place to support our learners? What are the opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing?

- ⇒ Learner support in classes and in small targeted groups to support literacy and numeracy
- ⇒ Speech-language assistant support with primary students
- ⇒ EA support in each class
- ⇒ EA trained to provide OT/PT support to designated students
- ⇒ Sensory room on site and available for student use; we have been approved through Jordan's Principle to employ an OT/PT assistant to work with students full-time in the coming school year.
- ⇒ FNSW workers connecting with families
- ⇒ Increased use of technology school-wide, including classroom laptops, iPads, 3-D printer, virtual reality system, woodworking tools/projects. Technology use focusses on cross-curricular activities, literacy development, and integrating Indigenous content throughout.
- ⇒ Classroom garden project – each class has a garden box in the school yard to grow vegetable, flowers, and other plants and provides a connection to the outdoors, the land, and regular hands-on activities. Cross-curricular connections to food/nutrition/cooking, science, and environmental education are made.
- ⇒ School counsellor, focussing on trauma-related behaviours and exploring options for both a boys' group and a girls' group for additional supports.
- ⇒ SOGI student group
- ⇒ All students take Gitxsan Cultural Awareness (Grades K-7); 80 % of Grade 5-7 students take Gitxsan Language. **Unfortunately we currently do have a Gitxsan Culture and Language teacher.**
- ⇒ Several classroom teachers regularly include Gitxsan words and phrases into their daily routines and incorporate Indigenous content in their general practice
- ⇒ Breakfast is provided each morning for any student who needs it; snacks are also available throughout the day, and Gitanmaax Band offers a hot lunch program for anyone who wishes to sign up. We have recently partnered with the Breakfast Club of Canada, which is providing more funding for food options for our students.
- ⇒ After School Sports and Arts Initiative (ASSAI) provides a range of healthy and fun activities
- ⇒ All staff greet and welcome students into the building and their classrooms
- ⇒ Completion of a new mural. It was created to reflect our students' culture and was designed by a local artist with input from every student.

3. **Focusing:** Where does your focus need to be? What is your specific inquiry question? Why is this important? Where would you concentrate your focus to change the results and the experience of your learners? Must reflect one of the Board Goals and a focus on Indigenous students.

Monique Gray Smith, Tom Hierck, Dr. Lorna Williams, and others have all told us that building a sense of community, belonging, and relationship is critical for student success, and that we must focus on creating safe, engaging learning environments where students see themselves and their culture reflected and where they know the adults in the building

believe in them. The recent discoveries of unmarked graves at residential schools across the nation, and other socio-political issues in the communities will continue to play a role in how students and families feel about school and their place in it.

- ⇒ A continued focus needs to be on developing foundational skills:
 - Reading: comprehension, accuracy, fluency, vocabulary
 - Writing: meaning, style, form, conventions
 - Numeracy: computation, math facts

- ⇒ A focus on social-emotional learning is another important goal – self-regulation strategies, growth mindset strategies, trauma-informed practice, embracing the “four blankets of resilience”: sense of self, family, community, and culture. Embracing the First Peoples Principles of Learning can support this, as well as programs such as Zones of Regulation and MindUp.

- ⇒ A focus on ensuring our students’ culture is authentically reflected in the school and shared with the school community is crucial. Authentically is key here. Often teachers have expressed concerns that they do not know how to incorporate indigenous culture into their lessons. Conversations with Dr. Lorna Williams have highlighted the idea that staff can begin with simply incorporating First Peoples Principles of Learning.

- ⇒ Engaging parents in the school on a regular basis is a must if we are to move children forward

OUR QUESTION:

Will we see increased student success academically and increased student engagement by reconnecting with parents and embracing culture and community in all areas of our teaching and learning practices?

How can we get there?

- Teach and use common language around reading, writing, and numeracy
- Teach and use common language around self-regulation
- Continue to collaborate and co-create curriculum with the GLC teacher to embed Indigenous content authentically in all classes. This can begin with embedding First Peoples Principles of Learning.
- Use Gitxsan language throughout the school wherever possible
- Showcase student projects (technology, art, literature, etc) throughout the school
- Continue to use the outdoors as a learning environment
- Weave culturally relevant activities into all learning. Keeping in mind this has to be authentic.
- Build partnerships with the communities to support culturally relevant activities; ensure elders and community members are welcomed and invited to participate in day-to-day school events and special occasions and encourage staff visits to community cultural events

- Support teachers to learn more about cultural protocols and practices
 - Focus on trauma-informed practice and social-emotional learning strategies
 - Use formative assessment and descriptive feedback to support student growth in learning
 - Continue to promote the use of technology to support student learning
4. **Developing a Hunch:** What practices in your school are leading to this situation? (*Focus on the areas over which educators have control – not parents, the system or the learner.*)

Many of our students enter school with low readiness skills in literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills; however, they usually arrive in the early years keen and eager to be at school and excited about their learning. This enthusiasm can decline by upper elementary, perhaps as students struggle to make sufficient gains in their learning and school becomes harder. This can lead to widening gaps in achievement and even further struggles as students progress to high school, as well as cause increases in absenteeism and challenges with behaviour in class as frustration mounts.

We know that every successful student has at least one (and preferably two) adults in their life who believe in them and support them in a positive way. Interestingly, we also know that even if a child can not identify an adult who they feel believes in them, they benefit when they have friends who they know adults believe in. As a school it is important that we create opportunities to allow students to be exposed to these individuals within our communities by building relationships both in the school and community. We need to ensure all staff subscribe to the idea of “all hands on deck”: **all** students are **all** of our responsibility. As well, we want to support parents in ensuring their children are attending school regularly, ensure they know they are safe, welcome, and wanted here, and know the value of the full educational experience we can offer.

We need to enable students to find and share their voices – to be able to express themselves in a variety of ways, with pride and competence. We need to help students develop strong critical thinking skills and resiliency skills in order to navigate through the challenges of the world they live in.

We need to ensure our students have access to a range of support services – mentorship, role models, peer support, academic support, counseling, career exploration, technology – to help them establish goals and vision for the future and to address issues that may impede the path to success.

We need to provide students with opportunities to deepen their engagement with their learning, to find relevance in their learning to the world we are preparing them for, to be role models and leaders, and to support their academic and social-emotional needs.

We need to continue to teach all students about behaviour expectations, using a cultural lens for guidance and support, and with the same consistency that we teach about literacy and numeracy. Meaningful and on-going discussions about trauma-informed practice can support this practice.

5. **Professional Learning:** What do the professionals in your building need to learn? How will this learning occur? What resources can you access? How will you build in multiple opportunities for learning?

We need to continue to learn about:

- Trauma informed practice
- Incorporating the First Peoples Principles of Learning in all our practices
- Cohesive literacy and numeracy strategies school-wide
- Positive behaviour support/interventions
- How best to support parents in valuing the school, school community, student engagement and learning

Resources we can access/Opportunities for learning:

- Role model program
- Collaboration opportunities – within the school and with neighbouring schools
- First Nations Resource Centre at HSS
- Local authors, artists, etc
- In-service opportunities: Shelley Moore, Brian Gidinski, Adrienne Gear
- Opportunities for teacher observation in well-established literacy and numeracy rich classrooms around the district
- Information from Student Voice Forums
- Allocate funds for teachers to participate in collaboration opportunities, professional learning opportunities, and to purchase resources to support initiatives

6. **Taking Action:** What are you doing about it? What will staff do differently? How will you know if it's working? (Incorporate the 3 levels of **Response To Intervention** and a focus on First Peoples Principles of Learning)

- ⇒ *What are the roles of Teachers, Support Staff, Principals and Vice-Principals in the inquiry?*
- ⇒ *What actions/ changes are happening based on what the students have identified as barriers to learning?*
- ⇒ *How are you communicating this to parents and incorporating their feedback?*

Tier 1 support is high quality instruction, guided by the First Peoples Principles of Learning, focussed on literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional learning. The Learner Support Teacher, Counsellor, Principal, Language and Culture Teacher, First Nations Support Workers, and EAs all play a role in providing this support alongside the classroom teacher: “all hands on deck” means all staff have roles in supporting students emotionally, behaviourally, and academically.

For those students needing more targeted supports in these areas, the school-based team (including all of those staff listed for Tier 1) can look at Tier 2 and 3 interventions, which may include small group instruction, making accommodations to teaching and learning strategies and the resources being used, making modifications to the classroom environment, offering more intensive one-on-one assistance, and the inclusion of education coordinators and/or outside agencies.

Other actions include:

- Start the day with check-ins – how is everyone doing?
- Ensure clear criteria, learning intentions, visual schedules, formative assessment, descriptive feedback are the norm in every class
- Make sure students know what “great work” looks like and have multiple opportunities to show their learning and their growth
- Enhance and expand the use of Indigenous content and ways of learning; include the GLC teacher and FNSW in classes
- Foster strong relationships with our communities
- Communicate with community partners about their needs; ask how can we as a school best support their children and culture?
- Embrace student voice and student choice and address what they identify as barriers to learning
- Continue to promote outdoor and land-based learning experiences
- Showcase and celebrate our students’ work, culture, successes in a variety of ways
- Consider establishing an education committee or professional learning committee (or similar) to focus on school initiatives or resources that teachers are interested in learning more about
- Encourage more parent and community involvement in school – literacy nights, talent shows, reading time during the day, etc.
- Ensure every student can name two adults in the building who believe in them and support them
- Work with HSS to bring peer tutors/mentors into the school
- Continue to communicate information about learning, achievement, and other initiatives to staff and parents via the school website, school newsletters, meet the teacher nights, PAC, PAC Facebook page, etc.

7. **Checking:** Have you made enough of a difference? What evidence will you be seeking to know you are making a difference?

⇒ *When will you check in and how often?*

⇒ *How can you do it in a way that allows for immediate adjustment?*

- Feedback from students and parents – check three times/year
- Improved attendance rates – check monthly via MyEd
- Reduced number of conduct reports – check monthly
- Improved results in reading (PM Benchmarks), writing (School Wide Writes), and numeracy (CMSD Numeracy Assessment) – fall/spring, and on FSAs
- More staff using formative assessment, UDL, and RTI practices to guide instruction, assessment, and interventions

School Principal Signature: _____



