

# Superintendent's Report to the Board

## February 2025



## A Message from the Superintendent

Ama Sah / Good Day,

February has been a month of celebration, reflection, and forward momentum within Coast Mountains School District. As we continue to honour the diversity of our school communities, we have embraced cultural celebrations and recognized significant events that deepen our collective learning and engagement.

### Cultural Celebrations: Hobiye & Black History Month

This month, we were honoured to celebrate **Hobiye**, the Nisga'a New Year, across many of our schools. This important celebration marks the start of a new season and reflects the traditional knowledge of the Nisga'a Nation, highlighting the connection between the moon and the natural cycles of life. Schools engaged in learning opportunities that included drumming, dancing, storytelling, and exploring the significance of Hobiye in Nisga'a culture. We deeply appreciate the contributions of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members who helped make this celebration meaningful for students and staff.



February is also **Black History Month**, an essential time to recognize and honour the contributions of Black Canadians throughout history. Teachers across the district have incorporated lessons that highlight the impact of Black individuals in Canadian history, arts, sciences, and leadership. Classrooms have engaged in storytelling, historical explorations, and discussions on equity and social justice, reinforcing the importance of inclusion and representation in education.

### Strategic Plan Update

This month, we presented an update on the Strategic Plan to the Education Committee, reinforcing our commitments to student success, equity, and community engagement. Some key highlights from the update include:

- ✦ *Literacy & Numeracy*: Continued implementation of UFLI Foundations (University of Florida Literacy Institute) and Acadience assessments, with over 90 educators trained in structured literacy approaches.
- ✦ *Indigenous Education & Student Support*: Expansion of services for Indigenous learners, including increased connections with Indigenous Education Support Workers and improved tracking of student success through EdPlan Insight.
- ✦ *Equity & Inclusion*: Strengthened engagement strategies to support Indigenous learners, students with various abilities, and youth in care, ensuring targeted strategies are in place to close achievement gaps.
- ✦ *Career & Trades Programs*: Introduction of new Dual Credit opportunities in Electrical and Welding, Early Childhood Education work experiences, and expanded trades samplers for middle and secondary students.

The **Enhancing Student Learning (ESL) Report** has guided our continuous improvement efforts, and we remain committed to aligning district goals with student achievement outcomes. We are grateful for the feedback from the Ministry of Education and will continue refining our strategic focus areas based on their recommendations.

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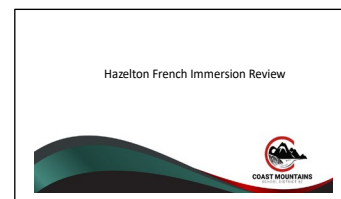
## A Message from the Superintendent *(cont'd)*

### Indigenous Education Council (IEC) Formation & Local Education Agreements (LEAs)

A significant focus this month has been the formation of the Indigenous Education Council (IEC), a crucial step in ensuring that Indigenous voices are central to decision-making in our district. The IEC will work collaboratively with Indigenous communities, schools and the district providing leadership and advocacy to enhance educational experiences and outcomes for Indigenous learners. Additionally, we are actively negotiating **new** Local Education Agreements (LEAs) with various First Nations. These agreements are vital in strengthening partnerships, ensuring equitable access to education, and aligning educational programs with the needs and aspirations of Indigenous communities. We value the ongoing collaboration with First Nations leadership and are committed to meaningful and productive discussions in the months ahead.

### French Immersion Consultations in the Hazeltons

Over the past several months, important French Immersion Consultations have been taking place in the Hazeltons, engaging students, parents, educators, and community members in discussions about the future of French language education in the region. These consultations aim to identify ways to enhance French Immersion programming, address challenges, and strengthen student enrollment and opportunities. We appreciate the valuable input from all participants, and we thank Tina McDonald, District Principal, Curriculum Support, for her work in facilitating these sessions.



In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt thanks to our parents, caregivers, staff, teachers, students, and district personnel for their unwavering commitment to learning and community building. Your dedication and collaborative efforts create an inclusive and inspiring environment where all learners can thrive.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to fostering excellence, cultural respect, and the principles of Engage, Ignite, Empower in all aspects of education.

Wishing all students, staff, and families a safe and happy **Spring Break from March 17 to 28, 2025**. May this time bring you rest, joy, and meaningful time with family and friends.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Tracey MacMillan  
Superintendent



### Upcoming Dates:

February 26 – Pink Shirt Day & Hybrid Board Meeting (Hazelton)  
March 12 & 13 – Early Dismissal Day  
March 17-28 – Spring Break (No Classes)  
March 31 – Classes Resume  
April 8 – Education Committee Meeting  
April 9 – Business Committee Meeting  
April 18 & 21 – Good Friday & Easter Monday (No Classes)  
April 30 – Hybrid Board Meeting (Kitimat)

# Superintendent's Report to the Board

## February 2025



### CMSD Food Program Monthly Newsletter

We know nourishing learners at school helps to improve academic outcomes as well as build stronger connections among peers, adults and with the community. With that in mind, Coast Mountains School District is committed to improving food programming throughout the district.



Our focus is to foster healthy, stigma-free food environments in our schools, making nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snack options accessible to every learner in our system. Our Food Programming team strives to create community partnerships wherever possible, in an effort to create sustainable food solutions throughout the Northwest region.

With recent announcements from the British Columbia government related to food programming, our schools are becoming better positioned to meet the nutritional needs of our learners.

**Learn more about our school district's Food Program through the CMSD Food Program Newsletter, a new monthly newsletter initiated in February 2025.** Access the following link to view the newsletter: [February 2025](#)

The CMSD Food Program Monthly Newsletter is available on the school district's website at <https://www.cmsd.bc.ca/food-programming>. If you are interested in finding out how you can get involved, or possibly financially support food programming in Coast Mountains School District, please contact Shawna Wilson, District Food Coordinator, by email at [shawna.wilson@cmsd.bc.ca](mailto:shawna.wilson@cmsd.bc.ca).

*Thank you, Shawna, for your ongoing efforts to enhance this program.*

### Pink Shirt Day ... Let Kindness Grow

On Wednesday, February 26, school communities all over Canada will unite under a banner of kindness to demonstrate their commitment to inclusive learning environments by wearing pink. This annual event, rooted in anti-bullying advocacy, promotes empathy and respect among students and staff and is often highlighted by classroom presentations, discussions, and learning activities aimed at raising awareness of the harmful effects of bullying. *This year the theme for Pink Shirt Day is 'Let Kindness Grow' and more information can be found at <https://www.pinkshirtday.ca/>.*

Pink Shirt Day began in 2007 in Berwick, Nova Scotia, the self-proclaimed Apple Capital of Canada, when two Grade 12 students stood up for another student who was being bullied by wearing pink t-shirts in an act of allyship. The movement caught on, and now many countries use the pink shirt to spread a notion of kindness and encourage respectful and inclusive classrooms.



# Superintendent's Report to the Board

## February 2025



### Student Voice in CMSD

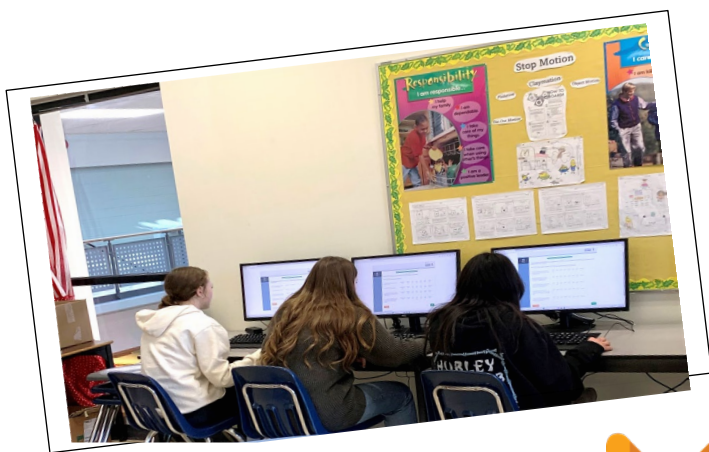
In the month ahead, we will engage students in multiple grade levels in a district-wide check-in, gaining insights into their experiences in our schools and classrooms. Student Voice Forums, led by Phillip Barron, Director of Instruction, Learner Services, will see in-person dialogue with students in middle and secondary grades. Our Student Voice Forums will provide students with the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions of their day-to-day experiences in schools.



### The Middle Years Development Instrument: Overview

Grade 8 students across the province, including Grade 8 students in Coast Mountains School District, will be participating in the MDI (Middle Years Development Index). MDI is a self-report questionnaire that asks children about their thoughts, feelings and experiences in school and in the community. These anonymous surveys focus on student well-being, physical and mental health, the attainment of social and emotional skills, their relationships with peers and adults, and even how they spend their time outside of the school day.

Through the administration of the MDI, we will gain a deeper understanding of children's social and emotional health, well-being and assets during middle childhood – all from their own perspective. Results from the survey will be available to schools and the district in the Spring which will provide valuable population data for schools and community partners. This data also helps to inform any necessary updates to the District's Mental Health & Well-Being Plan, a key element of the Strategic Plan.



# MDi

**Grade 8 students at Skeena Middle School participate in the Middle Years Development Index (MDI) self-report questionnaire that asks children about their thoughts, feelings and experiences in school and in the community.**



# Superintendent's Report to the Board

## February 2025



### Inclusive Education Student Success Story

Colbie is a grade 7 student at Skeena Middle School. She has been on Nici DeCario's caseload since kindergarten. Nici is the school district's Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Integration Support Teacher. Although Colbie has cerebral palsy, which impacts her left side and low vision challenges, in her view, she is just a regular student like everyone else. She enjoys participating in all subjects with her classmates and especially likes playing basketball.

Gone are the days of enlarging materials on a photocopier! To support her learning, Colbie initially used a CCTV in kindergarten. This allowed her to access near information but was not portable. By grade 1, the PRODIGI CONNECT 12 was introduced to support access to distance information OR near information – not at the same time. She has also had assorted magnifiers for years. All these devices allowed Colbie to access visual information, however, she needed a different tool for each task, and they weren't very portable.

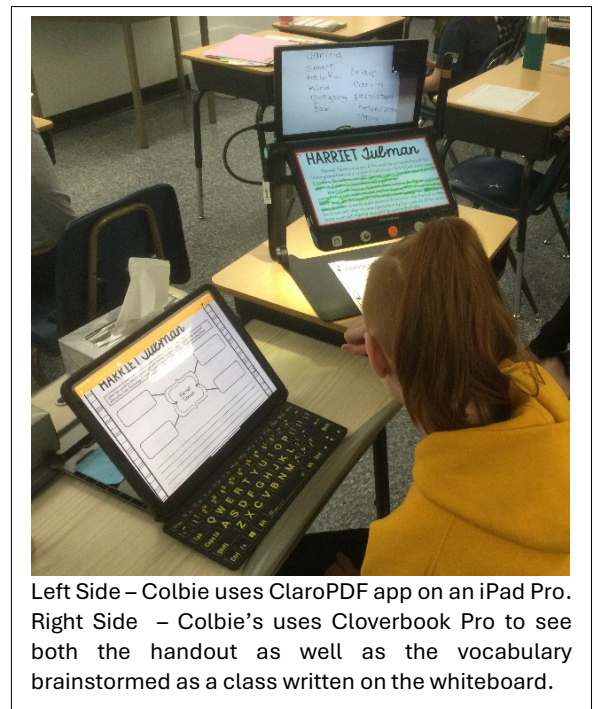
As Colbie has progressed into the intermediate grades, the school team wanted to provide Colbie with more portable and multipurpose tools to access curriculum alongside her peers, so, we applied for SET-BC technology support. The team investigated alternative tools for typing, apps to support reading and written output, as well as digital magnifiers for vision support. To support both reading and writing, Colbie uses an iPad Pro to access e-files. These can be work documents or copies of books she needs for class from Accessible Resource Centre for British Columbia (ARC-BC). She can customize vision

and keyboard accessibility features, and demonstrate her learning with apps like ClaroPDF Pro. Staff scan and email her assignments and documents. Each morning, she checks her email, imports the work into ClaroPDF, and saves her work into subject-specific folders. She completes the work on-screen with word prediction using a Bluetooth keyboard, then saves and emails her work back to the teacher for marking.

The other tool Colbie uses is the CloverBook Pro because of its portability and ease of use. This piece of vision technology allows her to view near AND distance information simultaneously. This tool has been a game changer and was introduced to Colbie in Grade 5. By having one device that can serve both near and distance functions, it has not only been more efficient but also preserves visual stamina, so Colbie isn't having to continuously shift her visual focus.

By having appropriate technology and supports in place, Colbie can access information, demonstrate what she knows and participate with her peers in a regular Grade 7 classroom.

*We thank Colbie's teachers, Nici DeCario, and the Inclusive Education Team for their continuous efforts to explore innovative technologies that positively impact student learning.*



Left Side – Colbie uses ClaroPDF app on an iPad Pro.  
Right Side – Colbie's uses Cloverbook Pro to see both the handout as well as the vocabulary brainstormed as a class written on the whiteboard.

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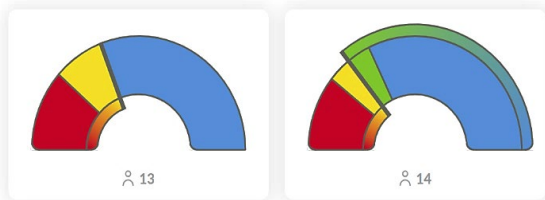
## February 2025



### Literacy Update

Schools across the district have been participating in the second round of Acadience testing measuring our Kindergarten to Grade 6 students' literacy skills. Literacy Support Teachers, Laura Gray, Hayden Drygas, and Amy Graham have been supporting teachers in Grades 4 to 6 with their assessments alongside school literacy helping teachers. *We would like to extend our appreciation to all teachers who are working to improve how our students read.* Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretariat states: "Acquiring literacy is an empowering process, enabling millions to enjoy access to knowledge and information which broadens horizons, increases opportunities and creates alternatives for building a better life."

As we continue to work on a District Literacy Framework, we encourage teachers to continue to collaborate, access resources on the K-6 Literacy Teams Folder, and request support as needed. The literacy team would be happy to work alongside you.



This sample graph is from one of our school's Acadience Data in Oral Reading Fluency. This graph shows that 64% of students are exceeding oral reading fluency from 62% in October. One student has also moved from requiring intervention in Tier 2 to being more likely to meet the next grade level expectation in May. *The results achieved thus far are due to the excellent work by the teachers in the school district – thank you to our amazing teachers!!*

### Early Learning

Many schools host open houses and Welcome to Kindergarten events. Our school district is privileged to have Cindy Hall as the Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transition (SEY2KT) Facilitator to support as needed. We will be working on planning a spring activity in Kitimat for our early years' children. Anyone interested in participating in this event, please contact Tina McDonald, District Principal, Curriculum Support at [tina.mcdonald@cmsd.bc.ca](mailto:tina.mcdonald@cmsd.bc.ca).



Additionally, two of our StrongStart Educators have been participating in an initiative entitled 'Appetite to Play'. Appetite to Play is a province-wide initiative in Canada that promotes and encourages physical activity and healthy eating with children in the early years (birth to 5 years old). It provides resources, toolkits, and training workshops for early childhood educators, as well as a family facilitator module to support community-based workers promoting physical activity and healthy eating. *We are grateful for the following StrongStart Facilitators, Ms. Amanda from Suwilaawks Community School and Ms. Rachel from Cassie Hall Elementary School for their involvement in this project.*



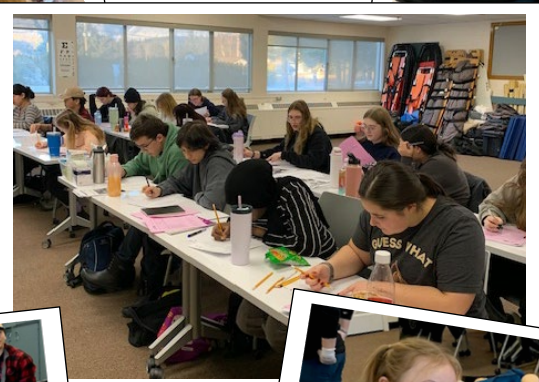
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## February 2025



### Students Attend Early Childcare First Aid & CPR Course

Secondary Students from Hazelton Secondary, Caledonia Secondary, Parkside Secondary, Mount Elizabeth Middle/Secondary and North Coast Distance Learning attended a Childcare First Aid and CPR course held at Coast Mountain College on February 4, 2025. This First Aid course marks the beginning of our Early Childcare Education initiative. This one-day course prepares students before they begin their ECCE 104 course at Coast Mountain College or a work experience placement at a local daycare. As seen in the pictures, the students had an enjoyable experience while gaining valuable life skills.



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## NTETC on the Move

Northwest Trades & Employment Training Centre (NTETC) staff visited Mount Elizabeth Middle/Secondary School on February 12, 2025 to discuss careers and opportunities with students in Grades 9 through 12. Darlene Godfrey from Coast Mountain College joined Cory Redl, NTETC Discovery/Dual Credit Teacher and Dan Hamel, NTETC Principal to make it all possible!

There was also quite a buzz at Caledonia Secondary School during the morning of February 12 when the Hairstylist Foundations Program students visited the school to showcase their skills. Even Phillip Blundon, one of Caledonia Secondary's teachers, took a seat in one of our dual credit student's hairstylist chairs! Students eagerly lined up, waiting for their chance to grab a free haircut scheduled from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Five students and their instructor worked non-stop in the school hallway, giving haircuts, and promoting the program. It was a fantastic opportunity to highlight the students' talents. Gabrielle Wright and Sydney Schulmeister, both dual-credit students, are taking a Foundations Course with Coast Mountain College.



Caledonia Secondary Teacher, Phillip Blundon treats himself to a free hair cut compliments of Sydney Schulmeister, an NTETC dual-credit student, enrolled in a Foundations Course with the Coast Mountain College, who showcased their skills on February 12 at Caledonia Secondary School.

## This Month On Social Media...



@CoastMountainsSchoolDistrict



@CoastMountainsSchools



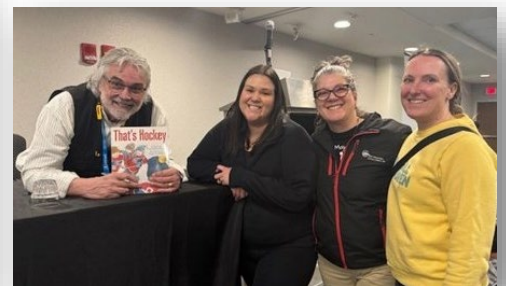
@CoastMtnSD



Caledonia Secondary School welcomed Taylor Bachrach, MP for Skeena-Bulkley Valley to share his knowledge and perspective on First Nations treaties. It was a morning of meaningful conversation and learning. On behalf of the Caledonia Secondary students and staff, thank you MP Bachrach for your leadership.



Celebrating Hobiye, the Nisga'a New Year, learning about the historical importance for local Indigenous communities. Superintendent Tracey MacMillan, Lindsay Harder & Vanessa Shirey, Indigenous Education staff attended the celebration of the 3rd Annual Kitsumkalum Hobiye event.



Great Learning at #LitCon 2025 for CMSD leadership team members Julia Nieckarz, Tina McDonald and Shylah Marshall. The National K-8 Literacy Conference held February 1-4 in Columbus, Ohio is the homecoming of leaders in childhood literacy – celebrating its 40th year in 2025!