

# CURRICULUM UPDATE

BOARD OF EDUCATION NOVEMBER 2017

It has been an exciting month of learning in School District #8 (Kootenay Lake).

To begin, held at the Creston Recreation complex, we hosted a regional/Ministry session for Early Years community care providers, Kindergarten teachers and Strongstart facilitators at the end of October. We spent the morning with nature researcher David Sobel, who presented an abundance of research and ideas around the importance of learning in nature in the early years (and beyond). Dr. Sobel challenged everyone to find ways to take our youngest learners outside to learn and grow. The afternoon was spent discussing the strengths and challenges of the connections between the early years and the Kindergarten program. It is always great to be in the same room together, to share ideas and to connect around the critical work that all of our early years' people do – whether they be in Kindergarten or in the early years' community. Relationships were built and strengthened, ideas were shared and attendees all walked away with a resource written by Dr. Sobel for the Early years. This session was attended by approximately 90 people.

At the same time, to take advantage of Dr. Sobel's visit to the Kootenays, we hosted a K-12 'Get Out and Learn' session in Creston. In the morning the regional group of approximately 50 teachers spent time sharing ideas, learning about new resources, and getting outside to practice and learn new activities to integrate into their practice with students. In the afternoon Dr. Sobel came to work with the teachers on design principles for outdoor learning – based on his extensive research into what works in educational settings. This group headed outside again for much of their learning, enjoying the cross-district networking as well as the practical ideas to bring back to class on Monday morning! This group also took back to their schools an important resource – a highly acclaimed book on nature and learning.

Our Read by Grade 3 team held two sessions in the past month. The first was a training for new or 'new to a position' Educational Assistants. The intent of this program is to provide EAs with an understanding of the foundational pieces of reading, and to give them strategies and activities to use to support students that they work with. The Read by 3 training is set up to be flexible – to support the foundational skills and adapt to the teacher's balanced literacy program.

The second 'Read by 3' session welcomed new and nearly new teachers to a Read by 3 day, to learn about the program and how it can support their literacy program. 20 teachers came out to spend the day discussing literacy, taking away tools, tips and strategies to improve their practice. The day was run by our amazing 'Read by 3' teacher team, and was really appreciated. It was great to see the combination of wisdom and experience of our experienced teachers with the energy of our new teachers – what a great mix that will make such a difference for our students!

Our MDI survey for Grades 4 and 7 opens this week, and closes mid-December. The MDI is a follow up to the EDI, which is a Kindergarten observation tool. Both the EDI and the MDI are run through UBC as a research project, and provide us with valuable data for school, district and community planning. The

MDI takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, and asks questions around four quadrants: physical health and well-being, connectedness, social and emotional development, school experiences and use of after school time. It is an excellent opportunity to add student voice to our data collection. As a District, we complete both the EDI and the MDI once every three years or so.

---

## PHYSICAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Children evaluate their own physical well-being in the areas of overall health including body image, nutrition and sleeping habits.



---

## CONNECTEDNESS

Children are asked about their experiences of support and connection with the adults in their schools and neighbourhoods, with their parents or guardians at home, and with their peers.



---

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children respond to questions about their current social and emotional functioning in 7 areas: optimism, self-esteem, happiness, empathy, prosocial behaviour, sadness and worries.



---

## SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

Children are asked about their school experiences in 4 areas: academic self-concept, school climate, school belonging, and experiences with peer victimization (bullying).



---

## USE OF AFTER-SCHOOL TIME

Children are asked about the time they spend engaged in organized activities such as sports, music and art, as well as the time they spend watching TV, doing homework and playing video games.

Our Healthy Schools Coordinator has been around the district meeting with principals to ensure that we are on target for our HSC plan for this year. Most secondary schools are putting their Student Health Action Teams in place, with Mike's support, and we should be seeing initiatives come out from these groups soon. The HSC has also updated our inventory of community services and uploaded it to the Healthy Schools site. In order to make it more readily accessible, it has also been uploaded to the main district site. (print copy as a hand out).

The Nelson Constables' Advisory group is hosting our first community fentanyl conversation on November 22. This community committee has created a number of sub-committees to address the fentanyl crisis and this is one piece of the work. Two of the speakers will also be heading out the MSSS and LVR to talk with students on the event day. Although this event is specific to the Nelson area, our Healthy Schools coordinators are pursuing a grant to hold school conversations across the District.

Ministry Foundation Skills Assessments for Grades 4 and 7 are finishing off in our schools, and we will be hosting a local marking session here next week. This is the first assessment in the new format, and we look forward to a new baseline of data for our Grade 4 and 7 students. FSA results are used at school and district level as a part of the evidence to inform school plans and district plans.

One great news story from the FSAs comes from a concern we had three years ago that the results between Grade 4 and Grade 7 were dropping in literacy. We compared the results to school scores, and were able to identify the Nelson family of schools as the challenge area. Within this family we have a transition, which may or may not be a cause of the switch in results. The Trafalgar staff worked with Innovative Learning Services to create a three-year plan to change these results.

I am pleased to report that results coming out of Trafalgar are very positive, and both their school assessments and their FSA data indicate a marked increase in the success of students. I encourage you to look closely at the school growth plan from Trafalgar – coming up at the next Education Committee meeting – to learn more about this success story.

Last but not least, this week-end brought together youth from 14-18 years old for a Leadership week-end at Crawford Bay School. Co-sponsored by the Rotary clubs of Creston and Nelson and School District #8, the event brought a number of community people out to share their strengths, talents and time with our students, inspiring them and helping them to explore their leadership strengths, ethics, character traits, and interests, as well as to give them a chance to explore possible career paths – looking at "Who they want to be" and "What challenges they want to take on in the world".! It was great this year to see a balance of students from PCSS, LVR, JVH and Homelinks. Last year was a pilot .

. . this year was a test and we are ready to move forward to make this an annual event! Shout out to Trustee Bendig who engaged our students in an outdoor learning session on Civic Engagement.