



School District 8
Kootenay Lake

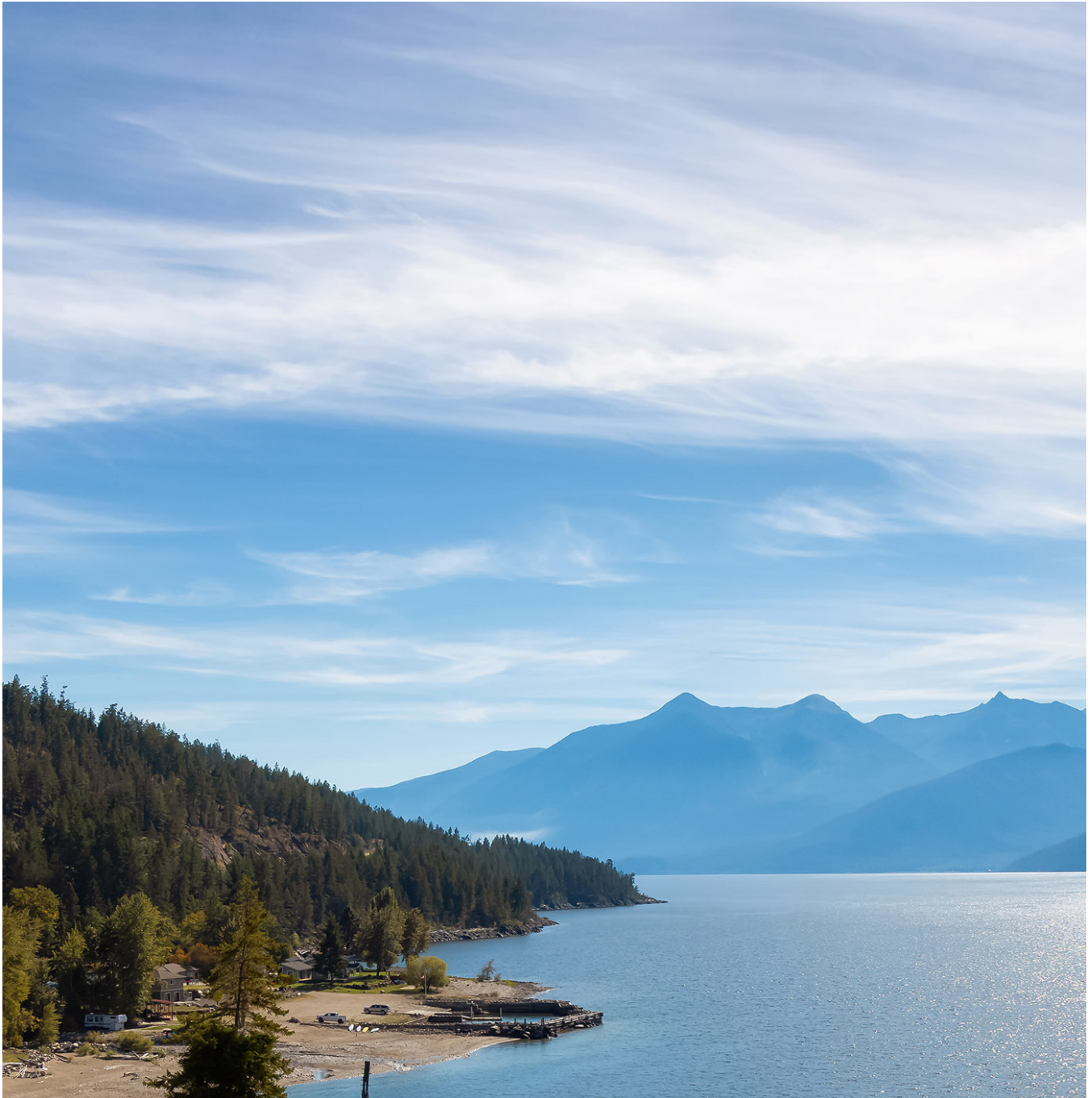
EQUITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY REPORT 2022-2023

Prepared September 13, 2022



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge, respect and honour the First Nations in whose traditional territories the Kootenay Lake School District operates and all Aboriginal people residing within the boundaries of School District No. 8.



CONTENTS

Executive Summary iii

Introduction 1

District Context 3

Evidence of Learning 5

Neurological and Physical Diversities 13

Cultural Diversity 18

Supported Transitions 19

Mental Health and Well-Being 21

School Safety 26

Sexual Health and Gender Identity (SOGI) 27

Targeted Ministry-Funded Programs 28

Education, Training and Engagement 29

Strategic Priorities and Future Directions 31

Conclusion 32



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) (SD8) has an overall goal that all learners graduate from high school. The 2022-2023 “Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Continuous Learning Report” reflects the district’s strategic priorities for all learners. These priorities are guided by the district’s vision and values and supported by school learning plans.

SD8’s strategic goals are literacy, numeracy, inclusion and Indigenization. The district’s vision focuses on excellence for all learners in a nurturing environment. These goals and vision align with the goals of the [Ministry of Education and Child Care’s “Service Plan 2022-2025.”](#)

Additionally, the Aboriginal Education Program’s focus areas of belonging, success, truth before reconciliation, and history and culture are congruent with SD8 [Strategic Plan 2018-2023](#) and the Ministry of Education and Child Care [2022/23 – 2024/25 Service Plan](#). The district continues to support and implement practices that result in learning success for Indigenous learners and in improved graduation rates for all learners.

Achieving equity and excellence is ambitious but attainable. Equity, achieved through the meaningful inclusion of all learners while honouring their diversity, builds a school system that supports each individual learner achieving their potential and the well-being of all learners.

SD8 recognizes that equity is the foundation for improving learner achievement; it is central to the learner’s experience and engagement. Linking learner achievement to equity, inclusion and diversity will increase a learner’s well-being, engagement and connection to others and to school.

The items in this report’s action plan will be given high priority for the 2022-23 school year. SD8 continually monitors these priorities to ensure

continuous improvement for all learners, including Indigenous learners, learners with diverse abilities, children and youth in care, and English language learners.

Priority areas from the 2021-2022 “Enhancing Student Learning Report” (ESL) are addressed as follows:

- implement three-year literacy and numeracy plans to improve literacy and numeracy
- increase graduation rates for all learners and ensure parity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners
- ensure all learners are supported through social-emotional learning and trauma-informed practice
- enhance equity for all learners, including Indigenous learners, learners with diverse abilities, children and youth in care, and English language learners

SD8 continues to look for ways to build on strengths and celebrate learner success. By referring to data that informs decision-making, planning and practices, and by working with education partners, the district can make a difference for all SD8 learners.

This annual “Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Continuous Learning Report” supports the priorities outlined in the district’s strategic plan. These priorities are central to the district’s mission, which is:

We focus on excellence for all learners in a nurturing environment.

It is vital to ensure the district addresses how each individual's potential connects to SD8's vision, which is:

Focus. Learn. Excel.

This report outlines how SD8 supports learner success while focusing on equity, inclusion and diversity, as well as mental-health wellness and learner safety to:

- increase learners' sense of belonging
- increase learners' sense of connectedness

- enhance learners' mental health and wellness
- support learners in achieving the goal of becoming an educated citizen

To provide our learners with the potential for success, the district supports students owning their learning, while building positive relationships within the learning community and developing social-emotional learning skills. SD8's goal of achieving learner success and equity is achieved by valuing diversity and striving for inclusion of all learners.



EQUITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2022-2023

- Support the implementation of the Early Learning Profile for Literacy (ELP) in grade 3 and continue to support the ELP in K to 2 to increase literacy development for diverse primary learners.
- Implement a middle-years literacy project to support literacy development for diverse learners.
- Implement an elementary numeracy project to support numeracy development for diverse learners.
- Continue to complete academic reviews of grades 10 to 12 learners and primary reviews for K to 3 learners to monitor success.
- Continue to enhance the early and continuous intervention and collaboration between school-based teams and the district-based team, with a focus on inclusivity and Indigenous learners.
- Ensure that Children in Care learning programs are implemented and monitored in each school.
- Offer Transition to Adulthood sessions for learners and parents that support youth with disabilities to prepare for adulthood.
- Provide in-person and online training for primary and intermediate teachers to implement the MindUP program.
- Train all education assistants in the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) verbal intervention training to promote safe and effective learning environments.
- Coordinate with School Gay and Straight Alliance (SAGA) groups and support Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) activities throughout the school year through lead staff in each school to foster a more inclusive and collaborative school district and improve student sense of safety and belonging.
- Enhance Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) supports, activities, and education for learners, staff and parents.
- Implement a pilot program of the Open Parachute program in 16 district classrooms.
- Provide workshops and parent engagement nights on mental-health literacy, mental-health first aid, trauma-informed practices, anxiety and social-emotional learning.
- Further implement the mental-health curriculum and social-emotional learning in classrooms.



INTRODUCTION

Equity, Inclusion and Diversity in the District

SD8 is a learning organization committed to continuously reviewing, refining and reflecting upon its practice to support the best possible outcomes for learners. SD8 recognizes that equity is the foundation for improving learner achievement; it is central to the learner's experience and engagement. The district follows the lead of [InclusionBC](#) in linking learner achievement to equity, inclusion and diversity will increase a learner's well-being, engagement and connection to others and to school.

"All learners in BC, including those with special needs, are entitled to receive a quality publicly funded inclusive education. A Ministerial Order directs learners with special needs to be placed in regular classrooms as the first option. Research shows that when learners are included in regular classrooms, they make greater overall academic gains than do their peers with similar disabilities in segregated classrooms." (Katz and Mirenda, 2002 - which publication?)

Inclusion Guiding Principles

1. All children are welcome at school.
2. Every child should experience a sense of value and belonging at school.
3. Meaningful programming needs to be provided within a child's learning community.
4. Whenever possible, children should be educated with their peers in a common space (for the majority of the time).

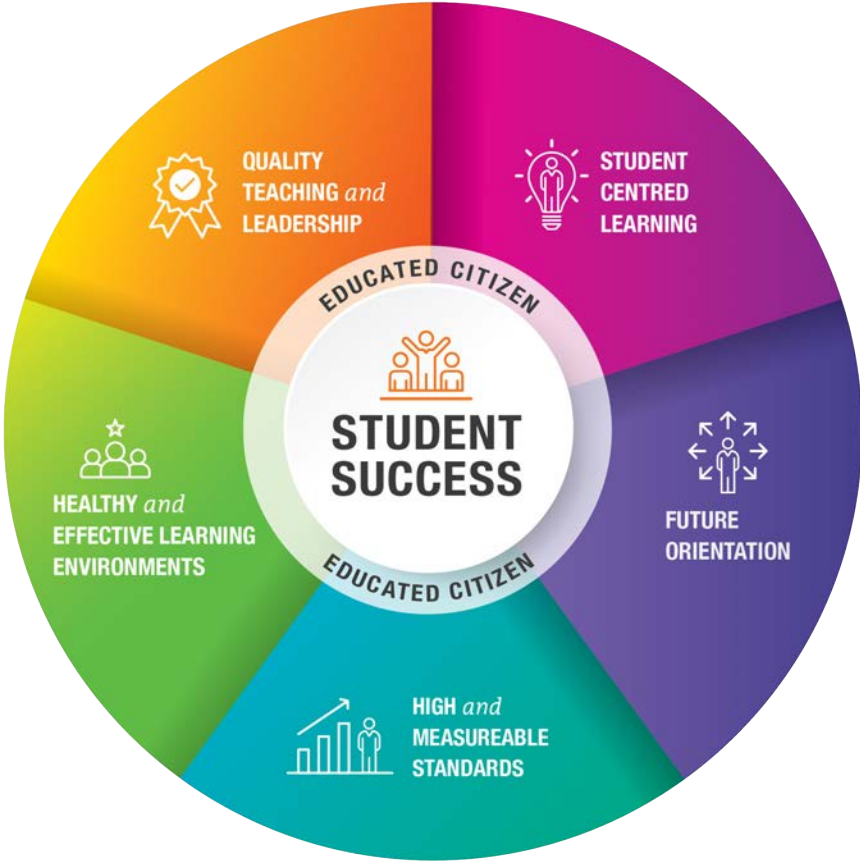
Learners are unique individuals and they all have the right to equitable access and participation in quality education. The district and its staff value diversity and respond to the diverse social, cultural and educational needs of the individuals and of the w

That [School Act](#) states that all school-aged persons are entitled to enroll in a district's schools if they are resident in that school district. The Act includes all citizens in its scope, identifying that "the goal of a democratic society to ensure that all its members receive an education that enables them to become literate, personally fulfilled and publicly useful, thereby increasing the strength and contributions to the health and stability of that society." It also states that "the purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable all learners to become literate, to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy." ([Preamble](#))

SD8 is committed to providing equitable, inclusive learning environments where all learners are meaningfully included and embraced as part of their school’s learning community. We embrace the philosophy that diversity is the norm, not the exception, and we celebrate the gifts and talents that all learners possess. Learners are included and taught in a regular classroom and participate in typical class activities with peers of their age to the greatest extent possible. Inclusive learning environments provide opportunities for all learners to experience success and where curriculum is planned, developed and implemented with the aim of teaching to the diverse learning needs of all the learners in a class.

SD8 provides programs and services within neighbourhood schools based on tiers of supports, including universal supports (for all), targeted supports (for some) and essential supports (for a few) to meet the needs of individual learners. SD8 believes that classroom teachers are best supported through a school-based collaborative and problem-solving model, where assistance may be brought to the classroom level from the school based team and district specialists who are part of the equity, inclusion and diversity team.

By continually focusing on improving results and striving for equity of access and outcomes for all learners, the Ministry of Education and Child Care places student success and well-being at the centre of its mandate. As specified in the “[Statement of Education Policy Order](#),” the ministry’s mandate is to develop the “Educated Citizen,” which is defined as the intellectual, human, social, and career development of students. The ministry’s ultimate goal is that children achieve their individual potential and become independent adults who have a lifelong appreciation for learning, a curiosity about the world around them, and a capacity for creative thought and expression through compassionate and empathetic worldviews.





DISTRICT CONTEXT

The BC Ministry of Education’s [“Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines”](#) states:

British Columbia promotes an inclusive education system in which students with special needs are fully participating members of a community of learners. Inclusion describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with full integration in regular classrooms and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others. (p.2)

SD8 receives specific funding to support those learners who are identified as having an Aboriginal background, who are English language learners (ELL) or who have special-education designations. Recognizing that its learners are unique and have specific learning requirements, SD8 expends resources far greater than the specific operating funds to ensure that equity, inclusion and diversity of learners are honoured in all SD8 schools and programs.

SD8 monitors school connectedness, engagement, progress and achievement of its diverse learners through formal “measures” Ministry of Education and Child Care’s School Learning Survey, provincial assessments, the district’s vulnerable student assessment tool, and several specific programming measures, including report cards, ministry data and inclusive education service data.



Inclusive Education Policy and Procedure

The district is guided in its inclusive education policy and procedure by the School Act and by “[Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines](#),” which guides the implementation of support for SD8’s diverse learners.

All Learners Are Unique Learners

The district recognizes that all our learners are unique. To support our unique learners, the district adheres to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, a pedagogical approach that helps give all learners an equal opportunity to succeed. The UDL framework offers flexibility in how learners access and engage with material and how they show what they know. This framework is based on neuroscience research that has identified three primary networks (recognition, strategic, and affective) that impact learning:

- The recognition network deals with incoming stimuli and affects what learners learn
- The strategic network mediates how learners process incoming information, based on their past experience or background knowledge
- The affective network regulates why learners want to learn and engage and considers learners’ attitudes and feelings about incoming information, as well as their motivation to engage in specific activities

Successful teaching and learning include simultaneous involvement of all three neurological networks. Based on these networks, UDL’s three principles are for educators to offer:

- Multiple means of representation: providing learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge
- Multiple means of expression: providing learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know
- Multiple means of engagement: providing learners with opportunities to explore their interests and increasing their motivation

The district uses a multi-tier response to intervention (RTI) approach to identify and support learners with learning and/or behavioural needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and interventions to support learners in the general education classroom. Interventions are introduced at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate the learners’ rate of learning. These services are provided by inclusion support teachers in schools, district inclusion support teachers, itinerant teachers, and other specialists.



EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

SD8's work in the areas of equity, inclusion and diversity reflects the goals and objectives of the [Ministry of Education and Child Care \(MOECC\) "Service Plan 2022-2025"](#)

Ministry Goal 1: All Students Become Educated Citizens

Objective 1.1: Support Student-Centered Learning and Improve Equity of Outcomes

Centering learning around the student acknowledges the reality that each student is different and so are their individual needs. It involves offering engaging learning opportunities that support student agency. High-functioning education systems engage and motivate every student to develop the set of competencies necessary for independence and lifelong learning. The Ministry of Education and Child Care (MOECC) aims for the education system to provide inclusive and responsive learning environments: ones that recognize the value of diversity and provide equity of access, opportunity, and outcomes for all students, from early years to graduation.

MOECC's 2022-2023 target for the performance measure for "equity in high school completion rates for Indigenous learners, learners with disabilities and diverse abilities, and children and youth in and from care relative to all other learners" is greater than 75%. The ministry is committed to addressing "racism of low expectations" and striving to eliminate the inequalities of outcomes for Indigenous learners, learners with disabilities/diverse abilities and children and youth in and from government care, to ensure each learner has equitable access to educational opportunities and outcomes.

With the overarching belief that literacy is fundamental to learning and to learner success in school and beyond, and consistent with the ministry's "Service Plan 2022-2025," SD8 has set a goal of improving literacy proficiency for all learners. To that end, the district is working to improve both learner participation rates on all provincial assessments and overall achievement for diverse learners to meet the ministry target of greater than 75% in all areas of the provincial assessments.



The following data tables provide information about the performance of SD8 over time in the area of literacy from the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) and the Graduation Literacy Assessment (GSA) provincial assessments and compares them to the provincial average.

FSA Reading Grade 4		% of Students On Track and Extending	Provincial %
2020-2021	All Resident Students	81%	82%
	Indigenous Students	71%	72%
	Students with Diverse Abilities	63%	64%
2019-2020	All Resident Students	75%	74%
	Indigenous Students	77%	61%
	Students with Diverse Abilities	56%	64%
2018-2019	All Resident Students	70%	76%
	Indigenous Students	59%	62%
	Students with Diverse Abilities	26%	65%

Reading: Grade 4

In 2020-2021, SD8 learners with diverse abilities were 18% lower in reading skills than their peers; this same achievement gap is also reflected in provincial data.

FSA Reading Grade 7		% of Students On Track and Extending	Provincial %
2020-2021	All Resident Students	76%	78%
	Indigenous Students	67%	62%
	Students with Diverse Abilities	42%	62%
2019-2020	All Resident Students	71%	76%
	Indigenous Students	67%	60%
	Students with Diverse Abilities	35%	58%
2018-2019	All Resident Students	81%	77%
	Indigenous Students	64%	62%
	Students with Diverse Abilities	70%	60%

Reading Comprehension: Grade 7

In FSA grade 7 reading comprehension data for SD8, all resident learners are on par with the province. However, learners with diverse abilities were 34% lower compared to their peers, which is significantly lower than the ministry target of greater than 75%.

FSA Grade 7 Writing	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Provincial 2020-2021
All Resident Students	84%	84%	82%	85%
Indigenous Students	80%	82%	79%	72%
Students with Diverse Abilities	74%	52%	55%	69%

Writing: Grade 7

In FSA writing, SD8 results for all resident learners and Indigenous learners are on par with the province. However, SD8 learners with diverse abilities achieved significantly lower than the provincial average; grade 7 learners with diverse abilities were 27% lower than their peers. Again, this is lower than the ministry's target of greater than 75%.

Grade 10				
Provincial Literacy Assessment	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Provincial 2019-2020
All Resident Students	n/a	112 students 71%	386 students 74%	22,419 students 74%
Indigenous Students	n/a	22 students 68%	76 students 75%	2184 students 56%
Students with Diverse Abilities	n/a	17 students 61%	43 students 52%	2797 students 55%

Literacy: Grade 10

Grade 10 provincial literacy assessment data shows that learners with diverse abilities achieved significantly lower in their literacy levels compared to their peers.

SD8's numeracy goal matches provincial outcomes and measures:

Educational Outcome 2: Learners will meet or exceed numeracy expectations for each grade level.

Measure 2.1: Current year and three-year trend for the number and percentage of learners on track or extending numeracy expectations for grades 4 and 7 as specified in provincial assessments.

Measure 2.2: Current year and three-year trend for the number and percentage of learners proficient in or extending numeracy expectations as specified in the grade 10 numeracy assessments.

FSA Numeracy Grade 4		Number and % of Students On Track and Extending
2020-2021	All Resident Students	181 students 72%
	Indigenous Students	23 students 74%
	Students with Diverse Abilities	10 students 53%
2019-2020	All Resident Students	194 students 70%
	Indigenous Students	36 students
	Students with Diverse Abilities	7 students 39%
2019-2018	All Resident Students	190 students 62%
	Indigenous Students	42 students
	Students with Diverse Abilities	5 students

FSA Numeracy: Grade 4

Learners with diverse abilities were 19% lower compared to their peers. SD8 grade 4 results in FSA numeracy are on par with the province for all resident learners, Indigenous learners, and learners with diverse abilities.



GNA 10 Numeracy*	Participation Rate	Meeting Grade Level Expectations (Proficient)
All Students	36.7%	37.6%
Students with Indigenous Ancestry	31.9%	31%
Students with Diverse needs	44%	9.1%

Graduation Numeracy: Grade 10

Learners with diverse abilities were 28.5% lower than their peers and lower than the ministry's target of greater than 75%.

SD8 School Completion

"5 Year Completion"		Cohort	% Rate	Provincial %
2020-2021	All Resident Students	412	80.2	85.6
	Indigenous Students	90	67.2	63.4
	Students with Diverse Abilities	76	59.9	64.7
2019-2020	All Resident Students	419	75.2	85.1
	Indigenous Students	94	68	62
	Students with Diverse Abilities	71	57.5	64.2
2018-2019	All Resident Students	452	81.3	84.2
	Indigenous Students	107	68.3	60.2
	Students with Diverse Abilities	59	70.8	62.6
2017-2018	All Resident Students	430	75.9	83.2
	Indigenous Students	95	55.1	59.7
	Students with Diverse Abilities	62	40.5	61.1

School completion is measured by the number of students who graduate after five years of secondary education. The percentage of students with diverse learning needs who graduate with their peers has increased slightly over time; however, students with diverse learning needs still do not graduate at the same rate as their peers and are approximately 5% below the provincial numbers.

School Connectedness and Learner Belonging

SD8's goal for school connectedness and learning belonging match provincial goals and objectives.

Ministry Goal 2: Learning Environments Foster Healthy and Effective Learning

Every learner deserves a safe and caring environment to help them learn and develop their potential. Supporting healthy and effective learning environments is of paramount importance for the ministry. A key ministry strategy is to implement the three elements of the Mental Health in Schools Strategy: compassionate systems leadership, capacity building, and mental health in the classroom to provide a vision and pathway for mental health in the BC K to 12 education system.

Objective 2.2: Support Learner and Staff Well-Being

For learners to be able to develop and learn, they must feel physically and emotionally safe. The ministry believes in an approach where school leaders, teachers, staff, and parents/guardians all have roles to play in ensuring that learners are engaged, feel a sense of belonging, and understand the importance education has in their lives. Learners also need to know that adults genuinely care about their well-being. Research shows that one caring adult can make a significant difference in a learner's life and increase that learner's outcomes. To create this safe and effective space for learners to learn, the health and well-being of professional staff in schools is also essential.

The ministry target for the measure, "Percentage of learners in grades 4, 7 and 10 who feel welcome, safe, and have a sense of belonging in their school" for 2022-2023 is greater than 70%. Learners who feel safe, have a strong sense of belonging, and feel that adults in their school care for them are more engaged and more likely to move through their education program on pace.

The ministry also sets a target for the measure, "Percentage of learners in grade 4, 7 and 10 who feel there are two adults or more at their school who care about them." For the 2022-2023 school year, this target is greater than 76%.

In SD8, the goals and objectives of the ministry for school connectedness and learner belonging are supported in the [2021-2022 Enhancing Student Learning Report \(ESL\)](#). In the area of human and social development, Educational Outcome 3 indicates that learners will feel welcome, safe and connected to their school. Data from the SD8 Student Learning Survey (2020-2021) for the number and percentage of students with diverse abilities in grades 4, 7, and 10 who indicate that they who feel welcome, safe, and have a sense of belonging in their school is indicated below:

“Do you feel welcome at school?”

SLS— Students with Diverse Abilities		Number of students reporting feeling welcome at school	%	Provincial Average
2020-2021	Grade 3 and 4	11	58%	69
	Grade 7	21	68%	60
	Grade 10	13	50%	59
2019-2020	Grade 3 and 4	11	69%	67
	Grade 7	13	50%	58
	Grade 10	1	100%	55
2018-2019	Grade 3 and 4	17	61%	69
	Grade 7	16	59%	58
	Grade 10	7	39%	57

“Do you feel safe at school?”

SLS— Students with Diverse Abilities		Number reporting feeling safe at school	%	Provincial Average
2020-2021	Grade 3 and 4	177	77	79
	Grade 7	173	62	70
	Grade 10	165	70	73
2019-2020	Grade 3 and 4	150	75	77
	Grade 7	143	65	69
	Grade 10	24	71	73
2018-2019	Grade 3 and 4	235	79	80
	Grade 7	175	61	71
	Grade 10	130	71	72

“How many adults at your school care about you?”

SLS— Students with Diverse Abilities		Number reporting 2 or more adults who care	%	Provincial Average
2020-2021	Grade 3 and 4	10	53%	68%
	Grade 7	23	74%	66%
	Grade 10	15	58%	64%
2019-2020	Grade 3 and 4	10	63%	69%
	Grade 7	18	69%	67%
	Grade 10	n/a	n/a	66%
2018-2019	Grade 3 and 4	18	64%	65%
	Grade 7	17	63%	64%
	Grade 10	14	78%	65%

Creating a climate that supports children, youth and families that is respectful, welcomes diversity and acknowledges cultural consideration is paramount. School and district staff are pivotal to the district achieving the goal to increase school connectedness and learner belonging. Staff build positive relationships within the learning community, develop and support social-emotional learning, and support learners to own their learning so they can be successful.

To support learners in human and social development, especially in “Educational Outcome 3: Learners Will Feel Welcome, Safe and Connected to their School,” SD8 provides several resources. SD8 also focuses on implementing the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care “Mental Health in Schools Strategy,” which includes cultivating system-wide well-being through compassionate leadership using targeted professional development, including:



These resources also provide schools with the tools and supports to build capacity for mental-health promotion, using professional development that targets:

- Social-emotional learning
- Mental-health literacy
- Trauma-informed practice
- Self-regulation training, embedding mental well-being throughout learning environments

And, finally, resources will provide learners and staff with the tools to understand, respect and respond to diversity. All learners are welcomed and supported through compassionate, professional and responsive learning environments; safe, inclusive and welcoming schools and programs; and voice, choice and flexibility for all learners.



NEUROLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL DIVERSITIES

SD8 has had several professional learning experiences with consultant Shelley Moore. The district promotes a diversity approach to education, recognizing that physical abilities and neurological differences between learners constitute natural variations amongst individuals. Following the work of Shelley Moore and other presenters, such as Todd Rose (*The End of Average*, 2016), SD8 focuses on learner strengths as unique learning abilities rather than disabilities.



District-wide competencies related to academic success, creativity and imagination, citizenship, and resiliency of learners with exceptionalities are addressed through the support of trained specialists comprising of inclusion support teachers, school psychologists, occupational therapist and physiotherapist services, hearing resource teacher, vision teacher, speech language pathologists, speech language pathologist assistant, mental health and addictions coordinator, manager of safe schools, English language learner coordinator, and services for learners requiring assistive and augmentative technology.

The programming offered through these supplemental services varies depending on the educational needs of each student. Most students will receive support within the classroom; others may receive some services outside the classroom in one-on-one or small group settings. Sometimes indirect service and resources are provided to the classroom teacher with no direct service to the student.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) outlines goals and supports for children.

Specialized Supplemental Services

To support SD8's unique learners, a variety of services are provided through inclusive education.

Specialized supplemental services may include one

The programming offered through these supplemental services varies depending on the educational needs of each student. Most students will receive support within the classroom; others may receive some services outside the classroom in one-on-one or small group settings. Sometimes indirect service and resources are provided to the classroom teacher with no direct service to the student.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) outlines goals and supports for children or more of the following, depending on the level of student need and the ministry designation:

- Educational assistants (typically shared support in the classroom)
- Youth and family workers
- Inclusive Education staff

School Psychologist

The school psychologist is responsible for providing psycho-educational services for learners from their entrance to kindergarten to their transition out of grade 12. School psychologists are active participants in SD8's consultation process and are also involved in determining whether learners are placed in a Ministry of Education and Child Care special-needs designation, based on appropriate documentation and assessment. School psychologists are expertly trained and experienced staff who perform assessments. School psychologists ensure that learners diagnosed with learning disabilities or those who might qualify for services through Community Living BC have an updated assessment prior to their graduation.

Speech and Language Pathologists

Speech and language pathologists (SLPs) support learners with a range of communication disorders, from simple developmental communication disorders to complex communication disorders that are often associated with other physical differences or neurodevelopmental disorders. SLPs work with other professionals in the district and in the community to provide differential diagnosis regarding specific types of communication disorders as specified in the DSM-5.

SLPs work with families, teachers and education assistants to provide strategies and programs for learners whose communication disorders impact their academic and social learning. Augmentative communication supports are provided and supported by SLPs for learners with “physical” or neurodevelopmental disorders that limit their ability to communicate verbally. In SD8, SLPs perform a screening for kindergarten students in the spring of their kindergarten year to assess their baseline speech and language proficiency. SLPs are supported by a trained and experienced speech language pathology assistant to assist in the implementation of programs.

Hospital Homebound Teacher

Hospital homebound services are provided for learners who are at home or in hospital for an extended time due to physical or mental illness, an accident or, in some cases, a refusal to attend school. Hospital homebound services are temporary and not considered an educational program; however, most referrals require additional support to transition learners back into the classroom. Transition planning support includes consultation with school staff, parents, the learners themselves, community agency representatives and school district staff (where appropriate) to identify and address specific concerns.

Hearing Resource Teacher - Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The hearing resource teacher provides services to learners who may be experiencing difficulty in school because of hearing impairment or loss. Any learner at any grade level who has significant hearing impairment or loss that results in substantial educational difficulties is eligible for direct service. Consultative services may include providing information to learners, parents and classroom teachers or managing auditory equipment. The SD8 hearing resource teacher also performs kindergarten hearing screening for incoming learners to assess their baseline hearing after school entry.

Vision Resource Teacher

The vision resource teacher provides wide-ranging services that includes direct instruction; teaching to the expanded core curriculum for learners with visual impairments; resources from the Provincial Resource Center for the Visually Impaired; accessibility to print material by way of transcription and conversion using alternative formats, such as braille and large print; supporting assistive technology needs for access; arranging orientation and mobility training; and liaising with families and outside agencies. The vision teacher also provides students with instruction and guided practice in orientation and mobility for students.

Inclusion Support Teachers (District Itinerants)

Inclusion support teachers build the capacity of schools to respond positively, and with a variety of strategies, to meet the behavioural and learning needs of learners. These teachers are responsible for supporting schools in developing and implementing competency-based individual education plans (CBIEPs), providing staff with strategies to support student success, coordinating professional learning opportunities, building capacity of staff to effectively support students with diverse needs, supporting positive behaviour intervention and support (PBIS), and consulting on social-emotional and behaviour programs in the classroom.

The district inclusion support coordinator arranges learner transition to high school and their placement in district programs and also coordinates provincial outreach programs funded by

the Ministry of Education and Child Care. The provincial outreach programs help meet the educational needs of low-incidence learners in school districts. SD8 accesses these programs for consultations, resources, and in-service in the areas of inclusion, autism, special- education technology, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, deaf and hard of hearing students, early intervention and other specific learning needs.

Mental Health and Addictions Coordinator

This position works as a liaison between the district and families to provide service to children, youth and families. This clinician consults with staff and provides resources to learners who are at risk of developing a mental-health disorder and/or showing mild and/or early signs where their functioning is impacting their home, school and social settings. The mental health and addictions coordinator supports school teams with social-emotional learning, trauma-focused schools implementation, mental wellness activities, and also provides resources for students who have or are at risk for addictions. The coordinator provides information at parent engagement nights, to school-based teams, the district-based team, and in schools. The coordinator is also a member of the Health Promoting Schools provincial team, supports both physical and mental health in schools and is a key member of the district's critical incident response team.

English Language Learner (ELL) Teacher Coordinator

Schools support English language learning (ELL) with inclusion support teacher services. ELL learners are supported to learn English while being immersed in classroom-based instruction in the English Language. The English language learner teacher coordinator (ELLTC) is an ELL resource teacher who assesses and evaluates ELL learners to determine their level of language proficiency in oral language, reading and writing. The ELLTC consults and communicates with school inclusion support teachers (ISTs), classroom teachers, teacher counsellors, inclusive education staff, principals, and parents to prepare and successfully implement the Annual Instructional Plan (AIP) for ELL learners. Intercultural goals are also included.

The ELLTC recommends and provides appropriate print, digital and multimedia resources specifically written and created for ELL learners. They provide continual support for successful universal teaching strategies and appropriate adaptations that are universally designed for ELL and at the same time benefit all learners. ELLTC also organizes professional learning for educators to address the core competencies, Ministry of Education curricula, ELL standards, cultural proficiency and best practices in teaching language proficiency.

Occupational Therapists

Occupational therapists provide services to learners with orthopedic, neurological, muscular, spinal, joint or sensory dysfunction, as well as those with cognitive and complex neuro- behavioural conditions. The occupational therapists work primarily with learners in grades K to 7 and those with complex neurological and/or muscular dysfunction.

Physiotherapist

Physiotherapists support learners who have significant physical or sensory-motor limitations that impact their activity and participation in school. They deliver a mix of consultation, assessment and therapy. The physiotherapist works with K to 12 learners.

Manager of Safe Schools

The manager of safe schools (MSS) is responsible for coordinating safe schools supports and services for students and staff. The MSS provides a variety of training: violence threat risk assessment, verbal intervention, lockdowns, hold and secure, parent engagement nights, professional learning workshops, etc. The MSS coordinates student safety plans and violence threat reports. The MSS is responsible for emergency preparedness, evacuation responses, liaising with RCMP and Nelson City Police, coordinating the restorative justice project in schools and is an integral member of the critical incident response team. The MSS is also the SOGI lead, sexual-education coordinator, and supports the development of safety administrative procedures.

Education Assistants (EAs)

EAs work to support of students primarily in the classroom setting, under the direction of the classroom teacher and inclusion support teacher to:

- Support a student in becoming an independent learner by implementing strategies in the classroom as directed by the classroom teacher.
- Implement learning accommodations developed by the classroom teacher, and/or IST, as outlined in the Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- Prepare materials for specific children, where appropriate, such as picture exchange communication systems or countdown strips.
- Document observed behaviours and/or demonstrations of a child's learning for review as part of the IEP planning process.

Assistive Technology Supports

The district recognizes the importance of providing diverse learners with technology support to assist in accessing, developing and showcasing their learning. Our learners are supported with both hardware supports (machines, devices) and software supports (learner accommodation programs).



CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The English language learning teacher coordinator (ELLTC) provides resources and support for English language learners, as well as inclusive education services that support learners to achieve cultural and linguistic competency and proficiency. The ELLTC supports learners in acquiring strong foundational skills and core competencies, personalized learning experiences, and an appreciation for vast cultural worldviews and perspectives.





SUPPORTED TRANSITIONS

Transition planning is the preparation, implementation and evaluation required to enable students to make major transitions during their lives: from home or pre-school to school; from class to class; from school to school; from school district to school district; and from school to the community in the form of post-secondary learning or work.

Effective transition planning is important and can impact learners' experiences of connectedness and belonging. Comprehensive transition planning that reflects a learner's strengths provides the foundation for successful transitional experiences. By developing individualized learner transition needs, equity and resiliency can be fostered in all learners and in their educational programming. As children move into and through the K to 12 education system, there are a number of transitions to navigate.

Early Years

Early-years kindergarten planning for learners with diverse learning abilities takes place each spring. The purpose of this planning is to effectively transition children into kindergarten by collaboratively sharing information between families, community agencies and district employees.

Kindergarten Transition

Children in SD8 who are supported through the Creston Early Learning Program (CELP), are invited to a joint kindergarten transition meeting with CELP and SD8. The Creston inclusion support teacher and other inclusive-education staff, in conjunction with a child's school staff, help manage the transition to school for kindergarten students in Creston already identified with diverse learning needs.

If a child is identified with diverse learning needs in other areas of the district, the connected inclusion support teacher and other inclusive-education staff, in conjunction with a child's school staff, help manage the transition to school for kindergarten students.

Parents/guardians of incoming kindergarten students are encouraged to register their child as soon as registration opens in the new year of the year the child turns five years old, and they are encouraged to attend "Ready, Set, Learn" and kindergarten orientation school events held each spring for children attending kindergarten in the fall.

Transitioning from One Grade to the Next

Each spring, schools begin reviewing their projected enrolment for September. Before the end of the school year, plans are already underway for the placement of students with diverse needs into classrooms. The school principal works closely with a child's inclusion support teacher, teacher counsellor, and classroom teacher(s) to determine which classroom will best suit the learning needs of children for the following school year. The exact classroom placement is finalized during the first weeks of school in September.

Changing Schools within SD8

If a child is moving to the next level of school within SD8 (e.g. middle school or high school), transition planning is initiated by staff in the early spring or sometimes earlier if a child has complex needs.

Transition planning typically involves a child's current inclusion support teacher, classroom teacher, and teacher counsellor who meet with the receiving school's inclusion support teacher, classroom teacher, and teacher counsellor, along with the district's inclusion support teacher for the school(s) and possibly other members of the district's inclusive education team. Meetings include parents to share with them a child's IEP and to discuss the specific learning needs for transitions.

Arrangements are often made for a child to visit the receiving school in the spring and to meet the new principal and school staff.

As with all transition planning, school staff work closely to determine which classroom will best suit the learning needs of children the following school year.

Transitioning from Grade 12 to the Community (Post-Secondary or Work)

Transitioning into adulthood requires coordination and planning. It is important that parents/guardians prepare for this transition well before their child turns 19 years of age. In some cases, there are arrangements that need to be made with Community Living BC (CLBC) and other agencies to ensure that a smooth transition takes place. It is recommended by the Ministry of Education that this planning begins when a learner turns 16 years of age (at the end of Grade 10 or into Grade 11).

School staff can assist with transition by including specific goals within the learner's competency-based IEP. There is also a parent information meeting that takes place annually at secondary schools (LVR and PCSS), where individuals from community-based agencies, such as CLBC, Selkirk College, College of the Rockies, WorkBC, etc., answer questions and provide information during this important time to promote a smooth transition.





MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SD8 works to ensure that learners have the support they need to thrive. By focusing on priority needs such as prevention, promoting mental well-being, and reducing the stigma that is often associated with mental illness and addictions, learners are learning how to recognize mental wellness. They are also learning when to seek help from others, how to access supports and how to proactively and confidently address issues.

Fostering social-emotional learning is a key competency for success at school and in life. Social and emotional learning is a set of specific skills that help learners set goals, manage their behaviour, build relationships and process or remember information. These skills impact a person's mental well-being and are connected to educational success and employment. School leaders have identified the need for more teacher professional development in the area of social-emotional learning.



Mental-health literacy is the knowledge and understanding of how to develop and maintain mental well-being, identify risk factors and signs of mental health challenges, and access help when needed. An important aspect to mental-health literacy education is the elimination of the stigma of mental health illness and the empowering of learner self-efficacy in managing mental health. In 2021-2022, a significant amount of our work in this area was on providing information and supports for all students in classrooms, in conjunction with classroom teachers, to demonstrate the need for mental wellness for all students.

Trauma-informed practice promotes inclusive and compassionate learning environments, understanding coping strategies, supporting independence and helping to minimize additional stress or trauma by addressing individual learner needs. The significance of addressing trauma through research-based pedagogies is critical for ensuring that our most vulnerable learners are successful in school.

Schools play an important role in supporting the development and maintenance of well-being for children and youth. Mental Health Literacy is focused on addressing learner mental health by helping educators create emotionally healthy learning environments, promoting early identification of learners who may be struggling with mental-health issues, reducing the stigma of mental health and providing support for access to specialized supports.

In 2021-2022, SD8 fostered mental health and well-being through a wide variety of programs, approaches, practices, training and strategies, summarized in the follow pages.



Connection

- Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in elementary schools: PBIS is a multi-tiered framework for learning to support clear and consistent behavioural expectations and promoting safety across the school community. SD8 was an early adopter of PBIS, and all elementary schools have had PBIS training. In 2021-2022, district inclusion support teachers supported the ongoing implementation of PBIS in all elementary schools.
- **MindUp:** A pilot program implemented in elementary schools, MindUp teaches the skills and knowledge children need to regulate their stress and emotion, form positive relationships, and act with kindness and compassion.
- **Self-regulation:** Most inclusion support staff in schools and many education assistants have received several training sessions in executive function strategies from expert Sarah Ward. These strategies assist learners with self-regulation, identifying “first/then,” and help learners to navigate the classroom environment more effectively.
- **Open Parachute:** Learners in several schools learned about mental health, the signs and symptoms of mental illness, how to reduce stigma, strategies for maintaining positive mental health, and how to access suitable resources to address mental-health concerns.

Children and Youth in Care

- A full-time mental health and addictions coordinator was hired.
- The district is working with the ministry to improve engagement with Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and Child Youth Mental Health (CYMH). Currently, there is limited sharing of information.
- The district is collaborating with local delegated authorities, such as Kinbasket Child and Family Services.

Learners with Disabilities and Diverse Abilities

- The district is ensuring the identification and support of learners with diverse abilities.
- The district is holding regular school-based team and district-based team training and meetings.
- The principal of each district school reviews learners with diverse abilities four times a year.

Conflict Resolution

- WITS (walk away, ignore, talk it out and seek help) teaches learners to have positive relationships and use peaceful resolution to solve peer conflict and develop social- emotional skills. Resources in WITS kits include Aboriginal content. Some schools have started to re-use WITS in the past year.

English Language Learners

- English language learner (ELL) language support provides direct support for English language learners in their schools. ELL support helps teachers foster belonging and connection for learners in their neighbourhood school.

Social Thinking

- Led in part by district occupational therapists and speech language pathologists, some elementary schools are implementing programs, such as Incredible Flexible You, to promote self-regulation, social thinking and related social skills, which in turn promote belonging and connectedness.
- District schools are increasing their capacity in learning and using trauma-informed practices through complex trauma resources (CTR).
- Increasing awareness, support, and education for and with learners who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.
- Work with learners and staff in schools to help them complete projects in their schools, such as PRIDE flag installations, bathroom signage, identification of school allies and SOGI groups, PRIDE rainbow painting, and other activities.

Mental-Health Literacy

Mental-health literacy is defined as understanding how to obtain and maintain good mental health, understanding mental disorders and related treatment, decreasing stigma about mental illness, and enhancing help-seeking efficacy. In 2021-2022, the Mental Health Literacy and Teach Mental Health Literacy programs were made available to all teachers.

Approximately 40 teachers in the district have taken these programs.

Trauma-Informed Practice

During the 2021-2022 school year, the district once again contracted with Dr. Chuck Geddes and Angela Murphy of Complex Trauma Resources (CTR) to provide training, consultation and resources to staff throughout the district. Over the past two years, over 400 SD8 staff have been trained in this area, and many staff have undertaken multiple training opportunities.

Throughout this past year, Angela Murphy has provided ongoing consultation to a group of six elementary schools to build capacity and understanding of trauma-informed practice to help students connect and form relationships at school. Dr. Geddes also provided an engagement session for parents and community members to provide caregivers with an understanding of trauma and tools they can use to support family members who have experienced trauma.

SD8 strives to provide optimal environments for learning by fostering school connectedness and by preventing and intervening in instances of bullying and other worrisome behaviours.

Social-Emotional Learning

The district fosters social and emotional learning for families with programming that includes parent engagement sessions:

- School-district and community-agency partners collaborate to support family and learner well-being through both in-school and community programming.
- The mental health and addictions coordinator and the manager of safe schools regularly host family information nights and attend school PAC and DPAC throughout the year to present information and support engagement.
- Everyday Anxiety Strategies for Educators (EASE). EASE helps educators teach learners in elementary grades strategies to address the thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with anxiety, while also supporting social and emotional learning and mental-health literacy of educators through a professional development course.
- The district facilitates connection and collaboration with local agencies, such as the Ministry for Children and Family Development, Child Youth Mental Health, Nelson Community Services, FreedomQuest, ANKORS, Kootenai Art Therapy Institute and others to provide supports for learners.
- The district connects with agencies and families to secure supports and services in-person and virtually through PEACE program, COINS, Community Living BC, The Foundry, Children's Help Line, Valley Community Services, WEG Community Services, BC Children's Hospital and others.





SCHOOL SAFETY

SD8 supports comprehensive training for employees to support the principles of a safe and caring school environment. This training is overseen by the manager of safe schools, who acts as the district's coordinator of safe schools.

In partnership with parents, SD8 has a critical role in educating youth about healthy boundaries and relationships. SD8 strives to be a strong voice for positive change in its learners' lives by addressing issues, such as sexual misconduct and violence, that continue to plague communities and disproportionately impact the lives of girls and Aboriginal youth. The focus on safety and healthy relationships is central to provide programs and services to learners.

Learners will understand they are in a safe environment if the district has a comprehensive response to threatening or worrisome behaviours. The violence threat risk assessment (VTRA) and worrisome behaviour procedures create and maintain an environment where learners, staff members, parents and others feel safe when there is a threat of violence. The VTRA protocol may be used in situations where there is a threat of violence by or toward members of the school community. If the school-based VTRA team identifies indicators that a learner may be on a pathway toward violence, the team can intervene to decrease the risk of violence, prevent injury and assist the learner in accessing support.

During the 2021-2022 school year, the district updated the administrative procedures with regard to student safety and violence in schools. This work has had a positive effect of streamlining procedures and creating consistency throughout the district.





SEXUAL HEALTH AND GENDER IDENTITY (SOGI)

Honouring the human rights of learners and their families and reducing homophobia, transphobia and other barriers serves to support a safe and supportive environment. SD8 provides learning opportunities for learners that focus on valuing diversity and respecting differences, human rights and responses to discrimination.

To enhance SOGI services during 2022-23, SOGI leaders will once again be established to support events and activities in schools. These leaders will gather three times during the year to plan SD8 events and create collaborative opportunities between school sites and various groups.

INCLUSIVE SEXUAL-HEALTH EDUCATION

SD8 continues to support the physical and health education curricular competencies of social and community health and mental well-being by delivering inclusive sexual-health education. Inclusive sexual health provides youth with comprehensive and accurate sexual-health information that is appropriate for their age, cognitive development and cultural context.

Professional development focuses on developing teachers' confidence, knowledge base and competence so they can deliver inclusive and shame-free lessons.





TARGETED MINISTRY-FUNDED PROGRAMS

- CommunityLINK funding provides targeted supports offered by a contracted child and youth mental-health clinician in Creston, through Strengthening Families.
- CommunityLINK funding provides targeted supports offered at the HUB at Kootenay River Secondary School.
- In the Slocan Valley, CommunityLINK funding supports art therapy and counselling services for learners.
- With the Food Equity Program, all schools were supported with financial resources to assist with the nutrition of vulnerable students in the district. Approximately 500 students were supported in 2021-2022, most of them either daily or weekly.

After-School Sports and Arts Initiative (ASSAI)

The After-School Sports and Arts Initiative (ASSAI)'s objective is to enhance children's well-being through creative arts, sport and physical activity. In SD8 in 2021-2022, the ASSAI program was offered at two schools and provided programming throughout most of the year. In total, over 100 students accessed the programming.





EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing Professional Learning for Staff

- Compassionate Systems Leadership (CSL)
- Everyday Anxiety Strategies for Educators (EASE)
- Mental-health literacy, staff training provided through Selkirk College
- Counsellor training in mental-health curriculum through the coordinator of mental health and addictions
- Staff training in violence threat risk assessment through the manager of safe schools
- Staff training in crisis prevention and intervention (CPI)
- University of British Columbia Mental Health Literacy course
- Trauma-informed practice through Complex Trauma Resources (CTR)
- ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) training

Programming for Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP)

- Trauma-informed professional development workshop for school administrators, teachers and education assistants.
- Mental-health clinicians offer professional development sessions to staff.
- Ministry of Education and Child Care trauma-informed webinars are made available to staff.
- Aboriginal youth and family liaison workers and Aboriginal education assistants have been given access to trauma-informed practices online courses.

Programming for Drug and Alcohol Education

Educators

Programming for drug and alcohol education for educators including professional development sessions with mental health clinicians.

Learners

- District-wide vaping education curriculum has been developed for grade 6 to 10 learners
- Mental health and addictions coordinator works with staff in presenting information and supports for learners with addictions.
- district-based team (DBT) meets regularly and supports learners referred with drug and/or alcohol addictions, providing resources, support and referral assistance for outside agency intervention (e.g., ANKORS)
- training and support from Interior Health: Health Promoting Schools.
- training and support provided by mental health and addictions coordinator and manager of safe schools.

Parents/Families - Including Engagement Activities

- parent engagement sessions each year on vaping, substance misuse and mental health
- parent sessions/training on trauma-informed practices
- parent sessions/training on addictions, including digital addictions



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This annual “Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Continuous Learning Report” supports the learning goal outlined in the district’s strategic plan. SD8 provides opportunities for all learners to achieve success in the following areas:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Inclusion
- Indigenization

SD8 provides conditions that foster success for all learners, including:

Equitable access to and equitable participation in quality education for all learners:

- District and school cultures that value diversity and respond to the diverse social and cultural needs of the communities the district serves
- School cultures that promote understanding of others and respect for all
- Learning and working environments that are safe, welcoming and free from discrimination, harassment and violence
- Decision-making processes that give a voice to all members of the school community
- Policies and practices that promote fair and equitable treatment of all learners

SD8’s “Focus. Learn. Excel.” initiative concentrates on learning goals from the board of education strategic plan. These goals are addressed by:

- Improving learning and assessment
- Supporting vulnerable learners
- Literacy and numeracy
- Enhancing learner supports

Staff engage in robust professional learning opportunities facilitated by renowned education professionals. Staff also have opportunities to contribute to district communities of practice in several educational domains, such as literacy, numeracy and early learning.





CONCLUSION

All SD8 learners are unique learners and have the right to equitable access to and participation in quality education. SD8 staff value diversity and respond to the diverse social and cultural needs of the individuals and the communities in which we learn, lead, and work.

By promoting the understanding of others and respect for all, and by creating safe and welcoming learning and environments that are free from discrimination, harassment and violence, educational excellence and equity are attainable.

