



Vancouver School District

School Plan for Charles Dickens Main Elementary

Year 3 (2017-18)

Social Responsibility Goal: To improve students' understanding and the use of self-regulation skills to positively affect them as learners within our school community with a focus on six K/1/2 classes, two 3/4/5 classes, and one Grade 5/6/7 class.

1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY:

Charles Dickens Elementary School

Charles Dickens Elementary School is part of a community that is located in a vibrant area of East Vancouver that reflects the changes and growth of our dynamic city. We are home to a catchment that is comprised of two schools; Dickens Main and Dickens Annex. Presently, Dickens Main has 485 students enrolled in 20 Divisions. For the 2017-18 school year, we are experiencing steady enrolment with a strong *in-catchment* family base. Kindergarten enrollment, for example, has increased (there are 4 classes of Kindergarten between Dickens Main and Annex) and, as a result, are planning to enroll 21 divisions with a combination of straight grade and family grouping classes, where enrollment permits.

Of our current 485 student population, 42 students have identified special needs and 49 students are English Language Learners (ELL). Seven students attending Dickens are self-identified as learners of Aboriginal Heritage. Our student population is diverse and includes a number of immigrant and refugee families. Our largest groups by '*Language Spoken at Home*' are English (76%), Chinese (7%), Vietnamese (6%), and Tagalog (3%). The physical space of our school building is well utilized. With its wide corridors, sliding glass garage-style doorways, and adjoining classroom spaces, it is conducive to the child-centred, group learning philosophy that the community has embraced for many years. The multipurpose room and gym are additional community spaces that reinforce the multi-age group experiences that take place at Dickens. As well, the gym is widely used as an evening and weekend rental space by numerous outside organizations.

At Charles Dickens, our child-centred program is based upon what we know about learning and optimum social and emotional development. The main tenets of our beliefs are that the child is the focus of education; that social responsibility and decision-making must be fostered; that learning is continuous and that the purpose of evaluation is to promote further authentic learning.

GENERAL SCHOOL STORY: CONTINUED

Dickens offers a variety of extracurricular activities, sponsoring cross-country, basketball, and track & field teams for both the primary and intermediate levels. We are pleased to report the tremendous success of our Boys Basketball Team who won the City 2016-17 Championship. Our community is extremely proud! Primary and intermediate students also have opportunities to participate in other physical activities that may be offered throughout the year with invited guests (eg: Ultimate Frisbee, Floor Hockey, and Badminton). Student leadership is supported through a variety of school opportunities such as student-led assemblies, buddy reading activities, school-wide announcements, student leadership teams (Students' Council & Green Team) and school monitors (eg: Library monitors & Welcoming/School Host Monitors). Additionally, students come together to celebrate one another by participating in a 'Year-end Talent Show' where student confidence shines.

To support our beliefs, the school is organized around four core principles:

1. Multi-age Learning: two or three age groups are organized together with the same teacher for two or more years (where possible).
2. Team Teaching: two teachers are generally responsible for all aspects of programming for one group of multiage children.
3. Authentic Assessment: criterion-referenced, non-letter grade report cards (letter grades are available to parents upon request), portfolio assessment, student-led conferences, student self-assessment and goal setting. This aligns strongly with the Curriculum Redesign work we have completed as a staff highlighting Core Competencies and the importance of Student Self- Assessment.
4. Varied Instructional Learning Strategies: student-centred, cooperative learning, large and small group instruction, project-based learning, multi-literacies and multiple intelligences.

At Dickens, we foster Student Leadership by providing numerous volunteer opportunities such as: Assembly Leaders, Morning Announcement Leaders, Green Team Leaders, and Library Monitors. The expectation is that students will make thoughtful, respectful decisions each day that align with our School's Code of Conduct of *Cooperation, Safety & Respect*.

In addition, we recognize the value placed on the Vancouver School Board's Strategic Plan and acknowledge the Guiding Principles within the framework of the respected work we uphold within our community. Charles Dickens is a community built on collaboration, engagement, inclusion, excellence and transparency. "This establishes a clear and shared vision for the future of public education in the Vancouver School District."*

At Dickens, there continues to be strong parent support and involvement, through the Parent Advisory Council and various community partnerships such as Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House and Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House which run Before and After School Care Programs.

Parents work as active partners and are a part of our professional teaming community. Our Parent Advisory Council (PAC) continues to be instrumental in implementing 'Speaker/Community Evenings' for parents around educational and parenting topics. Examples include: Nutrition, Supporting Anxious Children, and a Hop 'N Nosh (a Community Dance which brings together the families from both the Annex and the Main School). Additionally, members of our PAC initiate and lead a number of after school experiences for students (Chess, Ultimate and Singing).

* Vancouver School Board Strategic Plan 2016-2021

2. WHAT DID WE SEE?

Looking back to our sample core group, we were first introduced to a number of students exhibiting behaviour that we felt could be improved by focusing not only on the way we dealt with behaviour but also the language we used to help students find their own voice through a self-reflective and restorative practice.

At the beginning of the school year, we were working with students who:

- Displayed huge reactions to small events
- Reacted Physically to express their feelings
- Experienced difficulty playing cohesively as a group
- Experienced daily outbursts, anger and screaming
- Were lethargic & unmotivated, needing frequent breaks outside of the classroom
- Poor attendance and inappropriate behaviour
- Struggled to stay on task, often distracting others

Using common language with regard to self-regulation and programs like *Zones of Regulation*, *Ready Bodies Learning Minds* and *Mind Up*, we noticed a significant drop in “unexpected” behaviour in both primary and intermediate classes. Teachers were provided with collaboration times to explore self-regulation instruction and learning and its connection to the Redesigned Curriculum. Weaving self-regulation into curriculum, self-reflections and daily classroom routines helped to maximize student receptivity to academic learning. Opportunities were also made available for teachers and support staff to work with District Staff around self-regulation and social-emotional learning.

Working collaboratively with our Resource Team, Supervision Aides, Student Support Workers, Teacher Librarian, Area Counselor, Aboriginal Enhancement Worker and Youth and Family Worker further extended consistency in use of common language.

The following outlines our assessments and evidence of student successes:

- A common and consistent language was developed to promote the awareness of self-regulation and social-emotional understanding
- Surveying and gathering of information, both formally (through SBT, Office Behaviour Reports, Report Cards) and informally (SCM touch-ins, Conferences with teachers and parents, classroom visits) about our students focusing on self-regulation shows that students are able to identify and articulate how they are feeling and what Zone they are in using I statements with strategies to self-calm and reduce anxiety.
- Using Report Card data and Social Responsibility comments as a measure of success
- Data on office referrals due to discipline and conduct related issues of students has decreased 7% from the previous year - further demonstrating students’ ability to manage their conduct, emotions and decision making
- Using self-assessments, class meetings, interviews with parents and students, literacy opportunities such as journal writing and blogs provide anecdotal data used to help measure success
- Creating ongoing safe and multimodal opportunities to share student learning and reflections about self-regulation
- Ongoing conferencing with teaching staff around learning styles and strengths
- Educational leadership, provided by one of many Learning Teams, to create report card templates to highlight student self-assessment

3. WERE WE SUCCESSFUL?

Based on information collected by the previously mentioned formal and informal assessments, we have noticed a significant decrease in *unexpected* behaviour at Charles Dickens.

Most importantly, our initial target group of students have demonstrated a strong improvement in their self-regulated behaviour and social-emotional well-being.

Teachers at Charles Dickens have reported:

- Students requesting positive body breaks, returning to class calm and ready to learn
- Students are using mindful breathing to calm their bodies, which has helped deescalate behaviour
- Students are able to articulate their feelings and can identify a strategy to help reduce anxiety and frustration
- Students can recognize the difference between large and small problems, and reactions to said problems are appropriate and expected
- As opposed to physical action, students are now using “I statements” on the playground, they are learning to walk away from a situation and will seek the help of an adult on the playground
- Students from one division in particular are now cohesive and spend their free time playing cooperatively with each other
- Displays depicting Zone language, using daily Mind Up language, and breathing have helped students become “present” in the room with significant decreases in outbursts
- The Read Bodies Learning Minds program has helped students become more focused and aware
- Setting individual goals has worked effectively for students needing help working with others
- Self-Regulation has provided opportunities for others to work as a group (on a student level as well as a collegial level)
- Students are now participating in meaningful ways

4. HOW HAVE WE SHARED?

We continued to communicate and celebrate numerous student successes by:

- Sharing in student report cards, including specific Student Self-Assessment reflections targeting Social Responsibility, Goal Setting and Behaviour.
- Sharing in Student-Led Conferences, Goal Setting Conferences and Parent Meetings
- Providing frequent opportunities for students to share their learning and understanding of themselves as learners in whole-class and multi-class presentations, assemblies, blogs and newsletters
- Displaying vibrant work on bulletin boards, on the website and in classrooms
- Sharing and Celebrating student successes at the PAC Executive Meeting in May, 2017.
- One teacher running the Green Team presented to the PAC a short PowerPoint presentation made by the students from the club, showcasing the wonderful work they have accomplished this spring. The rooftop garden has become an urban oasis for many students who not only want to develop their passion for outdoor science but also for students wanting to express kinesthetic action outside, rain or shine.
- The Green Team has redesigned the outdoor space adding seating for student work. They also have access to tools to build birdhouses, gumbot planters, composting bins, work benches and a fairy themed student-shared library stand.

5. WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

In terms of moving forward with plans for the 2017-18 school year, staff are 'in process' with consideration being given to a different multi-year goal. As we anticipate staffing changes, staff have elected to revisit goal work early in the 2017-18 year to consider a goal shift related to inquiry work that was started in the 2016-17 year. Staff are poised to consider a different goal (possibly related to our School Child-centred philosophy) or a continuing focus on Self-Assessment, Social-Emotional Learning, or the Core Competencies highlighted in the Curriculum Redesign.

As a staff, focused dialogue around our goal work has taken place as follows:

- Through release time; team discussions in Teacher Collaborative Inquiry time (three staff groups engaged in this with a focus on student assessment). A total of 15 staff members were involved in inquiry discussions for the 2016-17 year.
- Within our weekly structured Staff Committee Meetings and with the support of our Professional Development Committee, designated times within the Staff Committee Meeting structure were identified for staff to engage in 'Table Talk' about student learning and goal work.



District-wide Aboriginal Goal: To increase knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions among all students.

6. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE ABORIGINAL LEARNERS IN OUR SCHOOL?

It was with mixed emotions as we witnessed our five Grade 7 students leaving their elementary school experience and moving forward to their High School programs in the fall. Staff were present to celebrate the success of our students at the Moving Forward Ceremony last year. We were extremely proud of our students and wish them great success.

We currently have 7 students identifying as Aboriginal learners, ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 6.

7. WHAT HAVE WE DONE AT OUR SCHOOL TO SUPPORT ALL LEARNERS IN REGARDS TO THIS GOAL?

To honour the history of the First Nations People and support the learning of all students within the Charles Dicken's community, as a collective group we have:

- Developed a strong network of support to strengthen the growth of our learners
- Celebrated student success with our Aboriginal Enhancement Worker, whose work has proved to be invaluable to our school community
- Dedicated Professional Days, Curriculum Implementation Days and In-Service Days to strengthen our understanding and recognition of Aboriginal contributions to Canada and the world
- Our District Staff Member from our Aboriginal Education Department, Shane Pointe, has visited classes of Grade K/1/2, Grade 4/5, and Grade 5/6/7 students. His stories and activities were well-received and welcomed.
- Staff engaged in an extensive Aboriginal Learning workshop early in November 2016. During this time, staff engaged in a BC Button Blanket experience that highlighted BC First Peoples History
- Discussed how we can access more district support and resources in order to learn how teaching professionals can authentically and meaningfully weave Aboriginal heritage, teaching and culture into BC's Redesigned Curriculum
- Celebrated the success and achievements of our Grade 7 students with Aboriginal heritage at the Grade 7 Moving Forward Ceremony
- Completed Aboriginal Success Plans collaborative through our School Based Team
- Accessed district level and BCTF workshops and speakers to enhance Aboriginal teachings, heritage and culture more accessible and meaningful for all students in the Dicken's community
- Requested student leaders give the Traditional Aboriginal Acknowledgement at our weekly assemblies and at all school and community gatherings
- Invited family members into our classrooms to share customs and strengthen relationships
- Provided safe, nurturing learning environments for all learners
- Worked collaboratively with the Teacher Librarian to build murals reflecting Shi-shi-etko's Residential School experience

8. WHAT WILL WE CONTINUE TO DO IN THIS AREA?

We will continue to communicate and celebrate student success by:

- Sharing successes in student term report cards
- Sharing in student-led conferences, goal setting conferences and parent meetings
- Collaborating, designing, celebrating and sharing of the Aboriginal Success Plans
- Providing frequent opportunities for students to share their learning and reflections in whole class and multi-class presentations, assemblies, blogs and newsletters
- Displaying work on bulletin boards, on the school website and in classrooms
- Sharing and celebrating student successes at PAC General Meetings
- Encouraging families and school community members to attend the Grade 7 Moving Forward Ceremony
- Honouring the families and telling the stories of Residential School survivors
- Inviting parents, grandparents and guardians into our school to share their knowledge of our world
- Honouring the understanding that we live, work and learn on the unceded territories of the First Nations People

9. HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE ARE BEING SUCCESSFUL IN THIS AREA?

The following is in place to support our work in this area:

- In collaboration with the Resource Team, the Aboriginal Enhancement Worker has developed a schedule of support for weekly visits to classes at Dickens. Understanding the value of this relationship has proven to show not only a stronger connection to students with Aboriginal heritage, it has built a stronger bond between students and their peers.
- At each assembly and community gathering, our Traditional Aboriginal Acknowledgement is shared. Student leaders state: "We acknowledge that we live, work and play on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish People."
- The Charles Dickens' philosophy involves high student leadership as well as creating and fostering a sense of belonging for all. All staff continue to make this their highest priority. For several of our Aboriginal learners, they have benefitted from remaining with the same teacher for a two and sometimes three-year period. For many of our Aboriginal learners, they have had the opportunity to be involved with their peers in leadership roles around the school; assembly leaders, Master of Ceremonies and School Hosts for community events like Ready Set, Learn and Welcome to Kindergarten
- Staff make consistent and authentic connections with parents of all learners in the Dickens community.
- Classroom projects and routines have also enhanced the understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture and heritage to all students in our school community.
- Our Professional Development Committee continued to move forward supporting Aboriginal Enhancement and its numerous connections to the redesigned curriculum
- Our Aboriginal Enhancement Worker has been invited to share her Metis heritage. Students have carried their learning forward into essays related to Aboriginal issues as well as personal opinion pieces shared on classroom blog sites
- Aboriginal perspective was introduced during a Gold Rush unit where discussion around the Small Pox epidemic took place. Students not only discussed the implications a plague has on a culture, they also discussed how some Aboriginal people were able to secure vaccines while others studied the impact of European settlement
- Presenters, like Shane Pointe, were brought in to speak with classes about salmon and their connection to his family
- Students researched and designed traditional First Nations villages
- Classes attended field trips to the Museum of Anthropology to experience cedar walks, Totems and Potlatch ceremonies
- Classes participated in a Blanket Story activity
- Students experienced print making at the Burnaby Art Gallery, focusing on bird imagery. They also studied animals, plants, the sky and water through a First Nations lens
- Students were presented with a Math Catchers unit through SFU which introduced math concepts through story telling
- The Teacher Librarian updated the school collection of books and resources and worked with a number of classes on Truth and Reconciliation and Residential School discussions
- Student teachers brought in and shared their learning from current University course work
- Project-Based Learning continued to be our highest priority; incorporating whole school support, SSAs, Resource, Aboriginal Enhancement Worker, Youth and Family Worker, Administrators and Area Counselor to provide supportive and positive ways of learning
- Staff provided solid leadership on self-reflection, responsibility and pride in accomplishments
- Students have shown an increase in pride in family heritage and culture