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**What We Heard**

**Community Engagement 2023**

In August of 2021, the Ministry of Education and Child Care (MOECC) legislated The Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (the Framework). The Framework is British Columbia’s approach to continuous improvement of public education. The Framework facilitates the improvement of student learning outcomes and equity within those outcomes. The Framework is based on shared commitments and common values; a commitment to reconciliation; the mandate to develop the Educated Citizen and existing legislation, including the School Act.

The Framework combines accountability with evidence-informed decision making to support a system-wide program of continuous improvement. It brings a formalized approach to the planning and reporting expectations for all school Districts with a focus on improving student learning and enhancing the intellectual, social, and career development of all students in the K-12 education system.

The Framework was developed collaboratively with Indigenous rightsholders, Indigenous peoples, and provincial education partners. The Framework is a collective approach that recognizes and fosters diversity, acknowledges and respects Indigenous

ways of knowing, relies on evidence-informed decision making, and responds to the various needs of students while honouring student, family, and community agency and respecting local autonomy to deliver educational programs.

On May 23, 2023 we held a Community Engagement Evening in the J. A. Laird gym. Using our parent newsletter, we also sent a QR code home to parents who were unable to attend the in-person event. During this event, we shared the goals and results from our 2022-2023 School Success Plan, as well as potential goals moving forward. The following three questions were posed to our school community:

1. What are some creative suggestions for things we can do in our school District to continually improve?
2. What are some examples of key things you appreciate, or think are working well about our schools?
3. What are some examples of things you think our students should be able to experience or accomplish to enhance their learning that they currently do not have access to?

Feedback was collected between May 1 and June 7. We received 26 responses.

**ABOUT THIS REPORT**

All responses from the online and community engagement have been included in this report (Appendix 1). The responses were themed, and we have endeavoured to provide as much information as possible in response to your feedback. The input of our school community is appreciated and has influenced the development of our 2023-2024 School Success Plan.

**THEMES ARISING FROM THE RESPONSES**

**Experiential Learning**

Many of you recognize the value of experiential, real-life, hands-on learning. We know that most students in the middle years are at the concrete operational stage of development. This means that they are logical thinkers, but they often need hands-on experiences or concrete examples to help them develop their thinking and make sense of the world around them. We are always looking for ways to make the learning authentic and meaningful. We have offered a variety of experiential learning opportunities at Laird this year, from our Enviro-Fair, where students made and sold items made from recycled materials, to planning, seeding and caring for garden beds, to an art show and sale. We will continue to provide authentic, experiential learning opportunities whenever possible.

**Outdoor Learning**

The opportunity to experience placed-based learning and explore the wonderful outdoor environment we enjoy in our valley was something that was appreciated, with many parents asking for more outdoor learning opportunities. We understand the many benefits to both physical and mental wellness when taking children outside, and are always looking for ways to make the learning authentic and connected to the land. For example, all students at Laird have the opportunity to ski at Panorama, take swimming lessons, and skate on our lake. We also have snowshoes that allow classes to explore the great outdoors in winter. Many of our Physical Education classes, and morning check-ins, also take place outside. We often take students outside to reflect, sketch, and journal, with nature as their inspiration. Next year, as part of our School Success Plan, every class in the school will be involved in outdoor gardening.

**Food Programs**

School food programs play an important role in providing students with stigma-free access to healthy, local food. Nourishing students at school not only helps them achieve better learning outcomes but also furthers connection with their school, peers, and community. For some students, food at school is an important part of their daily nutritional needs. We are grateful for the recent announcement from the Ministry of Education and Child Care that schools will receive multi-year funding in support of food programs in schools. One of our goals for next year is to provide a robust breakfast program with a variety of food choices, during which staff and students can connect in an informal, relaxing environment each day prior to the school day commencing.

Some of you expressed concern about creating dependency on food programs. While we are providing food to students, we are also teaching them how to grow their own food, through our gardening program, and use it to prepare nutritious meals and snacks. Our Health curriculum also provides many opportunities to teach students about the importance of making good food choices throughout the day.

**Extra-Curricular Activities**

You let us know that you value the many clubs and extra-curricular activities we provide at school. Staff at Laird will continue to provide a wide variety of clubs such as choir, zentangle, chess, Lego, Pokemon, and whatever else students let us know they want to participate in. In addition, we will provide extra-curricular volleyball, basketball, badminton and track & field. We are happy to report that Fantastic Friday will return in the 2023-2024 school year, by popular demand!

**Student Self-Reflections**

You asked if student self-reflections would involve both reflecting on learning, and on personal and social interactions. The ability to reflect on one's learning and social interactions is an integral part of the [British Columbia Core Competencies.](https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies) The ability to self-reflect is an important aspect of metacognition, or  the processes used to plan, monitor, and assess one’s understanding and performance. Research shows that metacognition increases students’ abilities to transfer or adapt their learning to new contexts and tasks, and become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as learners, writers, readers, test-takers, and group members. As part of our School Success Plan, we will be teaching skills for both academic and social-emotional self-reflection, using tools such as *Leader in Me* and SeeSaw. You should see the results of these reflections, and the creation of your child's Learning and Leadership Portfolio, during next year's student-led conferences.

**Psycho-Educational Assessments**

Concern was expressed about the amount of wait time before a student receives a psycho-educational assessment. There is currently a backlog of requests for psycho-educational assessments, primarily due to difficulty hiring qualified staff. Our district has been working diligently to find a solution to this challenge.

In the meantime, we continue to support students, whether they have an official diagnosis or not. When a student exhibits difficulty in a particular area, our skilled Learning Services staff consult with classroom teachers and parents/guardians to develop a Learning Plan which includes strategies to support learning in the area of difficulty. This may include the use of assistive technologies, one-on-one and small group support, additional staff in the classroom, or the adaptation of learning expectations. If necessary, we will also create and submit an assessment referral package to ensure that the child is on the list for an assessment when available. Parents are encouraged to reach out to the school if you have concerns about your child's learning, and would like to know more about the process.

**Bullying at School**

Conflict with friends, and even mean behaviour, is a normal and expected part of growing up and learning to navigate social situations. Several of the Habits that we talk about in our *Leader in Me* program are specifically designed to help students learn to resolve inter-personal conflict, including "Seek first to understand, then to be understood," and "Think win-win." At this age, most students still need explicit teaching, and often coaching, around pro-social strategies to help them deal with conflict with others. Every year, the Principal visits each class to talk about the difference between conflict with friends, mean behaviour, and targeted bullying, and what to do about each.

Bullying, by definition, is **the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power**. We take bullying very seriously at school, and our approach to bullying is clearly outlined in our school Code of Conduct. All incidents of alleged bullying are carefully investigated. In all incidents of verified bullying, we work with the family to help the bully understand that this kind of behaviour is not acceptable. We also provide in-school support whenever possible, through our school counsellor, Youth Care Worker, and other professionals, to help the bully develop more pro-social behaviours. Support for victims is also available.

The school district works with [ERASE](https://erasereportit.gov.bc.ca/) to provide a confidential platform anyone in the community can use to report bullying behaviour.

**Community-based Learning**

We are always looking for opportunities to partner with our community to enhance learning for our students. For example, students have planned weekly visits and presentations to seniors at Columbia Valley Gardens and other organizations in Invermere. We have recently partnered with the Columbia Valley Foodbank and Groundswell Community Network to develop a hands-on gardening curriculum for our students. Many classes also work with local artist organizations to build skills in pottery and graphic design. It is not unusual for our classes to visit the Invermere Public Library to get library cards, learn about

programs available to them at the library, and to build skills such as coding. All of our students also participate in the Spring clean-up of our community. We are looking forward to working with our local Shuswap Salmon Chief in the upcoming school year to raise and release salmon fry into the Columbia River. Please reach out to us at any time if you have an idea of ways that we can increase our community involvement.

**Environmental Learning**

Learning to care for the environment is embedded in the British Columbia curriculum and in classroom practice. Teachers have joined with organizations such as Wildsight Environmental Education to deliver programs including Beyond Recycling and Trash to Treasure. We are beginning to install rain barrels on school property to model stewardship of our water resources. Our annual Enviro-Fair challenges students to consider their environmental footprint, and think of ways that they can reduce, reuse and recycle. Programs like gardening and the salmon re-introduction provide opportunities for students to learn about the environmental impacts of human activity, and issues such as food sustainability and organic gardening practices. We already recycle many waste products on our school, and are hoping to introduce composting to our gardening program in the near future.

**Appendix 1: Summary of feedback**

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