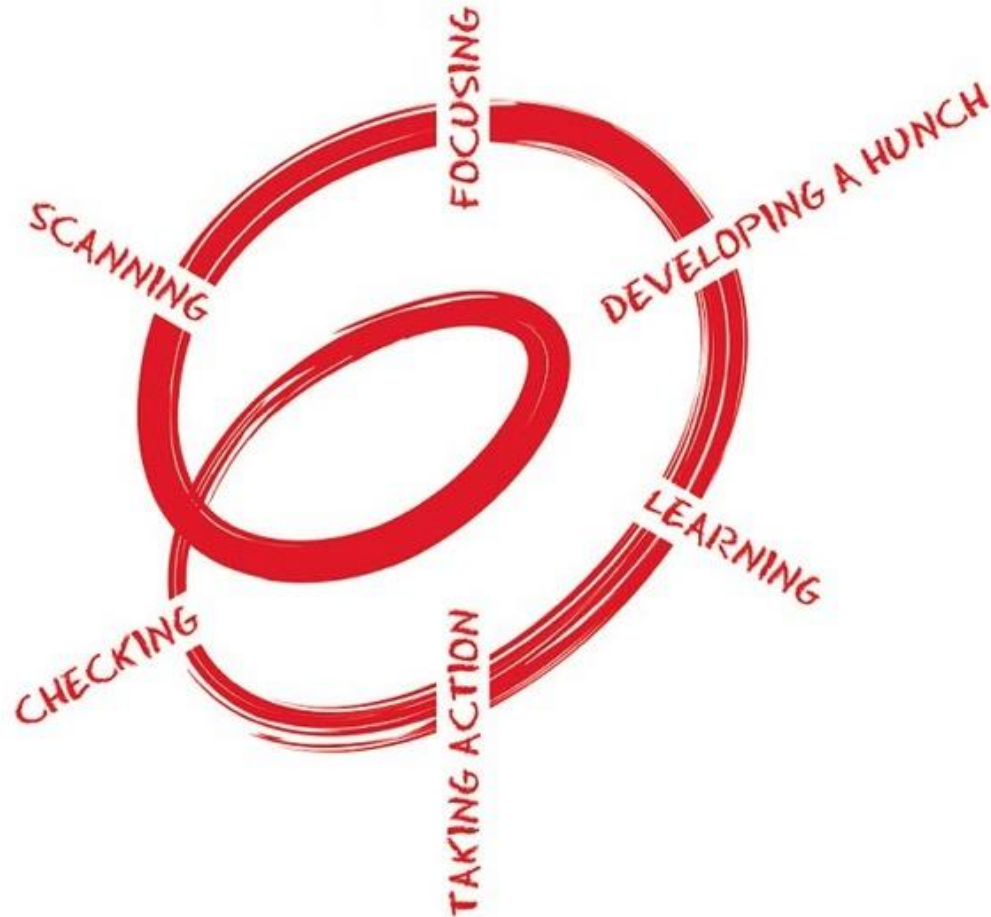




School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) Trout Creek Elementary's School Growth Plan



"Spirals of Inquiry for equity and quality"
Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser



Trout Creek Elementary School



“School District 67 (Okanagan Skaha) and Trout Creek wish to recognize the Okanagan (Syilx) People and our local nation, the Penticton Indian Band, on whose territories we live, learn, and do our work.”

School Context:

Trout Creek educates 175 students in a modern building located in a rural setting. The school grounds are large and are surrounded by quiet streets and backyard gardens. The catchment area for Trout Creek Elementary is approximately 22 square kilometers and consists of mixed agricultural and residential properties. The school enjoys a high level of support due to its key location in this close-knit community as well as from its strong educational programs. The school logo incorporates the key beliefs about our school:

- *we learn
- *we care
- *we co-operate



Inquiry Question: What do you think is driving your plan for student success?

Will an increased focus on outdoor experiences and education improve self-regulation and problem solving and develop a respect for nature, themselves and others?

Our goal(s):

To create conditions for social-emotional health and well-being within staff and students.

To provide students opportunities to problem-solve, take risks and be creative and curious through open-ended exploration and play.

To increase prosocial behavior and empathy amongst peers.

Scanning: (What do you know about your students – their successes and challenges - what's going on for them?)

Successes

Students at Trout Creek School:

- are caring, nurturing (take care of younger siblings) and respectful
- are well supported by our school community including parents, teachers and support staff
- seem to like to come to school and appear happy and engaged in school life
- generally, perform well academically
- have been exposed to metacognitive literacy strategies over time
- are generally comfortable and proficient in using technology to demonstrate their learning.

Challenges

- there has been a lot of work around social-emotional learning, developing a growth mindset and Core Competency development at Trout Creek school in previous years and we want to ensure that that work continues, while taking on new approaches and ideas
- Capturing student voice in an authentic way
- Providing opportunities for staff to collect and review evidence/data and offer input with a change in leadership and when working remotely during a pandemic

Focusing: (Identify the most important work you can do to improve the success of your students. On which key areas of learning will you focus?)

We will be focusing on the Core Competency of Social Responsibility as we provide opportunities for outdoor experiences and education.



Through this, we would see students who:

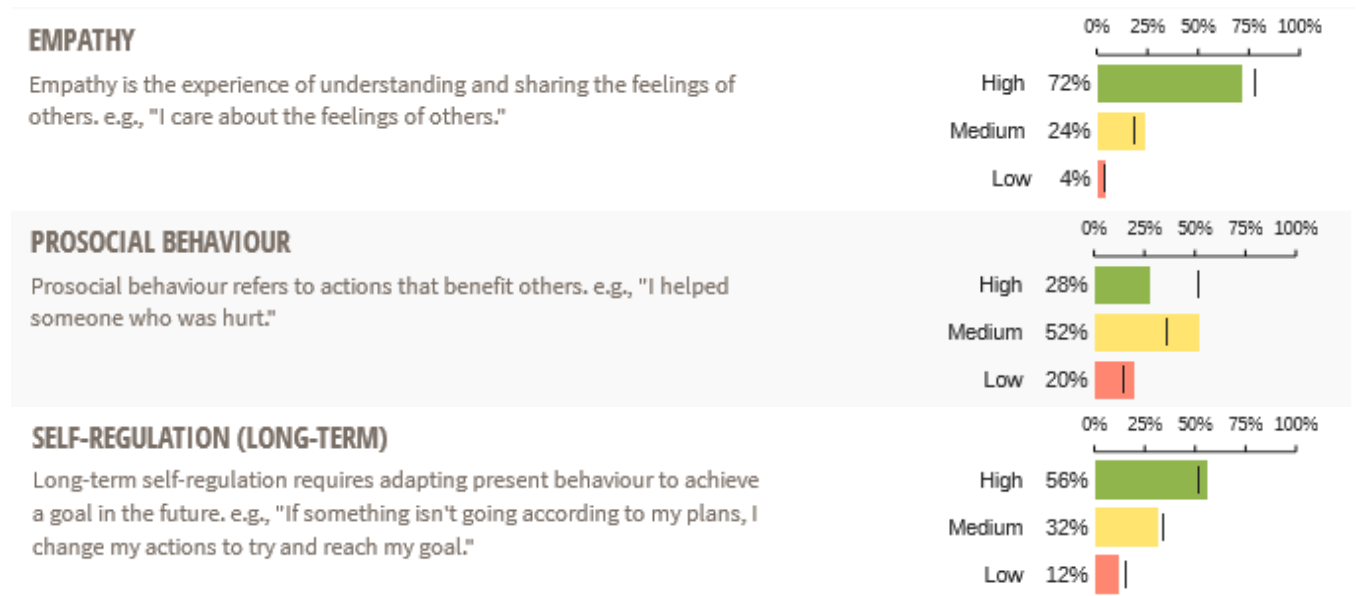
- Were aware of their surroundings and of others
- Built relationships and were able to work and play cooperatively
- Demonstrate respectful and inclusive behaviour with their peers
- Solve problems in peaceful ways and seek help when needed
- Demonstrate care and respect for the local environment
- Consider how their actions and the actions of others impact the natural environment

Evidence/Data to support:




Our inquiry question and focus is new to us this year and as such, we are still at the beginning stages of collecting data and evidence. Most of what we know is anecdotal and based upon informal interactions and discussions with students. We are using the Middle Years Development Instrument results as a baseline.

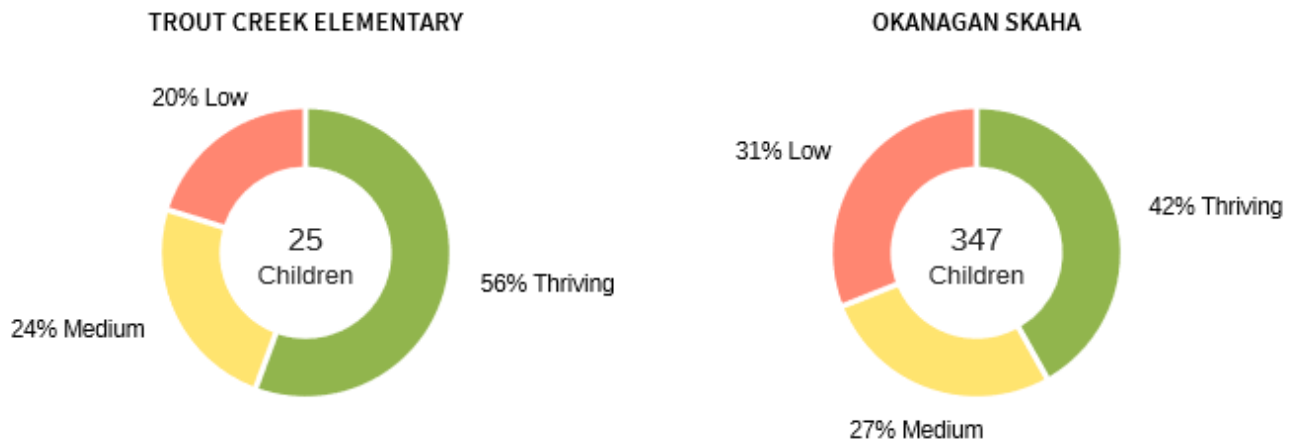
Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)

The MDI is a self-report questionnaire that asks children in Grade 4 about their thoughts, feelings and experiences in school and in the community. It helps us gain a deeper understanding of how children are doing at this stage in their lives. The information from the MDI that we are focusing on relate to our inquiry question.



Overall well-being relating to children’s physical health and social and emotional development can be captured in a holistic way and summarized, as you will see below:

	<p>High Well-Being (Thriving) Children who are reporting positive responses.</p>		<p>Medium to High Well-Being Children who are reporting neither positive nor</p>		<p>Low Well-Being Children who are reporting negative responses.</p>
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While there are many areas of strength for Trout Creek students, there are areas where we would hope to see positive gains. When we look at the areas in our MDI data that relate to our inquiry question, we see that in Empathy and Prosocial Behaviour, Trout Creek students fall below what is typically found in students within the district. Overall, however, we have more students who have high well-being – 56% of Trout Creek students are thriving, compared to 42% in the district.

Key Learnings:

While staff have spent a good deal of time and effort over the years helping our students become more metacognitive and reflective about themselves as learners. Our Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) data shows the effectiveness of our continued focus in this area. We recognize that we need to now focus more specifically on the Core Competency of Social Responsibility, and we believe that turning our attention to outdoor learning and play will help us support students in this area. Students need to develop their ability to think beyond themselves and nurture their relationships with peers.

Taking Action: (Describe the actions that you propose to take related to your inquiry. What will you do more of, less of, or do differently to improve outcomes for your students)?

Trout Creek has seen pockets of outdoor learning and play, and our goal would be to develop these opportunities more purposefully throughout all of our classrooms. We recognize that to help our learners grow in their Social Responsibility, we need to expand the outdoor experiences of all our students, beyond the Kindergarten and early primary classrooms.

Developing a Hunch: What is leading to this situation?

While students in Trout Creek have a strong sense of self and have worked very hard over the years to develop mindfulness, a growth mindset and a better understanding of the Core Competencies through the *Successful Learner Traits* framework, we need to narrow our focus on one Core Competency. We found, and our MDI data supports this, that our learners need to build their prosocial skills, increase their empathy, and focus on citizenship and problem-solving amongst their peers.

New Professional Learning: (Summarize new areas for professional learning and how you will go about designing new learning for yourself and your staff that will impact your learners.)

This is a new focus for Trout Creek Elementary staff, so we have spent time broadening our understanding of outdoor learning and the research behind it. One of our first steps was to build a library of professional resources for staff. We purchased books such as *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, *The Outdoor Classroom*, *Messy Maths*, and *Keeping a Nature Journal*. We created two Outdoor Learning Carts, based on suggestions from the field, that included water-resistant blankets, clipboard, wildlife and bird books, magnifying glasses, shovels and pails, binoculars and first aid kits. These carts were able to be borrowed by any staff member to help support outdoor learning adventures. In January, we had three staff attend a Risky Play workshop with Megan Zeni, an outdoor educator from School District No. 38. We also had teaching staff attend professional development workshops on Curriculum Linked Activities to Use Outdoors, which was shared amongst staff members. We recognize that there are different levels of comfort within our staff and that there will be early adopters and some who will go at their own pace. Being respectful of each other's personal learning journeys will be very important and staff needs to enter into this work in a way they feel comfortable with. While we all agree that the research supports outdoor learning experiences, contexts vary from classroom to classroom.

Taking Action: What will you do differently?

One of the things we have done is to purposefully carve out time to go outside and learn in an unstructured manner. We had two outdoor classroom days, one in November and one in March, where staff and students walked to Sun-Oka Provincial Park for part of the day. Teachers followed an emergent curriculum and followed the students' lead, which was a shift in practice for many of them. While we are in the early stages of working with this focus, we are excited to continue building upon these experiences next school year.



Check: Have we made enough of a difference? How do we know?

Each month at our staff meetings, we reflect how we, as a school community, are progressing and discuss how we can continue to help our student grow within this area. Equally important is our student's voice in how they are feeling about engaging in reflective and self-assessment practices. This will need to be a continued area of focus, as we weren't able to move forward with our student reflections as we had hoped.

Communication Strategies: (How will you communicate your inquiry and your results to the school community?)

We have shared with our parent community via our school newsletter and our PAC the shift in focus for Trout Creek Elementary, as we felt it was important to work with them and have their support.

Parental/Community Involvement: (How will you work together as a school community to do this work?)

We wanted to share with families a website and tool that was designed to help parents and caregivers gain the confidence to allow their kids to engage in more outdoor play. The website, www.outsideplay.ca, helps families understand the importance of risky play and manage the fear that can lead to setting too many limits. The tool was designed by the University of British Columbia, BC Children's Hospital and BC Injury and Research Prevention Unit. We encouraged families to check it out, as it ties into the work we are doing as a school at Trout Creek.



As a way of sharing what we were doing with our community, we invited a reporter from the local newspaper, the Summerland Review, to join us for our Outdoor Classroom day in March. We were fortunate to have the reporter attend and we were included in the next publication of the newspaper.



In addition, we have been working with our Trout Creek PAC to design an outdoor learning space. While we are still in the planning stages, work has continued during the suspension of in-class learning and we are excited about how we can further support outdoor experiences for Trout Creek students and staff.

Connection to the District Goals: (How does this plan connect to our district goals?)

Our school plan closely aligns with School District No. 67's plan to support student success. Our school inquiry around outdoor learning and its impact on self-regulation and problem-

solving ties into our district's goals around inclusionary practices, engagement of learners, choice and flexibility and, of course, the First People's Principles of Learning.

Connection to the 7 Principles of Learning:

(How do each of these principles align with your plan?)

- 1. Learners at the centre:** Students are the core participants and we recognize their active engagement and development of themselves as learners is pivotal.
- 2. Social nature of learning:** Students are working alongside one another to help each other, developing their problem-solving skills and self-regulation skills.
- 3. Emotions are integral to learning:** Creating social-emotional conditions which allow students to feel safe, secure and recognized is an important part of our outdoor learning experiences, especially in relation to prosocial behavior.
- 4. Recognizing individual differences:** Outdoor learning experiences level the playing field and are inclusive of all students. Diversity and unique ideas flourish in a culture that is supportive and open.
- 5. Stretching all students:** Both critical and creative thinking play an important role in these experiences and allows each child to work to their own potential and beyond.
- 6. Assessment for learning:** As students and staff work alongside each other with an emergent curriculum, we recognize the importance of regular feedback so students can reflect on where they are at and plan next steps for success.
- 7. Building horizontal connections:** Our outdoor classroom days have allowed us to have students from different grade levels and classrooms working alongside one another in a meaningful way. They are learning from peers and transferring knowledge they've gained from the classroom to a different place and space – the outdoors.