



West Sechelt Elementary

# GROWTH PLAN



Principal – Olwen Cowan – 2024/2025

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# West Sechelt Elementary School Growth Plan

**School Year: 2024/2025**

## School Demographics

- Total student enrollment:
  - 281
- Grade levels served:
  - Kindergarten to grade 7
- Demographic makeup:
  - A mix of students from a variety of backgrounds in terms of socioeconomic status. We have very few English Language Learners (4), and serve 47 students who have Indigenous Ancestry. We have over 66 students who have Individual Education Plans.
- Staff composition and expertise:
  - We have 12 Classroom Teachers, 12 EAs, 2 Early Childhood Educators, a full-time Inclusion Support Teacher, a fulltime (.8) Literacy Teacher, a part-time (.4) Learning Assistance Teacher, a part-time (.2) Inclusion Support Teacher, a .8 Teacher Librarian, a .6 Music/Band Teacher, a .8 District Counsellor, and a fulltime Principal.
  - We have a full time Administrative Assistant, a 2 day a week Library Assistant, a 1 day a week Office Clerk, and 2 Custodians.
  - Many teaching folks on our staff have M.Eds and graduate diplomas in a variety of relevant areas: leadership; special education; outdoor education; curriculum & instruction.
  - All staff bring their personal gifts and talents to our school.

## Community Context

- Our school is proudly on the lands of the shíshálh Nation.
- We have great partnerships with local grocers and other businesses.
- We are active members of our community and continue to build relationships with the District of Sechelt, the Sunshine Coast Regional District, our community school coordinator, local swimming pool and skating rink, and the Sechelt Library.
- West Sechelt Elementary is lucky to have access to our own school garden on Mason Road. Use of this plot of land that was donated by a generous



neighbour, John Bell. Many classes visit the farm to learn about gardening and growing their own food. To date, students have planted and enjoyed: apples, strawberries, kale, carrots, snap peas, radishes, lettuce, herbs, potatoes, spinach, broccoli, squash, and zucchini. We have also donated some of that bounty to our local food bank! This is a wonderful way for students to learn about where their food comes from, how to grow for and – most importantly – how to share it.

- We have a very supportive and collaborative PAC who has been focused on fundraising. Their fundraising efforts allow our students to experience learning outside of the school walls.

## Trends

- We have noticed recent trends upwards in terms of population.
- We have been excited to welcome new Canadians/Coasters to the school community.
- A trend towards chronic tardiness and absenteeism has been observed by all grade levels and this is something quite new to our school.
- Core competencies are focused on by teachers – we use the language daily in conversations and are supported by visuals. Through this work we have noticed that the shared language is also increasing with our parent partners.
- We are bursting with technology for all learners. Of note is our partnership with Set-BC and Provincial Inclusion Outreach team – seven of our learners are using AAC devices (iPads) to communicate their needs.

## Strengths

### Staff

- Highly qualified, dedicated educators passionate about teaching.
- Actively engage in professional development to stay current with innovative teaching strategies.
  - This may look like: courses through M.Ed and diploma programs, offerings from the district lunch and learns, pro-d that is developed at the school site by the pro-d committee, local and provincial union pro-d offerings, self-directed learning.
- Foster strong collaboration to enhance student learning outcomes and development of the core competencies.
- Create engaging, inclusive classroom environments.
- Committed to students' growth and well-being beyond academics.
- Supportive administrative team ensuring smooth school operations.
- Friendly, approachable office staff assisting students and parents.



- Well-trained support staff contributing to student success.
- Effective maintenance teams providing a safe, clean environment.
- Dedicated to fostering a positive and welcoming school atmosphere.

## **Students**

- Most are motivated, enthusiastic learners.
- Strong school spirit and active participation in extracurricular activities.
- Respectful, inclusive student culture that promotes diversity and belonging.
- Leadership opportunities that empower students to take initiative and contribute.

## **Parents**

- Highly engaged in school activities.
- Active Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) supporting school initiatives.
- Open, effective communication between parents and school staff.

## **Stretches (Areas for Growth)**

### **Staff**

- Differentiated Instruction: Ensuring all students, including those with diverse learning needs, receive personalized support.
- Workload Balance: Managing increasing responsibilities while maintaining well-being and preventing burnout.
- Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Encouraging cross-subject integration to foster critical thinking and real-world connections.
- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): Further embedding SEL strategies to support student mental health and resilience.

### **Students**

- Self-Regulation and Independence: Helping students develop emotional regulation, self-motivation, and independence.
- Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Encouraging deeper analysis, inquiry-based learning, and adaptability in problem-solving.
- Digital Citizenship: Teaching responsible technology use, online safety, and media literacy.
- Inclusivity and Restorative work: Strengthening peer relationships by promoting respectful communication and conflict management.
- Engagement and Participation: Encouraging all students to be actively involved in learning and school activities. To be on time. To be here.

### **Parents**

- Home-School Partnership: Strengthening collaboration between parents and educators to support student learning at home.
- Understanding Curriculum and Assessment: Providing parents with resources to better understand modern teaching approaches and evaluation methods.



- Technology and Digital Literacy: Enhancing parent knowledge of screen time and the negative impact it can have on children’s well-being.
- Community Engagement: Encouraging more parents to take on leadership roles within school initiatives. We have a wonderful, supportive PAC, but it is a small core group of parents who take on the load of the work.
- Equity and Inclusion Awareness: Promoting deeper conversations about diversity and equity to foster a more inclusive school community.

From the above acknowledgement of items, we know what we need to work on and grow, we concluded that our school needs to focus on inclusion (of all learners) and nature-based learning as way to foster the development of the core competencies.

### Reflections on Past Initiatives

- Since arriving at the school in 2022, it was brought to my attention by staff and the parent community that our school needed to work on behaviour and community building. The covid-19 pandemic resulted in a somewhat disconnected community. In October of 2022, we struck a behaviour committee of 12 staff members and we met monthly to review changes needed, successes, and training needed. We used the compassionate system tools (mainly the creative tension) to vision a future. We trained the full staff in restorative practices from the Restitution Institute who are based in Winnipeg. We reviewed our Code of Conduct and changed it to be child friendly. We worked with all students on restorative questions for when things go wrong and how to repair the harm. All staff were given lanyards with the leading questions for restorative problem-solving (we now see our posters in other schools, and are proud of that).
- We worked tirelessly on changing the outlook of “why we come to school” and “who we are and who we want to be”. We are very grateful that much of our work was successful in this regard.
- The major thing we noticed was that when students feel seen they were encouraged to try harder in school and to get along with one another.
- Our school has a very high number of complex learners. Because of this, it was very important that our students recognize that a diverse world is one where all people can be successful and belong.
- Now are staff are committed to focusing on all learners through the strands of inclusion and nature-based learning.



## Vision for Growth

A thriving and inclusive learning community.

## Mission

A respectful community that fosters belonging and balanced growth.

## Core Values

Respect, responsible, safe, and kind

## Equity Considerations

How are you supporting and planning for the following priority learners?

- Indigenous students – we work with our district team members and families to ensure students are connected and thriving.
- Students with disabilities or diverse abilities – we work with our district team, we are working with a very robust EA team and we are supporting our diverse students via outside agencies (Provincial outreach, popard, set-bc).
  - Principal is interviewing families and students to best see how we can meet the needs of students.
- Children and Youth in Care – we liaison with provincial social workers and foster placement guardians.
- Nature based learning: spending time in nature benefits priority learners, and all members, of a learning community by promoting self-regulation and fostering connections with themselves, others, and the natural world.
- Focusing on the strand of inclusion allows for an entry point for all staff members to feel like the work belongs to all of us not just the inclusion support team. We are committed to building the capacity of all stakeholders with this strand.

## Strategic Goals and Objectives

- Personal and Social: I can initiate positive, sustainable change for others and the environment (nature-based learning)
- Communication: I communicate with intentional impact, in well-constructed forms that are effective in terms of my audience and in relation to my purpose (inclusion)



## Selected Strands for Core Competency Development

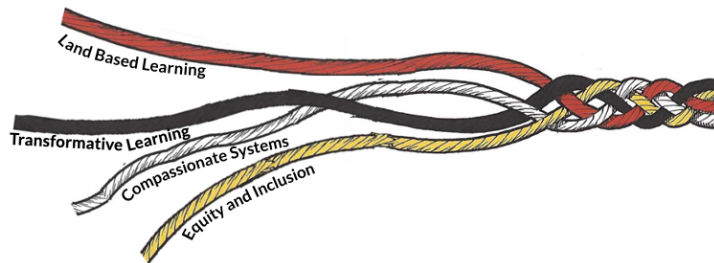


**ENSOULING OUR SCHOOLS**

"In This We Journey Together"

### Strands:

- Authentic Relationships
- Personalized Learning
- Nature-Based Learning
- Experiential Hands-On Learning
- Inclusion
- Authentic, Real-World Learning
- First Peoples Principles of Learning
- Transformative Assessment
- Flexible Learning Environments



***If we are attuned educators who build connections with joy, passion, and respect, we can design an irresistible future for all learners through weaving the following strand...***

1. Nature based learning

***...Then we believe students will authentically connect to and develop their core competencies; thus, nurturing their personal deep engagement, joy, and learning over time.***

1. **Core Competency Goal: social responsibility**
2. **Evidence Analysis and Interpretation: See appendix A for Data and Evidence**

#### ○ Direct Evidence:

- Data indicates that some students do not feel safe or welcome in their school community, highlighting a critical need for inclusive and supportive environments. To address this, integrating nature-based learning can serve as a powerful strategy, fostering belonging and connection. Research shows that outdoor, experiential education promotes well-being, reduces stress, and strengthens relationships among students and staff. By incorporating Indigenous perspectives, collaborative learning, and time spent in nature, land-based learning helps create a sense of shared responsibility and respect. We hope this approach will build a stronger, more inclusive community where all students feel valued, seen, and supported in their learning journeys.

#### ○ Indirect Evidence:

- Through discussions with students, parents, and staff, a common concern has emerged: the increasing reliance on technology is





impacting students' ability to connect with one another, their learning, and their environment. Many have expressed a need for more meaningful, hands-on experiences that foster engagement, well-being, and social responsibility. We have recognized the importance of incorporating nature-based learning as a way to help students disconnect from screens and reconnect with the natural world. Learning through direct experiences on the land, students develop problem-solving skills, strengthen relationships, and gain a deeper sense of responsibility for their communities and the environment. This shift aligns with the shared goal of nurturing more balanced, mindful, and socially aware learners.

### **3. Rationale**

- This goal was chosen by all staff members in September of 2024. The need to learn on and from the land was resounding in the conversations we have had about students' dependence on technology as well increase students longing to feel safe at school.
- Nature-based learning fosters students' social responsibility by deepening their connection to the environment, community, and cultural heritage.
- Through hands-on experiences in nature, students develop a sense of stewardship, recognizing their role in caring for the land and respecting Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.
- This approach nurtures Personal and Social Awareness by encouraging ethical decision-making and sustainable practices.
- By engaging with the land, students cultivate empathy, accountability, and a commitment to creating positive change within their communities.

### **4. Implementation Plan**

- Actions:
  - Provide training on land-based learning principles, Indigenous perspectives, and outdoor education strategies.
  - Identify opportunities to incorporate land-based learning into core subjects.
  - Develop lesson prompts that align with the social responsibility competency that could be done on the land.
  - Host info sessions for families to share the benefits of land-based learning.
  - Gather feedback and address concerns from staff, students, and families.
  - Encourage nature-based reflection and journaling.
  - Continue to build our connections with local groups and farmers.
- Timeline:



- In the fall - initial discussions with staff, parents, and students.
- In the winter - planning for spring activities with staff and integrating units across subjects that are nature-based.
- In the spring - expand implementation using April and May pro-d days as times to collaborate with one another and other school sites.
- Ongoing - continuous assessment, reflection and adaptation to improve our effectiveness.
- Responsible Parties: All staff but especially the learning guides and principal.

## **5. Resources Required**

- We need more training and time for all staff to learn from those on staff who have education in nature-based learning.
- Our school will focus on building relationships with local experts and farmers to encourage partnerships.

## **6. Success Indicators – consider staff, students and families**

- Observations: increased enthusiasm and participation in outdoor learning activities; positive shifts in student mood, energy levels, and focus; reduction in stress or anxiety-related behaviors.
- Measures: student learning survey results (appendix a) show an increase in that students feel belonging and safety at school; attendance and participation rates in outdoor lessons compared to traditional classroom settings; student surveys on their perceived balance between technology and nature; performance on inquiry-based projects and presentations related to nature-based learning.
- Methods for assessing the development of the core competencies as a result of the strand: Students demonstrating care and respect for the environment increased collaboration, teamwork, and peer support during outdoor learning; engagement in discussions about environmental stewardship and Indigenous perspectives; teacher and peer assessments of students' contributions to nature-based projects; documentation of student-led initiatives.



## 7. Reflection and Evaluation of the Plan: Seasonal Round

### Schedule for Reviewing Progress

- Fall Review: Assess initial engagement from 24/25 school year, student participation, and early impacts on well-being and social responsibility.
- Winter Review: Gather feedback from students, teachers, and families on land-based lessons (post and pre lessons).
- Spring Review: Evaluate progress in environmental stewardship, collaboration, students' self-reflections, and outdoor learning habits.
- Year-End Reflection (June): Conduct a full review of challenges and successes, preparing for the next school year.

### Collection and Analysis of Evidence

The school will collect a variety of data through:

- Student reflections and surveys – Self-assessments on their learning, connection to nature, and social responsibility. (street data, student learning survey, and MDI).
- Teacher Observations – Tracking student engagement, teamwork, and participation in nature-based activities.
- Parent Feedback – Surveys and conversations to assess student well-being and learning impact – ie., what are the learners reporting at home?
- Academic Work Samples – Project-based learning artifacts, inquiry-based assignments, and presentations.
- Spaces documentation – Visual evidence of student engagement in outdoor learning.

### Process for Making Adjustments

- Data Review Meetings: Staff will analyze collected data at seasonal checkpoints.
- Collaborative Reflection: Teachers, students, and families will provide input on what is working and what needs adjustment.
- Adjustments & Enhancements: Modify lesson plans based on student feedback; adjust outdoor learning schedules to maximize participation; strengthen community partnerships and Indigenous



engagement; address any challenges, such as accessibility or weather-related concerns.

Next Steps Planning: Use findings from the year-end review to refine and expand the program for the following year. This is a strand that the staff want to see flourishing in 5 years. We have a staff who are committed to West Sechelt.

***If we are attuned educators who build connections with joy, passion, and respect, we can design an irresistible future for all learners through weaving the following strand...***

## 2. Inclusion

***...Then we believe students will authentically connect to and develop their core competencies; thus, nurturing their personal deep engagement, joy, and learning over time.***

### **1.Core Competency Goal: communication (focusing on intent and purpose)**

### **2.Evidence Analysis and Interpretation: See appendix A for Data and Evidence**

- Direct Evidence: Analysis of data reveals two key areas for growth 1) inclusion of students with complex, diverse needs 2) Literacy skill development across all students.
  - Observations and feedback indicate that students with diverse learning needs require more intentional planning to participate meaningfully in learning activities.
  - Some students report feeling disconnected from group tasks, indicating a need for differentiated instruction and multimodal learning opportunities.
  - Assessment results indicate that students across various grade levels struggle with core literacy skills, including reading comprehension, written expression, and critical thinking.
  - School-wide literacy assessments indicate gaps in reading comprehension, written expression, and oral communication across all grade levels.
- Indirect Evidence:
  - Street data shows that hands-on, experiential learning—such as land-based activities—encourages participation from a wider range



of learners, suggesting that expanding these approaches could foster greater inclusion.

- Evidence suggests that integrating literacy into experiential, real-world contexts can show progress. Examples: nature journaling, storytelling, and Indigenous oral traditions.
- Student and parent feedback highlights a need for more inclusive strategies, such as differentiated instruction, assistive technologies, and flexible groupings.

### 3. Rationale

- Our school is committed to fostering an inclusive learning environment where all students, including those with diverse needs, can meaningfully engage in learning. Grounded in the Core Competency of Communication, we will focus on creating opportunities for students to express their ideas, collaborate with peers, and engage in meaningful dialogue. By integrating multimodal communication strategies, such as oral storytelling, nature-based journaling, and collaborative group discussions, we aim to improve literacy skills while ensuring all students can participate authentically. Through differentiated instruction, using the science of reading approach in primary, assistive technology, and nature-based learning, we aim to create an environment where every student feels heard, valued, and empowered in their learning journey. Our new school vision tries to capture this rationale in “a thriving and inclusive learning environment”.

### 4. Implementation Plan

- Actions for enhancing inclusive practices
  - continue to use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to ensure flexible, accessible instruction.
  - integrate alternative communication methods (e.g., visuals, assistive tech, speech-to-text).
  - design collaborative, hands-on activities that support diverse learning styles.
- Actions for strengthening literacy for all students:
  - embed literacy in land-based and real-world learning experiences to increase engagement.
  - foster oral communication skills through storytelling and peer discussions.
  - A focus on science of reading in the primary grades.



- Use multisensory literacy strategies, such as nature journaling, observation-based writing, and group reading in outdoor settings.
- Timeline:
    - In the fall: initial discussions with staff, parents, and students. The principal has been interviewing parents of children with complex needs to gather more information from what they need for their children to thrive and reach their individual potentials.
    - In the winter: ongoing literacy assessment with the literacy teacher, learning support teacher, and classroom teachers.
    - In the spring: expand implementation using April and May pro-d days as times to collaborate with one another and other school sites; at the April (2025) pro-d parents who were interviewed will be participating in a kiva panel; in May teachers will gather and assess students' writing of "My Special Place" and staff will develop a West Sechelt framework for assessment of writing (literacy).
    - In June: conduct student, parent, and staff surveys/interviews, review literacy progress, and gather street data feedback on inclusion efforts. Plan the next steps for the 2025/2026 school year.
    - Ongoing, continuous assessment, reflection and adaptation to improve our effectiveness.
  - Responsible Parties: All individuals in our school community are responsible for inclusion.

## 5. Resources Required

- Training for staff on Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, and inclusive practices.
- Collaboration with literacy specialists and inclusion support teachers (both in the school and district)
- Assistive technology training for all staff.
- Capacity building in order for all to value different ways of communicating.



## **6. Success Indicators – consider staff, students and families**

- Student engagement: increased participation of students with diverse needs in classroom activities; observations of collaborative learning, where all students contribute meaningfully.
- Feedback from stakeholders (staff, students, and families): student voice: surveys, reflections, and self-assessments on their sense of belonging and engagement; teacher observations - documentation of differentiated instructional strategies and their impact; parent feedback - reports on students' engagement, confidence, and willingness to communicate at home.
- Academic progress: improved literacy outcomes in reading, writing, and oral communication; student self-assessment and reflections of the core competency.

## **7. Reflection and Evaluation of the Plan: Seasonal Round**

### **Schedule for reviewing progress**

- Fall: Baseline data collection, goal-setting, and initial implementation.
- Winter: Mid-year reflection, review of student engagement and literacy development, and adjustments to instructional strategies
- Spring: Analysis of growth, student self-assessments, and stakeholder feedback.
- End of Year (June): Final evaluation, staff reflection, and planning for the next school year.

### **Collection and Analysis of Evidence**

The school will use a variety of data through:

- Student Engagement & Learning Evidence
  - Observations of student participation in activities.
  - Literacy assessments tracking growth in reading, writing, and oral communication.
  - Student self-assessments and reflections on their communication competency.
- Stakeholder Feedback
  - Teacher reflections on differentiated instructional strategies.
  - Parent surveys on student progress and engagement.



- Peer and group feedback on collaboration and communication.
  - Performance-Based Assessments
    - Rubrics assessing oral storytelling, written reflections, and group discussions.
    - Samples of student work, such as journals, collaborative projects, and presentations.
    - Assessment of reading in primary and intermediate.
    - Also implementing a new focus on a school wide write.
- 

## Engagement and Communication Plan

We will share our Growth Plan with the community through email, the school website, and PAC meetings. Staff meetings will have opportunities to learn about progress and give feedback. Students will also showcase their learning through presentations and classroom projects. Feedback will be collected through surveys and discussions to make sure the plan meets everyone's needs.

## Professional Learning

Professional learning activities will provide staff with the time, resources, and collaborative opportunities needed to focus on inclusion and nature-based learning. Staff meetings have shifted to be more focused on collaboration, with dedicated time for grade-level and cross-curricular teams to discuss challenges, successes, and next steps. Hands-on training sessions, classroom observations will ensure that educators feel confident in adapting their teaching approaches to meet the diverse needs of students. This ongoing professional learning will create a collaborative, reflective, and responsive teaching environment that supports the school's Growth Plan.

Next steps to work on: Collaboration time between staff members to be built into the schedule, allowing staff to co-plan lessons, share strategies, and reflect on student progress.

## Budget Considerations

Anticipated expenses include classroom materials for inclusive and nature-based learning, such as outdoor education supplies, adaptive tools, and culturally responsive texts.

We will set aside funds for professional learning opportunities, including guest speakers, workshops, and collaboration time for teachers. Professional development costs will





support training sessions with outdoor ed. specialists, specialists in literacy, and experts in inclusive teaching.

We also hope to advocate and partner with community groups to have better equipped places for nature-based learning. One example is the lack of washrooms at the beach and the removal of the portable washroom at a local park.

Finally, assessment tools such as literacy benchmarks that are more aligned with the science of reading may need to be purchased.

## Conclusion

West Sechelt Elementary is committed to fostering the growth of each student through inclusive and nature-based learning, creating a supportive environment where all learners feel valued and connected. By prioritizing the social responsibility and communication core competencies, we hope to empower students to engage meaningfully with their peers, community, and the natural world. Through collaboration, reflection, and continuous learning, we strive to provide experiences that nurture curiosity, resilience, and a deep sense of belonging. Our dedication ensures that every student has the opportunity to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. West Sechelt is a thriving and inclusive learning community.

## Appendix A.

### Nature-Based Learning

A narrative based on conversations:

West Sechelt Elementary has chosen nature-based learning as a key strand in our Growth Plan because we recognize the need to reconnect students with the world beyond screens, foster school readiness, and build social responsibility. As early as kindergarten, staff have observed a growing dependence on technology, with many young learners arriving at school without the foundational social and self-regulation skills needed to thrive in a classroom setting. This increasing reliance on digital devices has contributed to reduced attention spans, difficulties with problem-solving, and challenges in forming meaningful connections.

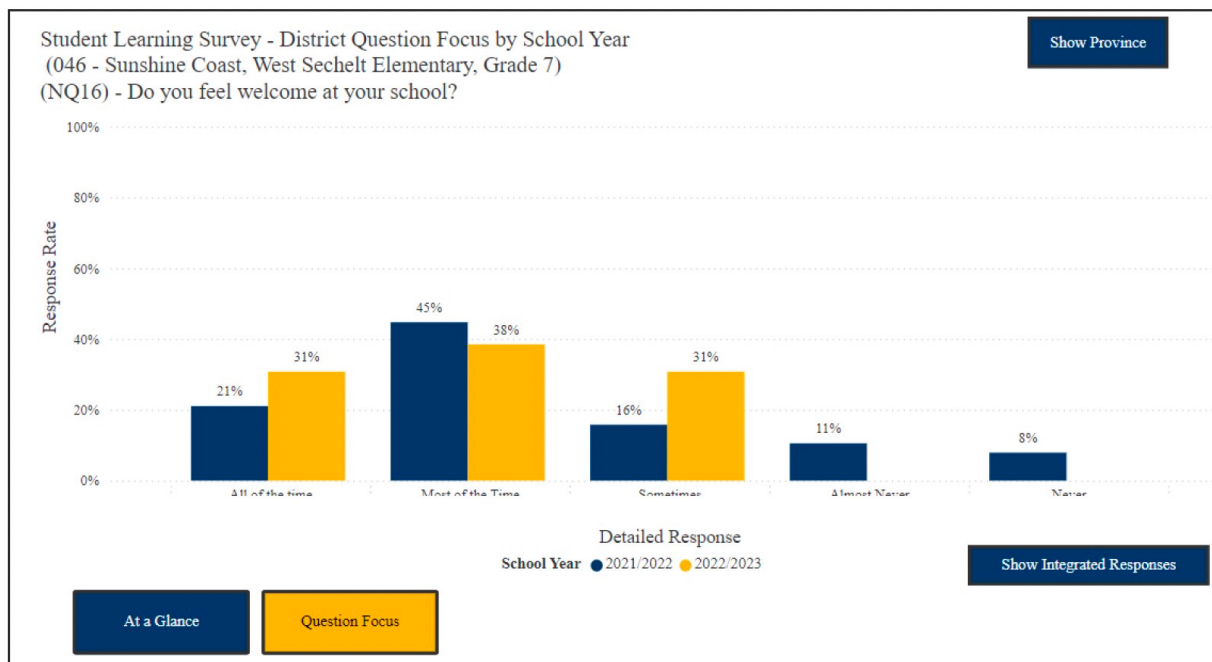
Our older students are at a critical stage in developing their sense of social responsibility - both within the school and in the broader community. Teachers have noticed a need for stronger interpersonal skills, teamwork, resilience and accountability, which can be cultivated through experiences that emphasize cooperation, resilience, and environmental stewardship. Learning in nature provides the perfect setting for



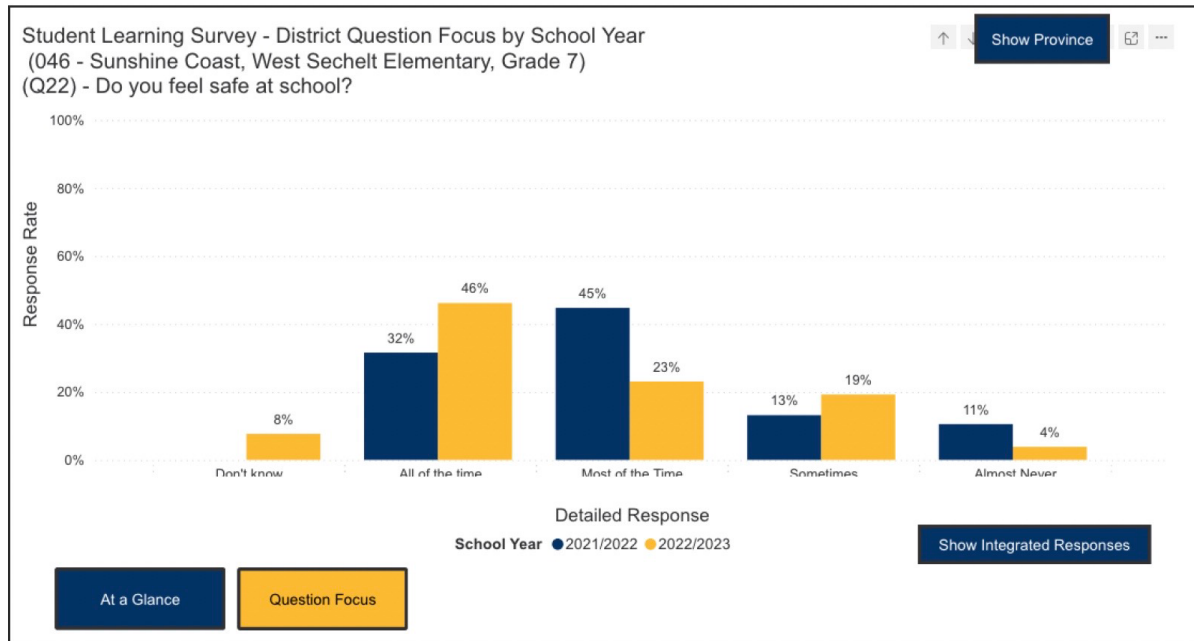
students to develop these competencies, offering hands-on experiences that promote curiosity, well-being, and a deeper connection to the land.

By integrating nature-based learning into our school culture, we aim to create opportunities for students to develop independence, practice self-regulation, and engage with their peers in meaningful ways. Through outdoor exploration and experiential learning, we will empower students to become active, engaged learners who are better prepared for school, more connected to their surroundings, and more responsible members of their community.

From the student learning survey:



## Grade 7 – Resident Students



### INCLUSION artifacts

#### A narrative:

At West Sechelt Elementary, inclusion is more than a goal—it is a commitment to ensuring that every student feels valued, supported, and able to thrive. Our school community is made up of a diverse group of learners, many of whom require additional support to fully participate in their schooling. We have 66 students with IEPs, and 23 of those students receive targeted funding. We have the largest group of Education Assistants on the coast who work with our learners. Recognizing this complexity, our staff has shown a strong willingness to learn, adapt, and implement new strategies that create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Inspired by Shane Shafir’s work, our principal has interviewed parents and has heard a clear and consistent message: families want their children to be seen, included, and actively engaged in meaningful learning experiences. Parents have shared stories of their children struggling to find a sense of belonging in the school community, and they have expressed a deep desire for more inclusive practices. These families have also shared the great work we are doing and are grateful for the partnership we have. These voices have been a driving force behind our commitment to ensuring that all students—regardless of their abilities or challenges—are welcomed, understood, and given the tools to succeed.

By making inclusion a core strand of our Growth Plan, West Sechelt Elementary is taking intentional steps to build a school culture where every child has the opportunity to learn alongside their peers in a way that meets their unique needs. Our professional



learning, collaboration time, and instructional strategies will be guided by this goal, ensuring that students, staff, and families work together to create an environment where inclusion is not just an idea, but a daily reality.

