



# Framework for Enhancing Student Learning Report 2022-23

Submitted to the Board of Education September 25, 2023



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# ABOUT US

Nechako Lakes School District gratefully acknowledges that we are situated on the traditional territories of fourteen [First Nations](#) representing the Dakelh, Nedut'en and Wet'suwet'en peoples. The school district encompasses five municipalities: the Districts of Fort St. James and Vanderhoof and the Villages of Fraser Lake, Burns Lake, and Granisle. The District is committed to continuous improvement and success of each learner through implementation of evidence-informed practices that enhance student learning, inclusivity, and equity of outcomes.

Our region has been traditionally reliant on forestry, mining, and agriculture but has seen an emerging tourism sector over the last decade. This large geographic region has a population of just under 40,000 people; and, in the 2022-23 school year the district served 3532 students, with almost 40% of learners being Indigenous.

Each of our communities has experienced declining enrolment; however, enrolment has been relatively stable across the region over the last two years. We operate a total of 15 standard schools in our communities. In addition to the community schools, SD91 also operates [EBUS Academy](#), a non-standard, Provincial Online Learning School (POLS) that enrolls several thousand full and part-time students. EBUS is one of the most established and largest online schools in British Columbia serving families and students across the province.

## Excellence | Innovation | Community

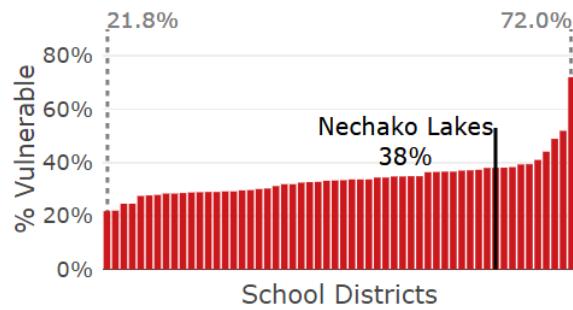
We currently have five-year Local Education Agreements (LEA) with 8 of the 14 Indigenous communities we serve. All of these agreements will require re-negotiation this year – we look forward to this process and hope to expand the number of LEAs to 10 this year. Some of the smaller nations are being supported by other members of the Indigenous Education Council and First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) in getting to a completed LEA.

Our school district has been involved in the [Ministry of Education's Equity Scan](#) which has contributed significantly to our strategic goals and objectives. We have completed one cycle of the [Equity Scan](#) and will re-scan in the 2023-24 school year.

Our most recent [Early Development Index \(EDI\)](#) indicates that 38% of kindergarten students are 'vulnerable' on one or more scales of the EDI, a trend that has increased over the last 5 years. *Figure 1* shows the results of SD91's Wave 8 EDI data within the provincial context.

Teachers and district staff are highly engaged in the [Networks of Inquiry and Indigenous Education](#) (NOIIIE), and we are seen as leaders in the province within this work.

Our active [Career and Trades Program](#) helps students to remain focused on what they see for themselves in the future.



*Figure 1*

# OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

We are entering year 4 of the Board's [Strategic Plan](#), and it is accompanied annually by the [Strategic Workplan Objectives](#) which describes the evidence-informed strategies guiding the work during the course of the plan.

The plan articulates four primary goals. To:

- Honour Diversity
- Engage our Workforce
- Create Student Success
- Enhance Connections

Monthly reporting to the Board is centered around these four strategic goals, and these reports are widely shared with our partners, including municipalities, Indigenous communities, and families. A public mid-year update, as well as a [Strategic Plan Year-End Update](#) to the Board also occurs. Our student evidence of achievement and well-being continue to be shared broadly with staff, rightsholders, the public, and partners.



The current Strategic Plan is an evolution from the district's first Strategic Plan that took us from 2018 to 2020. The development of our plan was done in conjunction with representatives from all our stakeholders and was facilitated by Dr. Dustin Louie, the Director of UBC's Indigenous Teacher Education Program (NITEP). Our trustees spent much of 2019/2020 presenting the plan to external

groups and the majority of our employees and then used feedback from those presentations to refine the plan.

## Honouring People, Land and History

The district utilizes a variety of school, district, and ministry assessment information to inform our focus on continuous improvement annually. Schools are expected to use their student evidence to create annual School Growth Plans that align with the district's strategic focus, as well as the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. We have also actively sought out student input and feedback related to Intellectual Development and Human & Social Development. As expected, these conversations with students have created rich learning opportunities for the district.

It should be noted that within our Strategic Plan there is a focus and financial commitment to recruiting and retaining qualified teachers for the district. A long-term and critical teacher shortage in Northern BC has impacted the achievement of learners as well as school environments. This past year saw expanded recruitment efforts to continue to navigate this issue which is an undeniable matter of equity for learners in the district. The 2022-23 school year saw over 20 classroom positions remaining unfilled by fully qualified teachers.

Our annual operating budget for the 2022-23 school year was just over \$64 million. Within this funding envelope we have worked to align our budget with the priority areas of the Strategic Plan. The upcoming school year will be an opportunity to further refine this process and make the connections between budget and Strategic Plan more evident to partners.

# INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

## LITERACY

Literacy involves exploring and creating written, oral, and visual texts to expand and deepen an understanding of both real and imagined worlds in order to gain insight into our own identity, the lives of others, and the world we live in. Teachers in SD91 use provincial, district and classroom evidence of literacy learning to reflect on practice and meet the needs of individual learners. The following representations are snapshots of how learners in the district have achieved on various literacy measures since the 2018-19 school year.

### Notes:

- Data representations focus on the percent of learners demonstrating proficiency (fully meeting/exceeding; on-track/extending).
- Literacy continues to be a core strategic focus as captured under the Strategic Plan goal "Create Student Success."
- District Teacher Leaders provided focused support this year to new teachers and LOPs with instructional strategies and response to assessment.
- This past year was a year in transition for the nonfiction assessment tool (RAD). Focus groups of educators worked together to revise the tool, both in terms of the questions and rubrics, and have also begun to introduce more contemporary texts for reading.
- Collaborative learning conversations occurred at the school-level regarding district literacy assessment data and the responses to evidence.
- The district continued to provide professional learning opportunities in literacy through Faye Brownlie.
- In the spring of 2020, we did not administer the nonfiction assessment due to COVID.

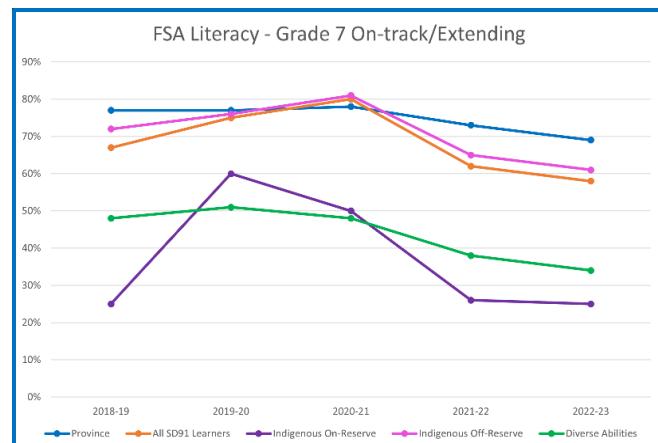
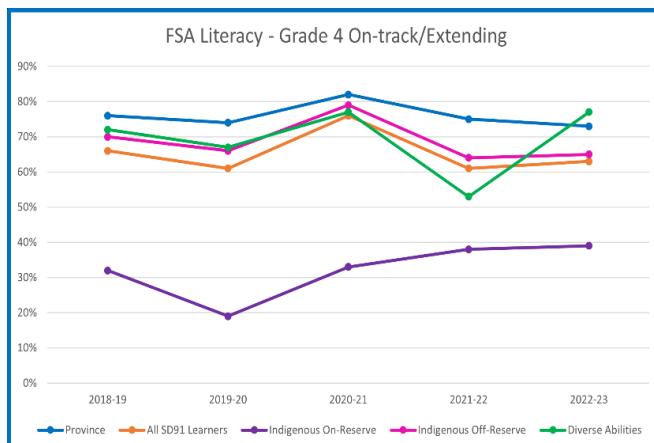
### Literacy Data Observations:

- **FSA:** While Grade 4 and 7 on-reserve Indigenous Learners continue to perform below all students in literacy as per the FSA, there has been an encouraging three-year upward trend of gains for grade 4 learners.
- **FSA:** Grade 4 learners with diverse abilities in SD91 showed positive gains in literacy in 2022-23, performing better than all other district learners, as well as the province.
- **Grade 10 Literacy Assessment:** Indigenous on-reserve learners continue to demonstrate improved literacy achievement, and the gap between all other learners has closed significantly. The 20% gap is still not acceptable, but an encouraging trend.
- **PM Benchmarks:** In the 2022-23 school year, Indigenous grade 1 and 2 learners showed an impressive increase in the percentage who were reading at grade level (proficient or fully meeting and above) compared to most previous years.
- **PM Benchmarks:** Approximately 30-50% of all grade 1's and 2's demonstrate proficiency in reading at grade level, even during the three years of attendance challenges brought about with the pandemic.
- **PM Benchmarks:** The data shows a decrease in achievement starting in the year 2019-2020, the beginning of the pandemic. Reading achievement is improving since that year, with this current year being the strongest performance since the year pre-pandemic.
- **RAD:** Grade 3 and 5 learners consistently show growth from fall to spring in most skills.
- **RAD:** Indigenous learners in grades 3 and 5 often achieve at par or very close to the total percent of learners demonstrating proficiency.

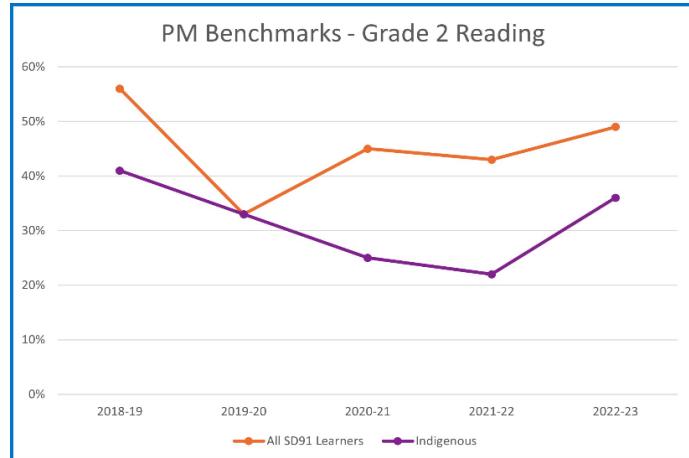
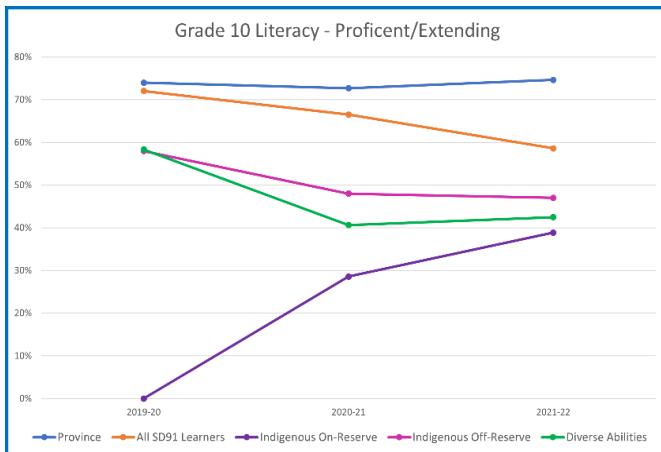
- **RAD:** In the current year, grade 8's demonstrated the biggest improvement over any year and any other grade in their metacognition skills. This may be attributed to the clarification of how their thinking was accessed through better question design. The improved question design may have also made it clearer to educators in terms of language and strategies to teach with regards to these reflection skills.
- **RAD:** Indigenous learners' achievement levels were about half that of the achievement levels of the total grade 8 population.

## Focus for 2023-24: Areas for Growth/Continued Attention

- Increase efforts at the school and district level to ensure students of diverse abilities have equitable access to learning as part of the school community. This involves initiating a multi-year plan to address barriers that are attitudinal, physical, information/communication, systemic or sensory, as per the Accessible BC Act.
- Provide focussed supports and expand school/district inquiry opportunities to "play" in order to support growth for all learners.
- Collaborate with partners to develop broad community strategies to respond to the Early Development Index (EDI) data and reduce childhood vulnerabilities.
- Many elementary schools will be able to participate in the POPEY rural residency project in the 23-24 school year, which will focus on literacy development K-2. We will tailor the learning to areas that educators identify as learning needs of students.
- Curriculum Services will identify and support the use of early literacy resources and pedagogies that ensure a balanced approach, and at the same time will capitalize on the improved phonics and phonological research and resources that are becoming more widely available. These improved resources are showing promise in many other jurisdictions in reducing the learning gaps that occurred during the pandemic years.
- We still have a significant amount of work to do with grades 5 and 8 learners. Consistently, 70-80% required increased levels of support to show proficiency in all skill areas.
- Grade 8's consistently demonstrate a decrease in achievement on RAD from fall to spring in most skills in most years. We need to dig deep into the root causes in order to determine responses. We wonder about learner motivation and investment in completing the assessment to the best of their abilities, versus a true decline in skills over the course of the year.
- School teams will be encouraged to engage in collaborative inquiry focused on grade 5 and 8 learners nonfiction comprehension skills with literacy expert Faye Brownlie.



— Province      — All SD91 Learners      — Indigenous - On Reserve      — Indigenous - Off Reserve      — Diverse Abilities



## NUMERACY

Numeracy encompasses the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and dispositions that students need to use in a wide range of situations. It involves students recognizing and understanding the role of mathematics in the world and having the capacities to use mathematical knowledge and skills purposefully.

### Notes:

- Data representations focus on the percent of learners demonstrating proficiency (fully meeting/exceeding; on-track/extending).
- Numeracy continues to be a core strategic focus as captured under the Strategic Plan goal "Create Student Success."
- District Teacher Leaders provided focused support this year to new teachers and LOPs with instructional strategies and response to assessment.
- Collaborative learning conversations occurred at the school-level regarding District Numeracy assessment data and responses to the evidence.
- The consistent finding in over 30 years of research is that more-successful students exhibit higher levels of metacognitive knowledge about a given domain and are more skilled at regulating their cognitive processes than less-successful students.

[\(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/neuroscience/metacognition>\)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/neuroscience/metacognition)

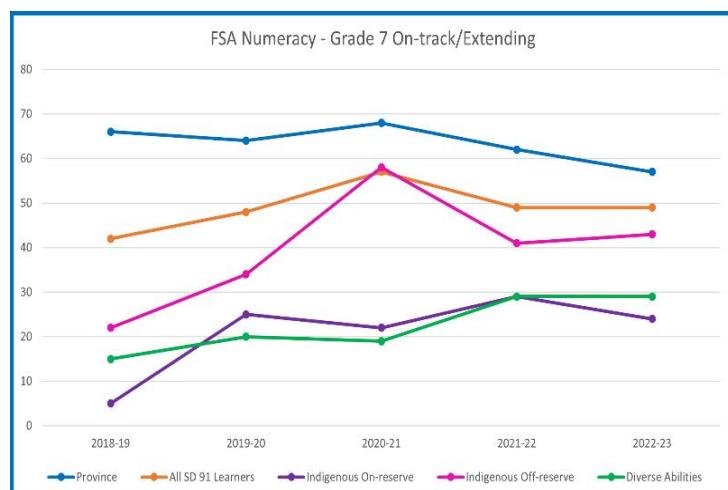
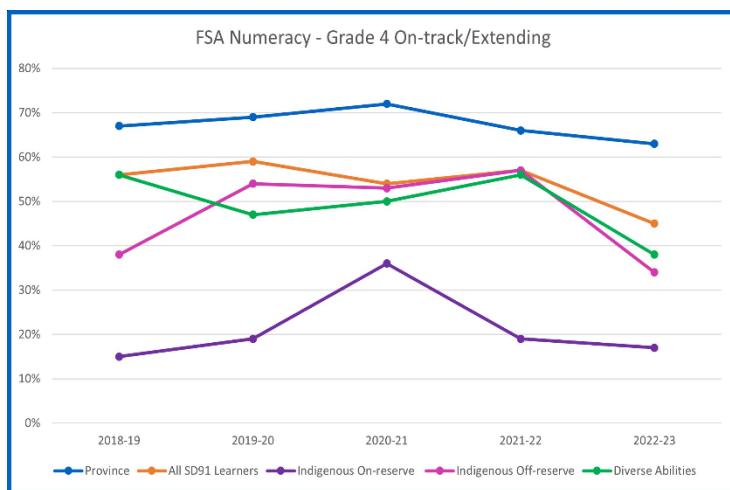
### Numeracy Data Observations:

- **FSA:** Grade 4 results demonstrate a decline in performance on this assessment from the previous year.
- **FSA:** Results for grade 7 learners show continued growth over time; slight growth for the last two years for most groups.
- **Grade 10 Assessment:** performance for all SD91 learners (last 3 years), as well as for on-reserve Indigenous learners has improved over the last 2 years. However, performance for diverse learners showed a decline after last year's improvement.
- **District Numeracy Assessment:** As a district, we have continued to focus on Number Sense for learners, since making sense of number is the foundation of other math concepts, as applied to real world situations.
- **District Numeracy Assessment:** In all areas, Grade 3 students performed higher than Grade 9 students.
- **District Numeracy Assessment:** Connecting and reflecting is consistently the lowest performing competency set, with 19% of students fully meeting expectations in Grade 3 and 12% in Grade 9. This percentage is slightly up over last year yet still not acceptable - 16% in Grade 3 and 14% in Grade 9.

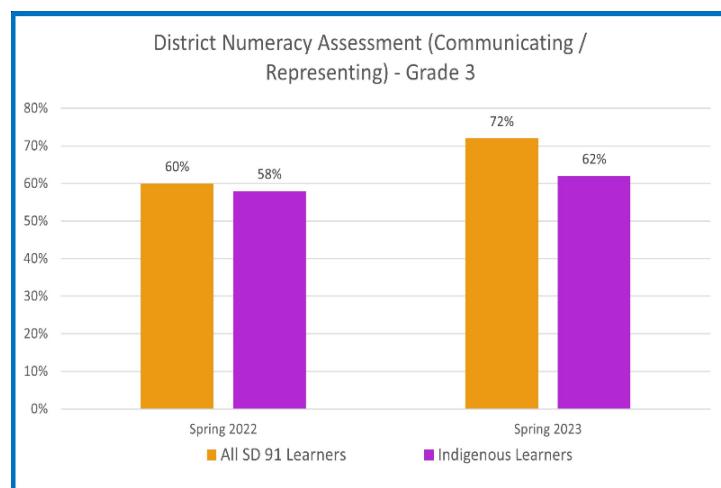
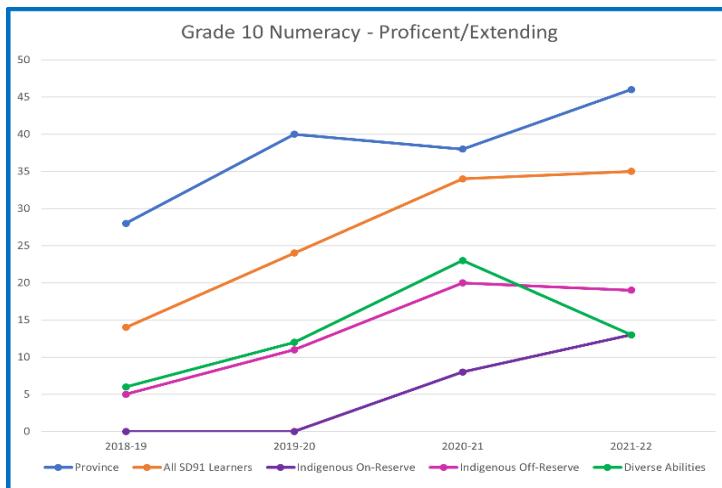
- **District Numeracy Assessment:** Communicating & Representing is consistently the highest performing competency set, with 72% of students fully meeting expectations in Grade 3 and 31% in Grade 9. This is up from 2021-2022, in which the fully meeting percentages were 58% in Grade 3 and 11% in Grade 9. This area has been a focus at the Grade 9 level.
- **District Numeracy Assessment:** Indigenous learners are performing at rates consistent with, or close to, all learners. This is significantly up from 2021-2022, indicating that supports are promoting growth for Indigenous learners.

## Focus for 2023-24: Areas for Growth/Continued Attention

- Increase efforts at the school and district level to ensure students of diverse abilities have equitable access to learning as part of the school community. This involves initiating a multi-year plan to address barriers that are attitudinal, physical, information/communication, systemic or sensory, as per the Accessible BC Act.
- Provide focused supports and expand school/district inquiry opportunities to "play" in order to support growth for all learners.
- Collaborate with partners to develop broad community strategies to respond to the Early Development Index (EDI) data and reduce childhood vulnerabilities.
- Continue to support pedagogies, assessments and interventions that facilitate the learning of all students, particularly Indigenous learners.
- Interventions will have a systematic, hands-on approach that are based on current, effective assessment of number sense.
- District professional learning opportunities will support teachers, especially new teachers and LOPs, to integrate best practice in Math: manipulative use, thinking classrooms strategies (Peter Liljedahl), land-based learning, and play-based learning.



— Province      — All SD91 Learners      — Indigenous - On Reserve      — Indigenous - Off Reserve      — Diverse Abilities



Legend: Province (blue line), All SD91 Learners (orange line), Indigenous On-Reserve (purple line), Indigenous Off-Reserve (pink line), Diverse Abilities (green line)

## TRANSITIONS & SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES

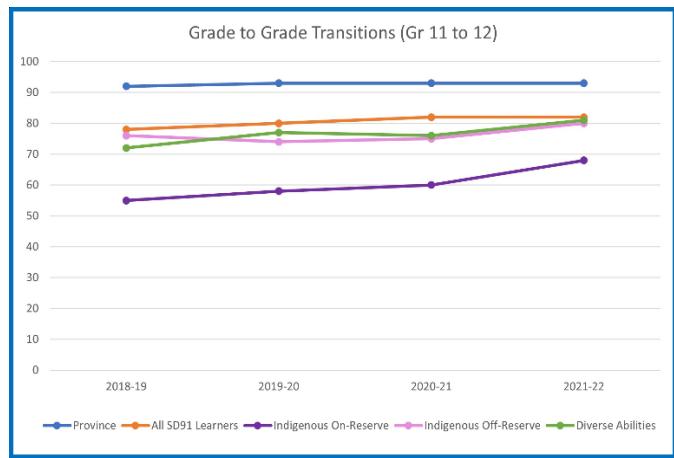
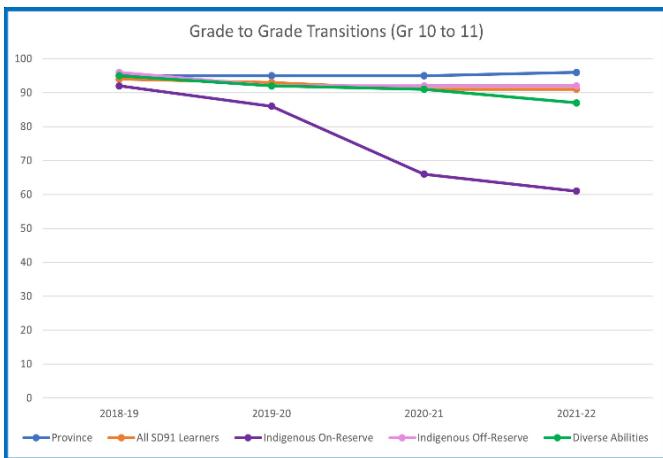
**Transitions** are changes or movement from one stage (grade) to another, at significant points in students' academic careers.

### Notes:

- Strategies were developed this year and implementation began in response to the Alternate Programs Review which was conducted in 2021-22. Collaboration among Alternate Program teachers was nurtured, and alignment of programs and philosophies has begun. This work was supported by the Inclusive Education Team.
- Engagement strategies for Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners continue to be implemented as per our Strategic Plan (e.g., Student Voice group Mental Health Fair, Hundiyin Indigenous Girls Group, Koh Learning with UNBC, Live.It Earth productions, etc.) in order to positively impact students' school experiences.

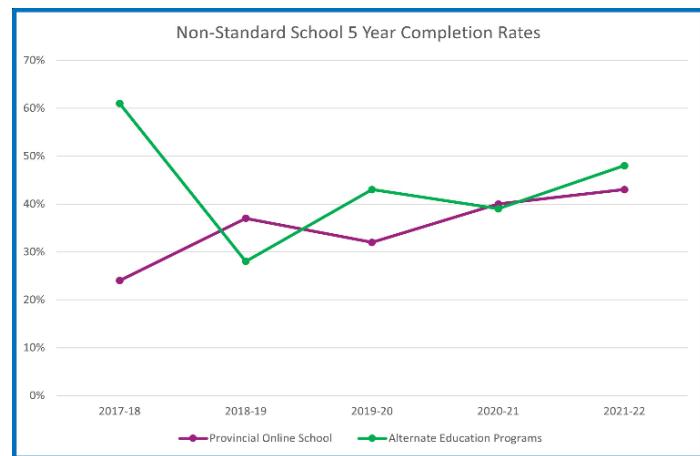
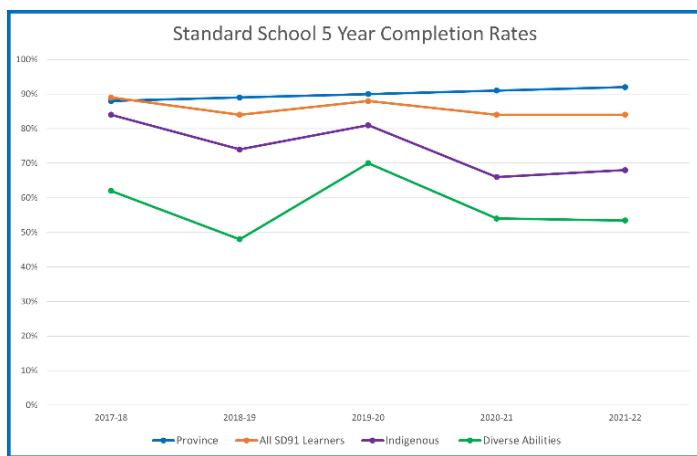
### Grade to Grade Transition Data Observations:

- While most learners are successful in their grade-to-grade transitions throughout their school experiences, there are some noteworthy observations that can be made in secondary schools as students move from grade 10 to 11, from grade 11 to 12, and again after school completion.
- Although the majority of learners are transitioning well from grade 10 to 11, there is a worrisome trend over the last three years for Indigenous on-reserve students. Further disaggregation indicates that male learners continue to decline in transition rates from grade 10 to 11, while female learners transition at rates higher (84%) than all other SD91 learners.
- There has been a modest upward trend in transition for learners moving from grade 11 to 12, with the most improvements in transition rates being made by on-reserve Indigenous learners (13% increase over the last 4 years).



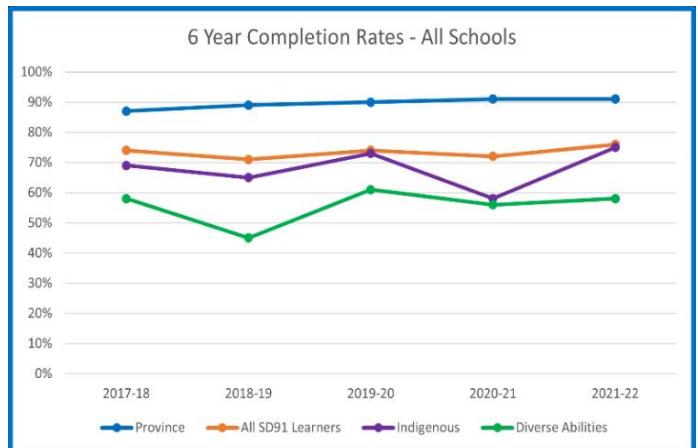
## School Completion Data Observations:

- Five-year completion rates remain largely unchanged for the last two years.
- Due to the large enrolment of students from across the province into EBUS Academy, we are displaying 5-year completion data separately for our 'standard' schools (FSJSS, NVSS, FLESS, and LDSS) and for our non-standard schools (alternate schools and EBUS Academy). As EBUS Academy cross enrolls many students who are not on track to a 5-year completion; their completion rates are significantly below that of our standard schools but in line with similar distributed learning schools within the province.
- Our **non-standard school**, EBUS Academy, and the alternate schools, are trending upwards in their 5-year school completion data.
- Six-year completion rates show that Indigenous learners (74%) have achieved parity with all SD91 learners (standard and non-standard) (75%).



## Focus for 2023-24: Areas for Growth/Continued Attention

- Expand leadership and cultural mentorship opportunities for Indigenous learners.
- Engage all staff in training within the BC Anti-racism Action Plan.
- Develop and implement a cultural safety course as a professional learning opportunity for staff.
- Expand professional learning opportunities for new teachers and Letter of Permission teachers regarding instruction & assessment, as well as responding to assessment results with a focus on Indigenous learners.
- Increase efforts at the school and district level to ensure students of diverse abilities have equitable access to learning as part of the school community. This involves initiating a multi-year plan to address barriers that are attitudinal, physical, information/communication, systemic or sensory, as per the Accessible BC Act.
- Expand the Elders in Residence Program within secondary schools.
- Provide Indigenous Graduation Coaches to Indigenous learners within SD91.
- Continue to implement strategies that emerged from the Alternate Programs Review of 2021-22.



## HUMAN & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Human and social development is central to a student's ability to learn. Building community and connection, as well as supporting educators in the development of their own social and emotional competencies, is critical to students' well-being.

### Notes:

- The development of strategies addressing the Student Learning Survey questions have been embedded within each school's individual School Growth Plan.
- At the district level, engagement strategies for Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners continue to be implemented as per our Strategic Plan (e.g., Student Voice group consultations and Mental Health Fair, Hundiyin Indigenous Girls Group, Live.It Earth productions, GSAs, Share the Love event, Koh Learning with UNBC, land-based learning, etc.) in order to positively impact students' school experiences and sense of belonging.

### Student Learning Survey Data Observations:

- There continues to be a positive upward trend in the belonging data, and Indigenous learners on-reserve are reporting an increased sense of **school belonging** (51%) more so than all other learners in the district (50%). Although trending upward for Indigenous learners by 17% over the last 4 years, this is still not acceptable.
- Students with diverse abilities continue to increase in their sense of **school belonging** (an increase of 18% in the last four years), however data across the province (BC 57% and SD91 at 50%) is not where it needs to be.
- Even though on-reserve Indigenous learners are trending in a positive direction regarding **caring adults** (72% now versus 58% four years ago), the fact that 32% of all learners in the district cannot positively identify caring adults in their school is concerning.

- The percentage of learners who **feel welcome** at school in the district (67%) trails slightly behind the province (72%); there has been an increase in **feeling welcome** by diverse learners (growth of 10%) and on-reserve Indigenous learners (growth of 11%) over the last 4 years.



Province      All SD91 Learners      Indigenous - On Reserve      Indigenous - Off Reserve      Diverse Abilities

## Focus for 2023-24: Areas for Growth/Continued Attention

- Increase efforts at the school and district level to ensure students of diverse abilities feel affirmed as part of the school community. This involves initiating a multi-year plan to address barriers that are attitudinal, physical, information/communication, systemic or sensory, as per the Accessible BC Act.
- Expand leadership and cultural mentorship opportunities for Indigenous learners, with focused attention for male learners.
- Enhance collaboration with IEC to establish a Language and Culture working group to initiate the development of localized curriculum.
- Engage all staff in training within the BC Anti-racism Action Plan.
- Develop and implement a cultural safety course as a professional learning opportunity for staff.
- Expand the Elders in Residence Program within secondary schools.
- Provide Indigenous Graduation Coaches to Indigenous learners within SD91.
- Continue to implement strategies emerging from the Alternate Programs Review (2021-22).

- Through a review of programs, ensure equitable access to nourishing food across the district through the Feeding Futures initiative.
- Engage PVP and lead teachers in evidence-informed professional learning regarding Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ2+ Students.
- Review and respond to the provincial Report on Two-spirited Youth.
- Engage Student Voice and school GSAs in an ongoing manner and respond with improved school environments.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

**Career development** involves actualizing one's potential to be self-directed and responsible for setting and meeting career goals; knowing a range of career choices and actions needed to pursue those choices; and learning to work effectively and collaboratively.

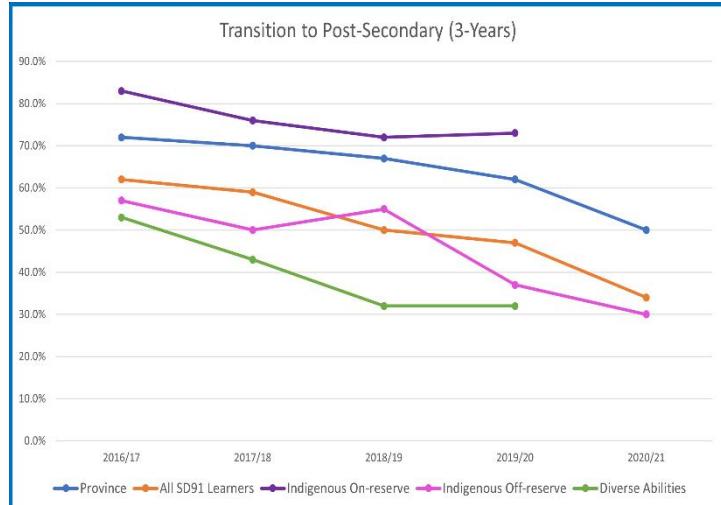
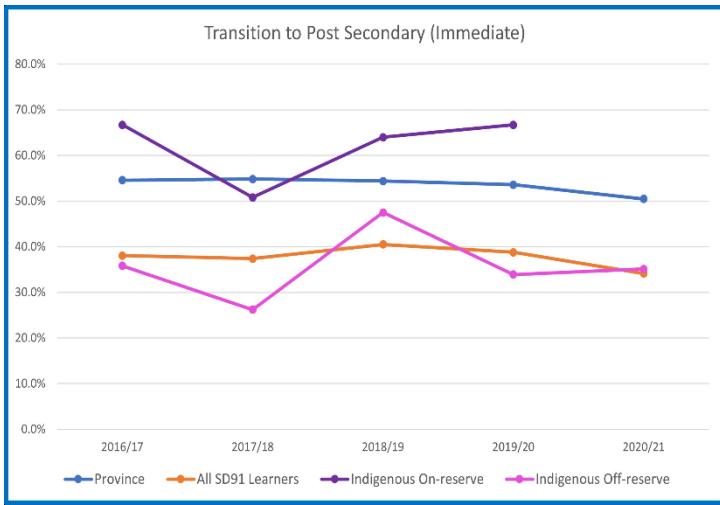
### Notes:

- An updated MOU was signed in June 2023 to enable dual credits for Early Childhood Education programs at UNBC. With the further expansion of early learning within schools, this relationship will be beneficial to students and the district as a service provider of high-quality pre-K programs. Currently we employ few qualified ECE's.
- Through the district's Career and Trades Programs Department, learners are active in the following career-focused initiatives in order to explore and find the path that calls to them: Project Agriculture, Project Aviation, Project Health, Project Heavy Duty, Project Mining, Project STEAM, YELL Entrepreneurship, Farm to School, Robotics, Live.It Earth, UNBC Active Minds, Outdoor Learning, Nechako Sturgeon Project, and more. [SD91 Career and Trades Programs](#)



### Transition to Post-Secondary Data Observations:

- Indigenous on-reserve students are transitioning to post-secondary both in the year following graduation as well as within 3 years of graduation at rates higher than other students in the district and at rates higher than the provincial average.
- There has been relatively little change in immediate transition rates for the province, all SD91 learners, and off-reserve Indigenous learners.
- There has been an overall decline in 3-year post-secondary transitions rates across the province and district.



## Focus for 2023-24: Areas for Growth/Continued Attention

- Partner with our parent and student groups to look at this data and identify specific obstacles to post-secondary transition.
- Share transition data with our high school counsellors and careers department to get their thoughts on specific strategies to increase opportunities for post-secondary exposure.

## SIGNATURES

Karla Mitchell, Superintendent of Schools

Date

David Christie, Board Chair

Date

