

We are grateful to live, work, and play on the unceded, ancestral territories of fourteen First Nations representing the Dakelh, Nedut'en and Wet'suwet'en peoples. We are working diligently towards creating equity for our learners through conscious acts of Reconciliation.

Hadih/Hadi/Hadeeh and Welcome to the New School Year!

On September 3, schools opened their doors and welcomed students to the first day of the 2024-2025 school year. Fall always brings a new start and refreshed energy for staff and students.

As many of you have noticed, there have been changes to school and district staffing to start the year. Since the spring, we have hired 15 new teachers, and 12 school administrators are new to their roles or have changed schools. We are excited to have these new people working and learning alongside communities, students, and families.

The Board is actively recruiting a new Superintendent this fall, and I am honoured to support their work as the Interim Superintendent until a new person is appointed to the role.

The District continues to dedicate time and effort to continuous learning and meeting the Board's Strategic Education Plan and Vision for Student Success goals. As we enter the final year of the current Plan, staff will continue to build relationships in safe and caring schools that focus on core learning in literacy, numeracy, and well-being. Next school year, the District will embark on consultations and engagement initiatives to create a new and revised Strategic Education Plan.

I have visited several schools over the past two weeks and enjoyed seeing many smiling faces in the hallways and playgrounds. It is wonderful to see and hear the excitement a new school year brings.

Again, welcome to the 2024-2025 school year!

Sincerely,



(he/him)
Interim Superintendent



Leadership Changes

Congratulations to our staff members who joined the leadership team or moved to new roles for the 2024-25 school year!

LEADER	ROLE	LOCATION
Erin Baker	Vice-Principal	WL McLeod Elementary
Tyler Clark	Vice-Principal	EBUS Academy
Brian Cross	Principal	EBUS Academy
Anne Geddes	Principal	Sinkut View Elementary
Eleanor Giesbrecht	Principal	Decker Lake Elementary
Jason Kadonaga	Principal	Fraser Lake Elem-Secondary
Candace Lawrence	Principal	Mapes Elementary
Cheryl Peterson	Principal	Lakes District Secondary
Stacey Soffel	Vice-Principal	Nechako Valley Secondary
Roberta Toth	Principal	Mouse Mountain Elementary
Marlee Wilson	Principal	Francois Lake Elementary
Barb Ziler	Principal	Evelyn Dickson Elementary

Congratulations to Leona Prince

Leona has been appointed Assistant Superintendent of Indigenous Education for the Ministry of Education and Child Care. She began a minimum two-year secondment from SD91 on August 1. She is the first person from northern BC to hold this position with the Ministry.

While we are saddened to see her leave our local community, the District extends its best wishes to Leona in her new provincial role. Her skills and perspectives from rural BC will undoubtedly enhance education across the province.



Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 1 - Honour Diversity

6th Annual Indigenous Education Conference – September 20

September 20 is our annual District Planning Day for all staff to learn more about Truth, Reconciliation, and Indigenous Ways of Knowing. This year's conference theme is "Good Ancestors."

Mesiyo to Leona Prince, Jesse Fairley, and Chrystal Vanderwijk for their work each year on this valuable staff conference.



Accessibility

Under the lead of Director of Instruction Claire McKay, District staff continue to participate in a northern working group developing a framework for improving all forms of accessibility. This year, consultations will occur with students and families with lived experiences to support district planning.

Indigenous Education Councils (IECs)

Legislative amendments to the *School Act* and a ministerial order have come into effect in an effort to strengthen, support, and ensure that all 60 school districts have IECs this school year. In SD91, we have been working with our IEC for many years, and we are all excited to see these changes implemented province-wide.

Purpose of IECs:

- Advocate for all Indigenous students through advice on programs, services, and achievement
- Advise on the integration of Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, particularly from local First Nations
- Support Local First Nations members in guiding the work on their distinct languages, cultures, customs, traditions, practices or histories
- Advise on grants provided concerning Indigenous students
- Approve the distribution of Indigenous Education Targeted Funding

Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 2 - Engage our Workforce

Professional Learning Plan for 2024-25

In addition to the District-wide Indigenous Education Conference, staff will also have opportunities to engage in a variety of other professional learning opportunities throughout the year, including:

- Building Thinking Classrooms with Judy Larson
- Assessment, Competencies & Reporting with Phil Stringer
- Network of Inquiry & Indigenous Education (NOIIE)
- Compassionate Systems Leadership Network
- Primary Literacy Interventions with Jen Kelly
- Principal and Vice-Principal professional learning and mentorship
- Indigenous Education Early Literacy pilots at WKE and Mouse Mountain Elementary

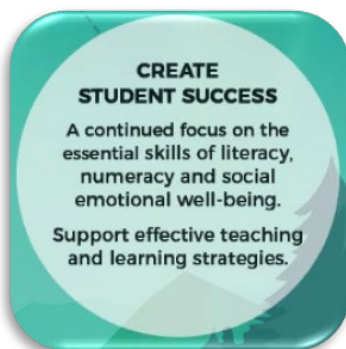


New Teacher Gathering

The annual New Teacher Orientation Day was held on August 29 at Evelyn Dickson Elementary School. We were honoured to have the Saik'uz Education Department join the session as we met on their unceded traditional territory. Eighteen 1st and 2nd year teachers joined staff members and local union representatives for a conversation and café-style learning groups.

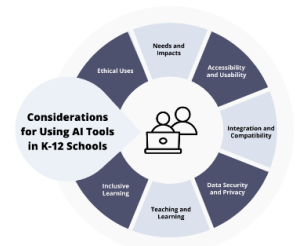
Thanks to the Curriculum Support Team and BLNTU for helping support our newest teachers!

Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 3 - Create Student Success



AI and Education

Since the launch of ChatGPT 18 months ago, students, parents, educational institutions and governments have examined its uses and effects on learning. The Ministry of Education and Child Care has provided districts with some information for schools, students and parents. This information can be found on the SD91 website under "Students & Families."



The Ministry and District will continue sharing best practices and guidance as this technology is rapidly changing.

Digital Device Restrictions in Schools



The Ministry now requires all school districts to have policies and regulations in their Codes of Conduct limiting the use of cell phones and other personal digital devices connected to the internet during the school day.

Relevant information is on our Facebook page and website. Find full details in SD91's [Policy 604.1](#) and [Regulation 604.1R](#).

According to the Ministry media release, research shows that classroom cellphone interruptions affect learning, and social media platforms have addictive algorithms. Further studies have found that children's mental health and physical safety can suffer as a result of body-image distortion, cyberbullying, images shared without consent and disturbing instances of sextortion.

Schools met with students and discussed the changes in the first few days of the new school year. Families may reach out to their school principal if they have questions.

Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 4 - Enhance Connections

MyEducation Family Portal Pilot

MyEducation (MyED) is the student information system used across BC. All schools use it to track and report on all students in the province. The Family Portal is another way students and their families can access information about their educational program, and many school districts across the province already use it. School District 91 will start with a three-school pilot this school year and then roll out access to other schools in future years.

Evelyn District Elementary, Fraser Lake Elementary-Secondary, and William Konkin Elementary will begin the pilot later this school year, starting with onboarding and supporting family users over the next several months.



Some of the features for families include:

- Daily attendance (updated nightly)
- Student course schedules
- Term marks
- A digital formal report card that can be saved and printed if required
- Additional features are being developed provincially, including a mobile device app that could be available in 2026.

While this portal will allow families to access valuable information more efficiently without the need to call the school, we will continue to welcome all family contact in all SD91 sites.

Online School Payment System Launch

We are pleased to be in the final stages of signing on to enable a remote payment system for families. [SchoolCash Online](#) is an easy-to-use, safe, and convenient way for families to pay for their students' school-related fees, such as field trips, athletics, and meals. Approximately half of all BC families use this platform for their children.

Some highlights include:

- SchoolCash Online is a safe, fast, and convenient web-based solution that allows caregivers to pay for items selected by students, similar to debit or credit cards
- Families can make payments, print or view their receipts, as well as track their account history
- Saves time and is more convenient than sending cash or cheques with your child to school
- Allows electronic permission and student travel forms
- Integration for school meals and cashless "point of sale" payments
- Easy access to a 24/7 support line 365 days a year

This service is optional and traditional forms of payment are still permitted.

Information and instructions will be added to the District and school websites over the next few months to support the transition to these new features. KEV School Solutions has created a [short video](#) that outlines the portal's capabilities and functionality.

Thanks to Kevin Black and Tyrell Miller for their time and effort on this project.



Feeding Futures Fund

Through the province's new Feeding Futures funding, more children and youth will have access to healthy meals and snacks at school. The funding invests in building and expanding local school food programs.

The Feeding Futures program will address the immediate need for feeding students and build on the progress made with the Student and Family Affordability Fund to help reduce the challenges of rising food costs for families who need it most.



As we enter year 2 of the provincial initiative, we aim to create equity across the District, with staffing and food options.

For more information, please see your school principal.

Child Care and Early Learning Updates



Evelyn Dickson Elementary School in Vanderhoof opened its doors to a new Before and After School Care Program!

In a spare classroom at EDS, the YMCA has set up a licensed School Age Care Program for children in kindergarten to age 12. The program begins as early as 6:30 am and operates after school until 6 pm. A complimentary SD91 bus shuttle is available in the mornings and afternoons for Sinkut View and WL McLeod learners. For more information about the YMCA School Age Care Program at EDS, please visit www.nbc.ymca.ca/child-care.

The District will also open 24 licensed before- and after-school child care spaces at David Hoy Elementary in Fort St. James in the coming weeks, funded by \$720,000 from the Ministry of Education and Child Care. These spaces are part of a new initiative using existing school space and school district resources and staff to provide before- and after-school care.

"We are grateful for this opportunity to participate in this program," said Wendy Kelemen, District Principal of Early Learning and Child Care. "We heard from many families about their difficulty in finding quality before- and after-school care for their children, so these new child care spaces across the school district will be such a benefit to those in need of a licensed child care space."

See the full release here: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024ECC0121-001438>

Employee Recognition

I would like to recognize **all staff** for ensuring the school year began in a positive way.

A special acknowledgement to our employees in the Facilities and Transportation departments for their work on cleaning, maintaining, and upgrading sites and buses over the summer months. Most of their work goes unnoticed during holiday breaks.

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