

Brechin Elementary

Year: 2021-2022

Principal: Tonia Collins Vice Principal: Marc Daneault



Our School Story

What are the unique, positive characteristics that we celebrate in our school/community?

Brechin Elementary remains one of the school district's Focus Schools for the 2021-2022 school year. Our school community represents a diverse population and at home some engage in a spoken language other than English: Afar, Arabic, Tagalog and Vietnamese for example. Approximately 31% of the school community identifies as Indigenous, approximately 13% of our students are students with designated special education needs, and approximately 12% of our students receive support in English as a second language or as a second dialect.

We celebrate...

- ...daily food bins (prepared by our secretary and CYFSW) and/or breakfast in class
- ...meaningful partnerships with community agencies: Tillicum Lelum, Pacific Sports, Literacy Nanaimo, Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo Food Share, BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, and the Nanaimo Schools Foundation
- ...commitment from staff to meet regularly to share data and determine 'next steps'
- ...commitment from staff to learn about and view students through a trauma sensitive lens
- ...a caring, dedicated PAC (Parent Advisory Committee) who struggle to fundraise during a pandemic
- ...a teacher-librarian and literacy support teacher who regularly collaborate and plan, including application for grants to support student literacy
- ...exploration of Growth Mindset, the EASE curriculum (anxiety), Catch the Calm and mindfulness

What are the important demographics of our school and community?

Currently Brechin gratefully houses 176 students arranged into 9 divisions on the unceded territory of the Snuneymeus peoples. Supporting our students are: 10 Educational Assistants, a full time Principal, part time Vice-Principal (who teaches 80%), part-time counsellor, full-time Child Youth and Family Support Worker (CYFSW), *almost* a full time Literacy Support Teacher, part time Speech and Language Pathologist and *almost* two full time Inclusion Support Teachers.

Classroom collected data indicates a significant amount of students are below grade expectations in the areas of reading, writing and numeracy.

Brechin embraces a culture of learning. Many staff members are engaging in research based inquiry to evolve their own practice, and adjust their instruction based on this research – not just personal belief systems or “this is how we’ve always done it”. We are all learning together.

Our School Goals

1. Students will move forward in their reading skills as measured by the PARS (Primary Assessment of Reading) and reading fluency assessment tools. Our intermediate teachers are using HIP (High Interest Passages) Assessment or EASYCBM to provide information on grade level placement, fluency and comprehension assessments.
2. Students will move forward from where they are with respect to grade level numeracy learning outcomes. We will identify essential learning outcomes for each grade, and notice that two years of interrupted learning during a pandemic has impacted their numeracy skills and self-image with respect to math.
3. Students will be supported in accessing their own emotions/values/thoughts and how they influence behaviours across contexts, with the goal of positively impacting their social/emotional well being, as reported by teacher observation and student self-reporting.

Our School Celebration Story

SILVER LININGS – BEING THE BEST VERSION OF BRECHIN DURING A PANDEMIC

We at Brechin, would like to celebrate that we noticed many silver linings amidst the challenging time of teaching, learning and being safe during a pandemic. We learned many lessons through trial and error, through following protocols, through being flexible and pivoting quickly, and through viewing ourselves and others using a trauma sensitive lens.

The amazing story of Brechin's families and staff over the past two years (from the start of the pandemic, during lockdown, to now – fall 2021) starts simply with feeling initially grumpy with all of the rules, then discovering that Brechin may have needed some re-imagining. Here is what we invite you to celebrate with us:

1. That Recess Zones created a safer play environment for our students. Age-appropriate behaviours are more inclined to occur (less incidents of older to younger peer conflict), regular staff supervising in zones permits relationship building, and we knew where to expect students to be. We noticed our post-recess re-entry into class was calmer. Currently we still maintain a version of our original zones created last year.
2. Virtual meetings can be efficient and effective, if they are offered as an option. We continue to have staff meetings on-line and they are faster and permit some of the CUPE staff to plug in on their phone and participate as they need to pick up their own kids. Some parents are also choosing this over in-person meetings for student conferences and IEP meetings.
3. That the school was calmer with cleared hallways, monitored visitors, and entry/exit to gym (and now music and library) are via outside doors to ensure the 'calm' is preserved (and students can be outside for a bit). We have kept the outside doors locked to monitor volunteers or visitors (important in this area) and aim to find a balance between safety and creating a welcoming school. Part of our plan this year, is to 'Catch the Calm' in classrooms after transitions and keeping the hallways quiet and calm has supported learning in the classrooms.
4. That asking staff and students to stay home when sick, wash hands regularly and wipe things down regularly really makes a difference on even the common cold, flu or other things that normally rip through our school community. Last year, and this year so far, except when scary COVID exposures happen, has been a time when we are seeing less generalized illness in our school. And when the caring adults land here, they are not being heroes and 'toughing it out', they are well and have the right kind of energy for students as being an educator takes a lot of patience and love.

There are more examples, and lessons learned we can share, but in short, at Brechin we recognize that *'kids don't care how much you know until they know how much you care'* so we are working on providing a safe, calm and relationship-rich place for our students before they can learn. We would like to celebrate that we think about, read about and meet and talk about the things we can do to improve student connection and learning on a daily basis. We believe social/emotional learning is pivotal for academic growth and starts with a calm, caring environment provided by a calm, caring staff.