

Brechin Elementary

Year: 2023-2024

Principal: Tonia Collins Vice Principal: Courtney Hill



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 2023-2024 school year. Our school community represents a diverse population and at home some families engage in a spoken language other than English such as: Turkish, Arabic, Ukrainian and Hindi for example. Approximately 25% of the school community identifies as Indigenous, 13% of our students carry designations, and 11% of our students receive support in English as a second language or in English skills development.

We celebrate...

- ...daily food bins (prepared by our secretary & CYFSW) and breakfast in class (cereal and milk)
- ...meaningful partnerships with community partners: Tillicum Lelum, Pacific Sports, Country Grocer, Frontrunners and Runners of Compassion, Nanaimo Food Share, BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, and the Nanaimo Schools Foundation , Rotary Club
- ...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 and poverty sensitive lens
- ...a caring, dedicated PAC (Parent Advisory Committee)
- ...a teacher-librarian and literacy support teacher who regularly collaborate and plan, including applying for grants to support student literacy
- ...exploration of Growth Mindset, the EASE curriculum (anxiety), Catch the Calm, We Thinkers, mindfulness
- ...commitment to build community and focus on viewing literacy through a lens of poverty

What are the important demographics of our school and community?

Currently, Brechin gratefully houses 178 students arranged into 9 divisions on the unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw 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 part time ELL specialist and two full time Inclusion Support Teachers. Classroom data collected over the past 3 years indicates literacy is increasing due to intervention and support from our literacy coordinator, ELL specialist and ISTs. Our Grade 2/3s are working on fluency and still struggling with aspects of phonics, many of our lower intermediates are reading at 2-3 grade levels below expected, and our higher intermediates struggle with fluency which hinders comprehension and need heavy support with writing. Data also indicates numeracy and ongoing social emotional needs. All of our Brechin family members engage in a culture of learning. Many staff members are engaging in research-based inquiry to grow their 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. To improve student reading skills. (As measured by the PARS (Primary Assessment of Reading Screener) and reading fluency assessment tools for primary and the Intermediate Reading Screener to assess grade level placement, fluency and comprehension for older grades).
2. To improve student numeracy skills. (This year we are beginning to collect data in the same way we did for Literacy Data starting with our K-3 grades using NLPS Early Number Sense Assessment to start Tier 3 math intervention on number sense in January).
3. To support student Social Emotional Learning. (With support students will access their own emotions/values/thoughts to notice how these influence behaviours across contexts). This year we continue to recognize the importance of building community to further support connection.

Our School Celebration Story

BUILDING CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY – HUMANKIND: WE ARE BOTH

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. Some examples of what we'd like to celebrate:

1. We start our year with the goal of building connection and community in the school:
 - a. First day start in grade groups and do our best to match them with last year's teacher's and EAs
 - b. DNA (Dreams, Needs, Abilities) whole school activity: posted out on walls ready for parents to see for PACnic
 - c. First two weeks: prep done in classes to reduce transition anxiety, promote 'classroom as a safe space' and let the prep teachers focus on community building instead of 'teaching' fine arts or library
 - d. Daily soft starts with Catch the Calm and breakfast/snack bins in each class
 - e. First week, all staff out at little recess to connect with old and new kids
 - f. After the initial month, buddy classes begin for mixed grade fun and connection
2. We work to build community with families
 - a. Staff are available after school, open for quick chats at the drop off/pick up door then for pre-arranged meetings when needed
 - b. Staff offer celebration of learning events after school
 - c. Staff participate in the beginning of the year PACnic (which is also Meet the Teacher night) and end of year Games night in June
 - d. Literacy Lead Teacher and Teacher Librarian run a Family Lit Night in January
 - e. Staff (with their classes) help decorate for PAC run movie nights and dances
 - f. eNewsletters to families every two weeks to share timelines and events
 - g. Friday left over carts and gift cards (when available) to families
3. Guests in the building, TOCs (Teacher on Call), EAs (Educational Assistants) and RAs (Responsible adults) always comment on how friendly and supportive the Brechin community is... both staff and students are welcoming and friendly and make them feel at home. TOC and EA binders are ready, welcome white board in staff room, secretary walks them through the plan including safety, admin check in on guests.
4. This year, after working very hard on community last year, staff notice a shift in energy and support teachers find that kids are more connected and more open to learning
 - a. Things we do throughout the year: Student lead assemblies, Thrilling Thursdays, D.E.A.R. and PJ Days, Halloween Snake and Winter pancake breakfast (hosted by the Knights of Columbus), teacher led recess activities, cooking classes with Mr. Elliot, Buddy class activities