

# Brechin Elementary

Year: 2022-2023

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 2022-2023 school year. Our school community represents a diverse population and at home some families engage in a spoken language other than English such as: Afar, Arabic, Tagalog and Vietnamese for example. Approximately 27% of the school community identifies as Indigenous, 12% 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
- ...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)
- ...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 with a PLG, the focus is *Building Connections*

### **What are the important demographics of our school and community?**

Currently, Brechin gratefully houses 180 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 and *almost* two full time Inclusion Support Teachers. Classroom collected data indicates a significant number

of students are below grade expectations in the areas of reading, writing and numeracy. Our Grade 2/3s are still learning letters and sounds, many of our lower intermediates are reading at a Grade 1 level, and our higher intermediates are 2 grade levels below and need support with comprehension. 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. 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 piloting an Intermediate Reading Screener to provide information on grade level placement, fluency and comprehension assessments.
2. Students will move forward 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 skills but, more importantly has negatively impacted their self-image and confidence as mathematicians.
3. Students (with support) will access 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. This year we recognize the importance of building community to further support connection.

## Our School Celebration Story

### **SILVER LININGS – BEING THE BEST VERSION OF BRECHIN AFTER 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 and after 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 three years (from the start of the pandemic, during lockdown, to now – the 2022-23 year) was challenged by the Pandemic and its aftereffects, however it helped us re-imagine some of our practices. We invite you to celebrate some of our learning with us:

- 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 two years ago, with some flexibility to support some students who need a different peer group to play with.
- Virtual meetings can be efficient and effective, if they are offered as an option. We continue to have staff meetings on-line however three meetings are in person and include food to support staff community building (September, December and June). Some parents are also choosing on-line options over in-person meetings for student conferences and teacher or IEP meetings.
- The school was calmer with cleared hallways, monitored visitors, and accessing the gym, library and music room using outside doors to ensure the 'calm' in the school 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. We are continuing with 'Catch the Calm' in classrooms after transitions and keeping the hallways quiet and uncluttered to support uninterrupted learning in the classrooms.
- Asking staff and students to stay home when sick, washing hands regularly and wiping things down regularly really makes a difference. This year so far we are seeing less illness in our school, although going into Winter we saw higher absenteeism which was the trend in previous years. Expecting staff to stay home when sick also lets them land at Brechin ready for work as they are not being heroes and 'toughing it out', instead, they are well and have the right kind of energy for students as being an educator takes a lot of patience and love.