

Queensborough Middle School Learning Plan

2021.2022

CONTEXT: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT OUR LEARNERS

- QMS is a diverse and growing community of learners comprised of over 350 students in grades 5 through 8. Our students and their families come from 19 different countries, including Canada, and account for at least 24 different home languages. Punjabi as a Second Language (PSL) is offered to our students with over 40 students enrolled. At QMS, there are strong connections amongst staff, students, parents and the community. Most of our students come to us from Queen Elizabeth Elementary; both schools and the Queensborough Community Centre work closely together to provide opportunities for the students in the community.
- The 2021.2022 school year is unique in that while we are entering 'near normal' learning conditions, we still face the realities and impact of a global pandemic. Our strong, positive school spirit and sense of community has been evident as staff and students have flexibly responded and adjusted to this changing educational landscape.
- Five years ago, we began a learning journey about growth mindset. We noticed that many of our students lacked confidence in their mathematical ability. Our hunch was that this belief system had an adverse impact on student achievement. This led us to focus our school learning plan on developing tools to enable students to have a growth mindset. Our hope was that once students learned about their brains (neuroplasticity) and how effort, perseverance, and strategy development positively impact success more than innate ability, we would see evidence of gains in student confidence and engagement, and ultimately achievement. After our first year learning the language and principles of growth mindset, our learning focus expanded to include "growth mindset assessment", specifically how our assessment practices align with growth mindset and maximize student achievement. For subsequent years, we have focused on the role that feedback plays in student learning. In particular, we wondered what the impact would be on our students if we gave them timely and specific feedback, taught them strategies, and gave them multiple opportunities to apply those strategies to demonstrate what they know.
- This year our staff decided to shift our school goal because of the pandemic. During our summer Professional Development, staff reflected upon their observations and leanings over the course of the pandemic, and expressed a desire to focus on the social-emotional learning needs of their students.

GOAL: WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE

We believe that all students can achieve at high levels with effort, perseverance, resilience and the right set of strategies. We hope to carve a path towards such achievement for our students as we shift our focus towards Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). **Our goal is to teach, demonstrate, and develop SEL competencies with our students.**

- According to CASEL's Framework, SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.
- The five SEL competencies which we hope to develop with our students are: self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

PLAN: THE STEPS WE WILL TAKE

Key Results

- Review of and reflection upon data from 2020.2021 school year (FSA results, Student Learning Survey, MDI, report cards), our current school needs in light of the COVID 19 pandemic to set a School Learning Focus for 2021.2022 school year. [Aug.-Oct.]
- Review/explicit teaching of SEL competencies, concepts and language [Nov.-Dec.]
- Surveys of students and parents around SEL competencies administered, reviewed and action items identified [Jan.]
- Intentional learning opportunities provided for students to understand SEL concepts and apply strategies, and improve their self-regulation and social interactions over time
- Staff (self) reflection and collaboration with colleagues around SEL strategies ('show and share' during staff and team leader meetings, Professional Development Days, Book Clubs, ongoing Professional Development opportunities provided by the district, etc.)
- Year end reflection on successes, stretches, and next steps

Timeline

- Summer Pro D (2 days)
- September/October planning and goal-setting
- Ongoing check-ins throughout the year:
- November – Term 1 Report Cards
- January – mid-year check-in and reflections
- March – Term 2 Report Cards
- May/June – collect data and measure progress

Queensborough Middle School Learning Plan

2021.2022

SUCCESS INDICATORS: HOW WE WILL KNOW THAT OUR ACTIONS ARE HAVING THE DESIRED IMPACT

- Evidence of teachers trying new SEL strategies (teachers sharing examples: staff meetings, Pro D days, engagement in professional development opportunities) and regularly integrating technology as part of the feedback process
- Evidence of students using these SEL strategies to both regulate their behaviour and build strong relationships over time (i.e. Student Learning Survey, parent engagement survey data, Kindness Club surveys, attendance data)
- Opportunities for students to show learning in different ways (UDL). With SEL being one of the components of the 3-block model of Universal Design for Learning, we are working through an inclusive lens – one that emphasizes inclusive instructional practices (i.e. differentiated instruction). We are seeking the input of teachers, counsellors and support staff – especially those that work with our most striving or vulnerable learners; including working with our SWIS worker to advocate and support children who are new to Canada.
- Three Way Conference feedback (student self-reflection and goal setting) incorporated when communicating student learning (i.e. work habits and self assessment)
- Evidence of ongoing Core Competency development:
 - Goal setting and reflection will encourage students to take responsibility and ownership of their learning
 - Goal attainment will strengthen our students' sense of accomplishment and self-efficacy/confidence
 - Self and peer assessment will develop students' critical thinking skills as well as their ability to identify their strengths and challenges
 - Timely and effective feedback will encourage student reflection, help students to direct their efforts toward improvement and increase perseverance as they self-regulate
 - Communication skills will be developed through regular opportunities for self-reflection, peer assessment, Three Way Conferences, etc.
- Feedback from parents and students pertaining to our objectives considered and incorporated into our implementation of the School Learning Plan throughout the year (surveys, Three Way Conferences, etc.)
- Evidence of responsible decision making as students navigate through relationships with peers.

COMMUNICATION: HOW WE WILL SHARE OUR LEARNING JOURNEY WITH OUR COMMUNITY

- Announcements, class discussions, student leadership initiatives including assemblies, posters, TV in front hallway, school message on report cards, newsletters
- Three Way Conferences & Self-Assessment of Competencies focussed on "I can" statements (e.g. I can get better through self-awareness exercises, developing strategies for self-regulation, and evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies).
- Parent engagement through email, newsletters, school website, PAC meetings, surveys and MS Teams
- Communicating student SEL progress informally (Three Way conferences, email, telephone calls, MS Teams meetings) and formally (report cards) in student and parent friendly language
- School Learning Focus visible in our school throughout common areas and classrooms