

NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING

INFORMATION SHEET

DATE: October 5, 2022
TO: Education Committee
FROM: Deputy Superintendent, Laura Tait
SUBJECT: Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: A District-Wide Focus

Overview

The Department of Learning Services will have a considerable focus for the 2022/23 school year, aligning with the Board Goal of creating a *safe, caring and healthy learning and working environment that is inclusive of the diversity of our entire learning community*. Compassionate Systems Leadership will continue to inform our work and as an extension Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) will overarch much of the strategies aimed at meeting the goals of the Board and the objectives of the Superintendent's Operational Plan.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care has clearly emphasized that this is the work of every school district in the province. These concepts reflect the mission, vision and values of NLPS, and are ever present in our Board Strategic Plan. More than all of this, though, these words and their meanings sit in the hearts of all of us, when we think about the students in our care, and their families.

Background

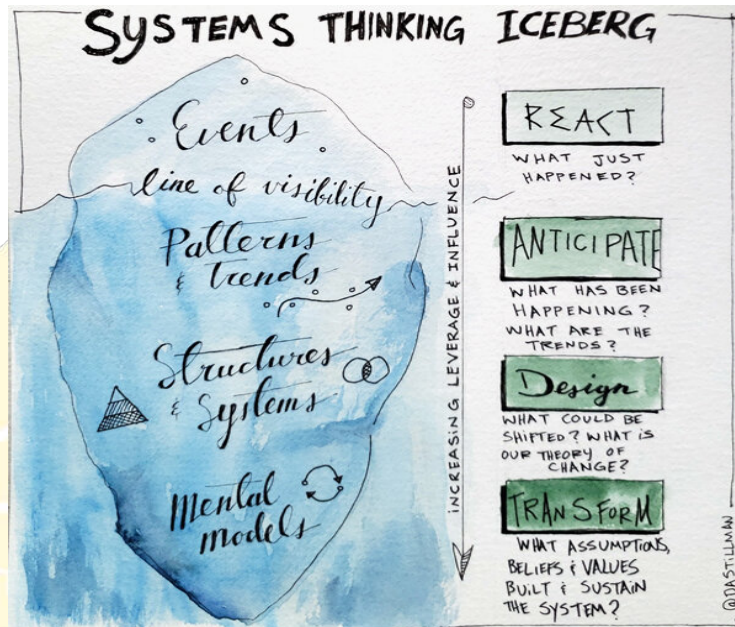
Compassionate Systems Leadership

Compassionate Systems Leadership (CSL) is a way of being or a way of doing things with compassion. It is about slowing down, being mindful, considering the impact our behaviours, values and beliefs have on those around us or the system around us. In other words, CSL is about always being aware of how we're showing up each day.

In the 2021/22 school year CSL was the focus with our system leaders/managers. These four sessions were facilitated and modelled differently than in past. The approach was compassionate: time was given, diversity of how we learn was at the forefront of planning and content was shared with much dialogue and practice.

An example of a tool in CSL is the Systems Thinking Iceberg. The iceberg provides a framework for understanding an entire system and reminds us to not focus solely on a particular problem or event, but to dig deeper. In nature, only ten percent of an iceberg can be seen above the water, yet what shapes the iceberg, the water temperature and currents, takes place below the surface, out of sight. This

mirrors what often happens in social/educational change efforts where we spend time focusing on what we see and not delving deeper to determine the systemic drivers. Attending to only those things that can be easily seen or experienced, prevents us from getting to the deeper motivators or drivers of our system. If we want real, deep change we need to get to those assumptions, beliefs and values that have built and continue to sustain the system.



So, how does this impact student learning and success? When we consider a problem of practice within our educational system, the iceberg supports us to move beyond - a simple solution to a complex problem; a solution that may only provide a quick fix or superficially address the issue. A systems thinker will ask about relationships to other activities within a system, look for patterns over time, and seek root causes. This kind of thinking will work to achieve much needed systems transformation. The transformation aimed at improving the life chances of all of the children and youth we serve.

Compassion acknowledges our essential sameness: our common humanity. Compassion implies the capacity to empathize deeply with this suffering, to realize that it is completely the same in nature to our own suffering: our experiences of suffering connect us as humans. Compassion goes beyond empathy to a willingness and commitment to act in some way to alleviate suffering. From a place of compassion, our actions (and the intention behind them) influence not only ourselves and the individuals we work directly with, but also the entire system.

We are a human organization. Tending to compassion, as educators, helps to bring the human limbic system to a place where higher level learning can more easily occur. When children are feeling safe and understood, only then can their brains and bodies be ready for learning.



Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Justice, meaning treating others with fairness and equity. Equity, each person getting what they need to learn. Diversity is a representation of people's identities and experiences, not only in NLPS but the world overall. And Inclusion is making this diversity meaningful. Inclusion is embracing these differences and using them to inform what we do.

The Department of Learning Services would like to suggest a JEDI stance. This stance could be described as *Making intentional choices to create a continuum of opportunities that lead to Success for All*. As we in DLS believe that our school leaders are best positioned to move this important work forward in schools, we started with our principals and vice-principals (PVPs). For the 2022/23 school year, this will be the focus of our monthly PVP meetings. The emphasis for this year, through the lens of JEDI, will be:

- Supportive Planning in schools
- Tier 1 Instructional Practices
- Making this work visible

Our Manager's Learning Series, again will be through a CSL lens while considering Human Resources and Labour Relations issues that are of a JEDI nature.

The Department of Learning Services strategies in the Superintendent's Operational Plan have been prioritized to reflect the principles of JEDI across the system. Examples of some of these strategies are:

Strategy: Deepen understanding of and personalize, the pathways to graduation.

Strategy: Establish and communicate a district-wide multi-tiered model of support.

Strategy: Enhance understanding of Tier 1 systems of support.

Strategy: Build leadership capacity for educational leaders.

Strategy: Build an overarching framework for children and youth in care.

Strategy: Create strategies to decolonize the system.

Strategy: Champion the Indigenous focus graduation requirements.

The principles underlying both **Compassionate Systems Leadership** and **JEDI** serve NLPS well, from the classroom to district leadership. This work is deeply personal and evolutionary in nature. It will take time as meaningful work does. We will measure the impacts of this work against the four Board Goals. Our key metrics will stay consistent over time, in the form of literacy/numeracy rates, transition rates and graduation rates. If students in NLPS are treated consistently with compassion and through a lens of justice and equity, if diversity is celebrated and they feel included, we will see all students **graduating** with dignity, purpose and options.



Justice – the right to be treated and the responsibility to treat others with fairness and equity. Making sure personal and social circumstances are not obstacles to achieving education potential.

Equity – With equality, we think “same” – each individual or group is given the same resources opportunities. With equity, we consider the different barriers and conditions that exist for individuals and groups. Different resources or opportunities may be needed to reach an equal outcome.

Diversity – a representation of people’s identities and experiences, collectively and as individuals.

Inclusion – makes the diversity that exists in our community meaningful. Differences in identity and experience are embraced and included in how things get done. Systems, structures and programs are created with the needs and talents of a diversity of people and groups in mind, so that people feel welcomed, valued and affirmed.

[Minister’s, K-12 education partners’ statement on support for SOGI](#): This statement on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) is from Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education and Child Care; BC School Trustees Association; BC School Superintendents Association; BC Association of School Business Officials, BC Principals’ and Vice-Principals’ Association; BC Teachers’ Federation; CUPE BC; BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils; Federation of Independent School Associations; ARC Foundation; First Nations Education Steering Committee; First Nations Schools Association and Métis Nation BC.