

**NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
INFORMATION SHEET**

DATE: April 5, 2023
TO: Education Committee
FROM: Kerri Steel, Director of Instruction; Trina Norgan, District Vice Principal
SUBJECT: Elementary Inclusion Outreach Program

Board of Education Strategic Plan – Board Goal

Safe, caring and healthy learning and working environment that is inclusive of the diversity of our entire learning community.

Objectives:

- *Increase the number of students who feel welcomed, safe, connected and have a sense of belonging in their school*
- *Increase the number of students who feel there are two or more adults at their school who care about them*
- *Increasing awareness and capacity in addressing mental health and wellness*

Background

The Inclusion Outreach Team (IOT) was redesigned this year to address the ongoing needs of families and learners in our system. It is a coming together of the Inclusion Support Team, which has provided consultative and capacity building support for school teams since 2015, with the Elementary Outreach Team, which was created last year, to support students who have refused to attend school due to mental health or other barriers for a number of years, or who had not returned to school following the pandemic.

The team works in collaboration with school teams and is an extension of the services provided by schools. Our goal is to create a continuum of wrap around support for students and families of learners with diverse needs. This includes students who require highly individualized supportive planning due to a specific diagnosis or developmental need, (e.g. students with a diagnosis of autism who are non-verbal and have complex behaviours in the school environment), or students who are experiencing significant barriers in attending school.

Overseen by the District Vice-Principal of Inclusive Education, the team consists of 3.5 Inclusion Outreach Coordinators, 1 Outreach Teacher, 4 Inclusion Support Workers (Education Assistants with additional training and expertise in providing this type of support) and a Child and Youth Care Worker.

There are three main areas of focus for this team: supporting students with complex learning needs, supporting students with complex behaviours, and system-wide capacity building and resource development. Services are accessed through referrals from school-based teams. The outreach services provided through this team are available for students in grades K-7, (as a complement to the in-house outreach structures in each of the high schools), the capacity building and school-based consultive services are provided K-12.

Response to these referrals can take a variety of forms:

- Observation, plan development and capacity building to create programming and supportive plans for learners who are in school full or part time
- Outreach services to assist parents with accessing community services and resources
- At-home or community based-support for students
- “Hybrid” programming where a student is partly supported through at home or in the community, and is attending their neighbourhood school part-time
- Small-group opportunities in the outreach classroom or other community locations
- Outreach and school-based staff partnering in school settings to create functional programming opportunities
- Transition planning and support for vulnerable students
- Facilitation of workshops and training sessions for staff at the individual, school and district level

In addition to the intervention and capacity building the team provides for individual students, they are also engaged in broader work across the system. Our Inclusion Outreach Coordinators serve as district partners for the provincial outreach programs for autism (POPARD); fetal alcohol syndrome disorder (POPFASD) and inclusion outreach (PIOP). They provide site and student specific Non-violent Crisis Intervention Training in collaboration with the trainers who provide the larger-group opportunities, and they assist with the creation and curation of resources for supporting our learners with diverse abilities and disabilities. They also provide support and capacity building for staff in both of the District Life Skills programs.

This school year (as of March 31, 2023), the team has processed referrals for 192 students, spanning all 28 of our elementary schools, and 4/6 secondary schools.

In order to track the progress of the individual learners who receive outreach interventions, the team has been tracking their attendance and participation in these opportunities, increased engagement and hours of attendance at their neighbourhood schools, student self-reflections, parent feedback, and monitored their academic growth. The team is also piloting a research-based, individualized assessment tool, the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS), which is designed to assess a youth’s day-to-day functioning and is used to track changes in functioning over time.

41 of these referrals involved outreach support for elementary-aged students. Of those 41 students, 16 have fully returned to their neighbourhood schools, and another 19 are engaged in a hybrid approach, as we work to reconnect them to their school communities.

The outreach teacher has developed an off-site classroom environment for small group interventions at Dufferin where 20 students receive intervention support daily. The team has also collaborated with teams in three of our elementary schools to develop similar environments in-house. Several other school teams have visited one of these classrooms, and we see this model of support being developed across the system as other schools create these flexible settings based on the individual learner needs in their own buildings.

Feedback from parents and school teams has been overwhelmingly positive. Among the group of learners who are now attending their neighbourhood school full-time are students who had not attended school regularly even prior to the pandemic. Students in the hybrid programs are engaging more successfully and joyfully in their home school environments and are developing authentic connections within their peer groups. Many families whom we have struggled to build relationships with are engaging with both outreach and school teams more consistently and openly than ever before.