

# Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools SD #68

## Enhancing Student Learning Report September 2024

In Review of Year Four of the NLPS Strategic Plan 2019-2023



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## Section B: Moving Forward

### *Planning and Adjusting for Continuous Improvement*

#### Introduction: District Context

Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (NLPS) resides within the traditional territories of the Snuneymuxw, Snaw Naw As and Stz'uminus First Nations. NLPS also partners with the Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre and the Mid-Island Metis Nation.

The district supports 15,648 learners, of whom 17% (2703) identify as Indigenous and 9% (1471) with recognized disabilities and diverse abilities.

The district represents a population of 170,367 (2021 Census data), which includes the City of Nanaimo, the towns of Ladysmith and Lantzville, Gabriola Island, and the North Oyster and Cedar communities. The 2021 Census placed Nanaimo as one of the five fastest growing communities in Canada. The region has a lower unemployment rate (4.8%) than the provincial average, (5.2%) however, it is higher than the Vancouver Island Coastal Region's unemployment rate (4.2%).

Nanaimo is also home to Vancouver Island University, a public university that offers trades programs, bachelor's, and master's degree programs. However, on average, Nanaimo's population has a lower level of postsecondary education than the provincial average. As a result, Nanaimo's average annual household income is approximately \$20,000 lower than the BC average.

Following extensive community engagement and feedback, the NLPS Board of Education approved a new Strategic Plan in June 2024 for 2024-2028. This new Strategic Plan replaces the district's first-ever Strategic Plan which was active from 2019-2023. The new Strategic Plan will direct the actions, decisions, and direction of NLPS over the next four years.

#### Current Strategic Plan Priorities

NLPS concluded the final year of the district's [2019-2023 Strategic Plan](#) and began working with students, staff, Indigenous partners, and stakeholder groups to create a new [2024-2028 Strategic Plan](#).

The 2019-2023 Strategic Plan was NLPS' first ever strategic plan, and the district viewed the plan as the starting point to engage the community and stakeholders on the goals and vision for NLPS.

2019 – 2024 Strategic Plan			
Goals			
Continuous improvement in students with complex and unique abilities, Indigenous, and overall student population	Safe, Caring and Healthy Learning and Working Environment that is inclusive of diversity of our entire learning community	To be a leader in Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability	Truth & Reconciliation
Objectives			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continuous improvement in Special Needs,</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increase the number of students who feel welcomed, safe,</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establish a Board Environmental Stewardship and</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Implementation of the Syeyutsus Reconciliation</li></ul>

<p>Indigenous and overall student population on student achievement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue providing collaborative opportunities for employees to work toward full implementation of the new curriculum.</li> <li>• Improve opportunities for early intervention and learning Increase leadership capacity and excellence.</li> </ul>	<p>connected, and have a sense of belonging in their school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing awareness and capacity in supporting children and youth in care.</li> <li>• Increase the number of students who feel there are two or more adults at their school who care about them.</li> <li>• Increasing awareness and capacity in addressing mental health and wellness.</li> <li>• Accelerate seismic upgrades and upgrade aging facilities Increase employee engagement.</li> </ul>	<p>Sustainability Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase learning opportunities for students and staff on climate change and sustainability Implement a food security initiative that includes community partners.</li> <li>• Supply and support infrastructure for sorting, composting and recycling at all educational facilities.</li> <li>• Increase opportunities for outdoor education and programming in the district.</li> </ul>	<p>Framework in the school community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support innovative Indigenous educational and community partnerships.</li> <li>• Implement Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action #57 "Promote land and hul'qumi'num language-based learning programs."</li> </ul>
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The [NLPS Strategic Plan 2024- 2028](#) includes voices from our community and aligns with the Ministry's FESL. The plan sets the direction for the district across three overarching priority goals: Student Success, Student and Employee Wellness, and Truth and Reconciliation. It includes metrics that will gauge the district's progress towards the plan's goals and objectives which will also allow for refinement based on yearly data.

2024 – 2028 Strategic Plan		
Guided by Pillars of: Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, the Syeyutsus Reconciliation Framework, & Environmental Stewardship		
Goals		
Student Success	Student and Employee Wellness	Truth & Reconciliation
Objectives		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase literacy rates for all students.</li> <li>• Increase numeracy rates for all students.</li> <li>• Increase graduation rates for students who are Indigenous, who have disabilities/and or diverse abilities and/or who are Children in Care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of students who feel welcome, safe and have a sense of belonging in their school.</li> <li>• Increase the number of employees who feel valued and engaged.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness of and access to resources available to support hul'qumi'num language learning.</li> <li>• Create and share district-wide, Syeyutsus Principles of Teaching and Learning.</li> </ul>
Metrics		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report cards K-12</li> <li>• FSA (Grades 4 &amp; 7)</li> <li>• Grade 10 Literacy and Numeracy Assessments</li> <li>• Grade 12 Literacy Assessments</li> <li>• Graduation Rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Learning Survey (Grades 4, 7, 10, 12)</li> <li>• Annual Employee Engagement Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of educators who are aware of the resources available.</li> <li>• The frequency of access to these resources</li> </ul>
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**Continuous improvement**

The district’s [Continuous Improvement of Instruction and Assessment Policy](#) values and supports cycles of inquiry. Each school year, we move through a process that includes Planning, Acting, Observing and Reflecting at both the district and school level. (See graphic below and Appendix A: Strategic Planning Cycle)

**NLPS Continuous Improvement Cycle**



**Looking Back on the Year: Effectiveness of Implemented Strategies**

The Department of Learning Services (DLS) developed strategies and high-level actions to deliver on the final year of the 2019–2023 Strategic Plan. The DLS Operations plan 2023–2024 focused on a realistic path with guidance from the Syeyutsus Reconciliation Policy and the Framework for Ministry of Education and Child Care’s Vision and Mandates which includes the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning.

**2023-2024 DLS Operations Plan**

**Objectives**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue providing collaborative opportunities for employees to work toward full implementation of the new curriculum.</li> <li>Improve opportunities for early intervention and learning.</li> <li>Increase leadership opportunities for early intervention and learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the number of students who feel welcomed, safe, and have a sense of belonging.</li> <li>Increasing awareness and capacity for supporting Children and Youth in Care.</li> <li>Increasing awareness and capacity in addressing mental health and wellness.</li> <li>Increase employee engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annually reduce district greenhouse gas emissions.</li> <li>Increase learning opportunities for students and staff on climate change and sustainability.</li> <li>Supply and support infrastructure for sorting, composting, and recycling at all educational facilities.</li> <li>Increase opportunities for outdoor education and programming in the district.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the Syeyutsus Framework.</li> <li>Reconciliation Framework in the school community.</li> <li>Support innovative Indigenous educational and community partnerships.</li> <li>Implement Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action #57.</li> <li>Promote land and hul'q'umi'num language-based learning programs.</li> </ul>
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**Implemented Strategies**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented components of the Early Learning Framework.</li> <li>Continue to build leadership capacity for Educational Leaders with a focus on JEDI.</li> <li>Continue to promote and facilitate the Educational Leadership growth plan and evaluation process.</li> <li>Create professional learning structures and opportunities to support teachers with the implementation of tier 1 systems in supports.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced and refined tier 3 referral pathways for specialized services and supports.</li> <li>Continue to build capacity regarding mental health and wellness.</li> <li>Continue to build capacity regarding supportive planning for student safety across the system.</li> <li>Create a data dashboard to support adaptive and responsive decision making towards improved student success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support schools with the Zero Waste Initiative and RDN Inquiries focusing on environmental stewardship.</li> <li>Explore learning opportunities for food sustainability and food security.</li> <li>Continue building learning opportunities that support outdoor education and land-based learning.</li> <li>Support the implementation of the Indigenous focus grad requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a district structure to support Transformative Reconciliation at the secondary level.</li> <li>Enhance implementation of the Indigenous focus grad requirements.</li> <li>Continue to increase hul'q'umi'num teaching time at schools across the district.</li> <li>Develop more opportunities for land and language-based programming at schools with on-reserve student populations.</li> <li>Strengthen and formalize relationship with Kw'umut Lelum.</li> </ul>
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**Strategy successes 2023/24**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>K/1 teachers were provided with professional learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Created Learning Services Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zero waste initiative continues to be adopted and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PVP and teacher leaders attended regular learning sessions which</li> </ul>
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<p>opportunities to implement components of the Early Learning Framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Educational Leadership growth plan and evaluation review process allowed PVP to feel supportive and proactively addressed issues.</li> <li>• Successful learning structures included: Numeracy series in three schools, literacy series for Grade 8/9 teachers.</li> <li>• An Intermediate Reading Screener was piloted and positively received and will be implemented district-wide in 2024-25.</li> <li>• Regular reflection of all systems and structures through a JEDI lens.</li> </ul>	<p>Team (District-level 'School-based Team).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brought alignment and structure to referrals which resulted in 114 referrals, 14 outreach, 26 inclusions for elementary and 50 referrals, 5 outreach and 7 for secondary.</li> <li>• Piloted Tier 1 program (Open Parachute) which received positive teacher feedback. This will be extended throughout the full district in 2024-25 school year.</li> <li>• Professional learning opportunities and team consultations were provided for building capacity to support student safety across the system.</li> </ul>	<p>implemented in schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoor education and land-based programs were established at 6 of 8 secondary schools and 20/28 elementary schools and work continues to implement at all schools.</li> <li>• English First Peoples 10 and 12 have been made mandatory in the district. English 12 is no longer offered.</li> </ul>	<p>had a great impact for PVPs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher learning opportunities were supported to enhance the implementation of the Indigenous focus graduation requirements.</li> <li>• A formal information sharing agreement was signed with Kw'umut Lelum. The relationship with Kw'umut Lelum was reorganized and is now shared with both the Indigenous Education Lead and the Inclusive Education Lead.</li> </ul>
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Not all strategies implemented in 2023-2024 saw success. For example, for Learning Services Support Team referrals, there were considerably fewer secondary referrals than elementary referrals. As a result, the district will put systems in place to increase the number of secondary referrals. Additionally, the district is currently limited by the number of language teachers available to teach hul'qumi'num. Moving forward, this will be addressed by emphasizing Core language instruction by classroom teachers and partnerships with local nations and institutions of higher education to recruit and retain local language speakers.

(See Appendix A: Operational Plan)

### Existing and/or Emerging Areas for Growth

Currently we are using Ministry data, reflective conversations with school leaders and individualized supportive plan data (such as IEPs, part-time programs, regulation support plans and outreach tracking), as part of our improvement cycle. The lack of local data to identify struggling student populations and implement effective strategies is the most significant area of growth for the district.

Ministry data identifies a downward district trend in both literacy and numeracy. However, the district has a low FSA participation rate and to provide accurate and timely assessment of progress towards the above goals, it is necessary for the district to identify, implement and successfully engage with learners to produce local data on literacy and numeracy. The district

does not currently have local data to evaluate the Strategic Plan Board Goal of Student Success other than report cards.

In the area of students feeling safe and welcome in their schools, NLPS is on par with the provincial average, and this is an area where the district does have its own additional data which includes the student survey on washroom safety and vaping, Suicide Risk Assessments, Behavioural and Digital Threat Assessments, Violent Incident Reports, ERASE Bullying Reports, BC Adolescent Health Survey, and the Youth Developmental Index. These additional sources of local data indicate that human and social development need to remain an area of focus for NLPS. There is also a need to triangulate and disaggregate this data formally, so that it is more useful to the district in identifying student populations and appropriate strategies.

Of the three Board goals in the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, NLPS has identified literacy and numeracy as the two primary focus areas for student success. Student wellness is the second board goal which the district will continue to measure through the Student Learning Survey.

### **Areas for growth**

The district has identified the following actions and activities to access and curate local data that can be compared with FSA data to provide a more accurate assessment of progress and effectiveness of implemented strategies and the Strategic Plan:

- Creating and implementing district-wide writing and reading snapshot assessments.
- Creating and implementing a district-wide numeracy assessment.
  - Require schools to collect and use this data to inform school-based decisions and inform school plans.
- Disaggregating all Priority Population data and articulating strategies for improvement.
- Take NLPS PowerBI data dashboard to the next level and make this data available to schools to inform the teaching and learning and progress of learners.
- Much of the provincial data for priority populations is unavailable and/or masked due to the small sample size. To address this, the district will:
  - Disaggregate the newly developed assessment data; identify gaps where the Priority Populations are not completing the assessment.
  - Ensure Priority Populations complete the assessment or differentiate our assessment approach to get this information.
- The district will continue to monitor graduation rates and the transition to post-secondary. The 2024-28 Strategic Plan engagement offered good suggestions on how we can increase the number of students actively engaged in their learning. Incorporating and building JEDI principles throughout teaching and learning, in addition to the introduction of high-interest courses are suggestions from the Strategic Plan engagement process (which included Indigenous partners as well as students).

## **Ongoing Strategic Engagement (Qualitative Data)**

NLPS approaches Strategic Engagement opportunities with the goal of being student-centered while taking direction from the Syeyutsus Framework as outlined in the district's Public Participation policy. The Syeyutsus Framework was incorporated into the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan and is guiding wisdom for the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

The district is committed to honouring the land and using the Syeyutsus Framework to guide and inform by:



1. Working with our students, staff, Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, and community partner groups in a spirit of respect, courage and vulnerability to bridge together different views and beliefs, in a restorative and caring way.
2. Providing ongoing and meaningful learning opportunities for all students, staff, and community partner groups. With every engagement opportunity, the district will value:
  - **Transparency and accountability.**
    - a. It will clearly communicate engagement opportunities, the process it intends to follow and will share the results and outcome of its decision-making process.
  - **Inclusivity.**
    - a. With direction from the Inclusion Policy, engagement opportunities are based on the principles of respect, acceptance, safety and equity.
  - **Authenticity.**
    - a. The community will be given the opportunity to participate in a variety of avenues. The district will discern all respectful and authentic feedback during the decision-making process.
  - **Relevance.**
    - a. All engagement, no matter in-person or electronic, will be received and considered, provided it is relevant to the respective engagement process.

### **2023- 2024 NLPS Strategic Plan Engagement**

In 2023-2024, NLPS embarked on an eight-month engagement process with students, employees, local First Nations, partner organizations and the community, to draft, refine and finalize the 2024-2028 NLPS Strategic Plan. The strategic plan was formally approved by the Board of Education in June 2024.

The district employed a full engagement process for the Strategic Plan which included in-person and online engagement opportunities, numerous meetings with Indigenous and community partners, as well as students and staff.

Due to the large number of engagement opportunities offered the plan, there was significant diversity in the feedback received. Some of the themes that emerged from the process included the need for improved school facilities, better student engagement processes, more support to address bullying, more effective teaching practices (especially for students with diverse abilities), additional JEDI resources, increased mental health supports, more emphasis on environmental stewardship education and best practices, and the need for better collaboration among school staff.

Participants were provided with all the engagement feedback through reports to the Board of Education which were publicly available as part of the agenda packages for board meetings.

The district is satisfied with the strong level of engagement from students, families, and Indigenous and community partner groups, especially for online modalities. However, we continue to face challenges with in-person engagement, especially when it comes to engaging with district families. Providing multiple opportunities, including evenings and/or daytime engagement sessions that are school based are avenues we can consider going forward but will have to be balanced against district staffing and resources.

## **Continuous Engagement Strategies**

### **Leaders for Learning: Indigenous Education Council/Indigenous Staff Survey**

Through meetings and a survey of staff who identify as Indigenous, it was shared that there are several areas where there could be an improvement in Indigenous Education, including having Indigenous staff feel more valued and culturally safe. Additionally, it was shared that there are improvements needed in district leadership regarding the role of Indigenous Education in schools and the need for an audit criterion to be put in place. All feedback was shared with Indigenous Education staff, Department of Learning Services and Principals/Vice-Principals.

### **Learning Support Services Team**

The LSS Team is part of the Department of Learning Services and works with school teams to identify strategies/solutions and provide program referrals. Feedback included the lack of resources to address the increasing complexity of students, more violence in younger grades, increased mental health issues, and effective resource allocation. This information was used to inform many systems, structures and services such as the creation of a district inclusion support team and piloting a Tier 1 mental health support program that will be made available throughout the district next year.

### **Employee Engagement Survey**

Feedback from all staff survey included the need for strategic direction, organizational commitment, strong relationships, work on JEDI, employee wellbeing and communications. This information was shared back to all employees and areas for improvement were highlighted and communicated. This information is being used to create strategies to address these issues and through the Strategic Plan through the goal of Employee Wellness.

### **Student Voice Circle**

The Student Voice Circle was created following a district policy that requires annual opportunities for students to provide ideas and feedback on school and educational issues. The students highlighted the need for more mental health supports and for strategies to address vaping and washroom safety. These were discussion-based feedback sessions, so students listened to all feedback provided to senior staff and trustees at the discussions.

### **Parent Engagement Tool (Elementary)**

The Department of Learning Services and principals/vice-principals built a tool that guides users through a variety of equity informed questions, as they plan for parent/caregiver engagement and/or school events in response to concerns that lack of JEDI focus was contributing to low caregiver engagement. Schools are reflecting on this feedback to inform how they provide engagement opportunities at their schools (Ex. Open house, IEP meeting structure, etc.)

### **District/Parent Advisory Councils**

Principals and vice-principals meet monthly with school Parent Advisory Councils to discuss issues and work collaboratively on solutions at the school level. The PACs keep minutes which are used to inform future meeting agendas. In addition, Board and Senior Staff attend monthly District PAC meetings.

### **Regular senior staff/internal partner meetings**

Senior district staff meet 1-2 times a month with leadership of the Nanaimo District Teachers' Association, CUPE, Principal/Vice-Principal Association, District Parent Advisory Council Executive to discuss issues and build relationships to facilitate collaboration. All these groups had formal

consultation opportunities around the Strategic Plan but were also able to regularly provide thoughts and feedback as the plan progressed which helped shape the final goals and strategies of the Strategic Plan.

## Alignment for Successful Implementation and Adjustment and Adaptations: Next Steps

The 2019-2023 Strategic Plan was NLPS' first ever Strategic Plan and introduced the district system to strategic planning as a process. Since it was drafted and shared district-wide there have been valuable learnings, including the need for realistic and attainable strategies and outcomes in addition to the need to have local data to track progress as we move forward. New to the process is the ESL Reporting Order, which did not exist when the first Strategic Plan was drafted.

Both the district Strategic Plan process, which is based on the continuous improvement cycle, and ESL reporting have established the following benefits: annual planning, prioritizing, system alignment, opportunities for the system to be united around a north star, and operational planning. It is clearly understood now that with four goals and twenty-four broad objectives, the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan lacked focus, cohesion and prioritization. It also did not include agreed upon metrics. These aspects created challenges for departmental operational planning and reporting. As a result, it was difficult to measure continuous improvement and whether the district was successful in meeting the goals of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

NLPS has many strengths and successes. The 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, with its implicit complexities, and ESL Reporting requirements were not aligned, which has created complexities and led to a lack of reporting on some of the required areas.

Moving forward, the 2024 – 2028 Strategic Plan more closely aligns with the ESL Reporting requirements. In addition, it has clear metrics corresponding with all objectives. The district will be moving forward with processes and methods to gather more local data over the next four years to better track if the objectives are being met. A district practice has recently been established that requires that departmental operational plans that align with the Strategic Plan be created across the district; these will also be reviewed annually for progress. This is especially important for NLPS' annual process, as it will ensure that allocation of resources to achieve Strategic Plan goals is considered. Additionally, collaboration between department leaders will enhance alignment throughout the district and promote continued monitoring, development, and evaluation of operational plans to ensure they align with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan (guided by the wisdom of the Syeyutsus Framework, JEDI stance and environmental stewardship).

The NLPS 2024-2028 Strategic Plan has now been set as the overarching plan to guide the district's focus, goals and decision-making. Operational plans flow into the Strategic Plan and outline how each department will align workflow to support the goals of the Strategic Plan. Similarly, School Plans will also flow into the district Strategic Plan. In this way, the plans remain aligned with each other, and the Strategic Plan informs all other district plans and processes.

## Conclusion

Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools is focused on creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment where every individual flourishes. Through our new 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, we will support the Ministry's FESL and use both local and provincial data to inform our progress on the Board of Education's Goals in the Strategic Plan of: Student Success, Student and Employee Wellness, and Truth and Reconciliation.

NLPS is committed to multiple pathways and platforms to achieve these goals and contribute to successful outcomes for our learners. Our continuous improvement cycle will inform our district's planning and priorities and progress towards achieving the goals of the 2024- 2028 Strategic Plan.

We have identified the need for more local data for a more wholesome view of learner success and improvement. As this data is made available, it will inform the district of our progress in the key areas of literacy and numeracy and whether we are on track to meet the objectives of the district's Strategic Plan.

The Syeyutsus Framework for Truth and Reconciliation, a Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (JEDI) Stance and Environmental Sustainability will provide the guiding wisdom for our actions and decision-making as we continue to navigate a dynamic and ever-changing educational landscape.

The NLPS Board of Education is committed to ensuring all employees, regardless of their role in the organization, understand the impact they have on student success and achieving the goals of the Strategic Plan.