

NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING
INFORMATION SHEET

DATE: April 8, 2026
TO: Strategic Directions Committee
FROM: Kerri Steel & Kirstin Funke Robinson, Directors of Instruction
SUBJECT: District Skills Programs Review

Background

This review, completed in the spring of 2026, is an exploration of three district-level programs that support students with complex developmental needs: RISE at Rutherford Elementary, Elementary District Skills at Georgia Avenue Elementary, and Secondary District Skills at Nanaimo District Secondary School. The review gathered feedback from parents/caregivers, students, and staff, to enhance services for students and families.

Discussion

Enrollment in these district programs includes close collaboration with families to consider their goals for their child where significant medical, behavioural or developmental complexities make it challenging for students to access their learning in typical classroom settings. RISE provides an additional focus on social-emotional learning and navigating peer relationships. Each program serves up to 12 students and is overseen by an Inclusion Support Teacher, who collaborates with itinerant specialist staff as needed. There is a 1:1 ratio of education assistant support/student. District Skills programs typically support students long term, while RISE is designed as one-to-two-year, transitional support. Most students initially attend their neighbourhood schools, although they also occasionally enroll directly from a home school program or independent learning center. Placement decisions are made collaboratively by schools and families.

Recommendations

Based upon the review of the themes that emerged from the data gathered as part of this review, each of the six facets of these programs that input was gathered about (i.e., *physical environments, social environments, teaching and learning practices, supports and partnerships, transitions, and referral processes*) are addressed with a recommendation for action, as follows:

1. **Physical environments:** Complete a fulsome gap analysis of space and equipment needs in these district programs.
2. **Social environments:** Expand intentional opportunities for students enrolled in these programs to engage across the school and broader community.
3. **Teaching and learning practices:** Support implementation of evidence-based practices for functional life skills curriculum and assessment.
4. **Supports and partnerships:** Formalize mechanisms for interagency collaboration and information sharing with community partners.
5. **Transitions:** Create a transition “road map” as a shared resource for staff and parents to understand what to expect at times of transition into or out of these programs.
6. **Referral processes:** Establish and communicate clear inclusion and referral criteria for these programs that are responsive to current student needs.