

BOARD OF
EDUCATION



Comox Valley Schools

A Community of Learners

INNOVATIVE • INQUISITIVE • INCLUSIVE

Strategic Plan

District Annual Report

2020-2021

School District No. 71
607 Cumberland Road
Courtenay, B.C. V9N 7G5
www.comoxvalleyschools.ca



A Community of Learners

INNOVATIVE • INQUISITIVE • INCLUSIVE

The Board of Education acknowledges that we are on the traditional territories of the K'omoks First Nation. We would like to thank them for the privilege of living on their land and the gift of working with their children.

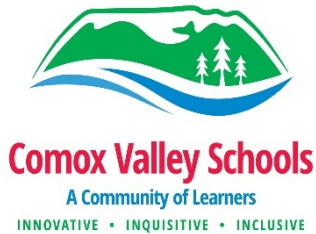
Comox Valley Schools District Review Report



Our District Review Report is our Annual Progress Report, which accompanies our Strategic Plan Annual Report. These reports uphold the Boards commitment to supporting the priorities outlined in the Ministry of Educations Framework for Enhancing Student Learning.

School Districts are requested to develop plans to improve student achievement. Districts have flexibility to create plans that meet the unique needs of their communities but are required to report on the intellectual, social and career development of students. Also, district plans must address vulnerable student populations, Indigenous students, students with special needs and children in care.

THIS IS OUR STORY



Message from the Superintendent

On behalf of Comox Valley Schools, thank you for taking the time to read our story and review our strategic plan.

This past school year was probably one of the most challenging years we all faced. The COVID-19 pandemic affected all of us. We were required to learn how to deliver learning opportunities to our students and families in different ways. The resilience and creativity shown by our staff and students was truly remarkable. We learned how to deliver education, support, and address the unique needs of our students in new ways.



Although as a district and community we faced several challenges, we had a number of successful experiences. Several of our schools competed and placed in both National and International competitions such as Robotics, Destination Imagination and Improve just to name a few.

2021 VEX Competitive Robotics World Championships:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/valley-students-continue-their-excellence-in-robotics-in-virtual-tournament/>

First Online National Destination Imagination Competition:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/destination-imagination-students-shine-in-first-online-national-tournament/>

Our online school (NIDES) responded to the global pandemic and saw an increase of 1000 students from across the province. The school was able to restructure and accept all our students and provided them with a quality educational program.

On behalf of the Senior Leaders, we extend our gratitude to our staff and families who worked together this past year to support and guide our students.

I would like to especially thank all SD71 staff for keeping all students and each other safe throughout this pandemic. Your extra efforts and commitment to keeping schools open and safe is greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Tom Demeo

Superintendent/CEO

Message from the Board Chair

On behalf of the Comox Valley Board of Education, I am very pleased to review this report which documents our progress in pursuing our mission - to inspire engaged, compassionate, resilient, lifelong learners and cultivate a collaborative community together.

Our district experienced immense challenges throughout 2020-21, as we moved through the second school year impacted by the global Covid pandemic. Our dedicated staff worked tirelessly to maintain highly effective educational programs and support student wellbeing while responding to constantly changing conditions. We appreciate the commitment of each and every person, our senior administrators, school leadership, educators, and support staff, who truly showed the strength of our learning community.



Throughout the challenges, focus was provided by our strategic plan priorities, Educational Excellence, Community Engagement, Organizational Stability & Environmental Stewardship and Physical Health & Mental Well-Being. These lenses made it possible to continually monitor and evaluate progress on a range of initiatives and develop action plans for the work still to be done. This report provides evidence to support the effectiveness of programs implemented to achieve our broad goals in these areas and their alignment with Ministry requirements. At Comox Valley Schools, we are proud of the achievements made and excited to continue our work together.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila McDonnell,
Board Chair

ABOUT US

Comox Valley Schools (SD71) is a positive, progressive, and growing school district situated on the east coast of Vancouver Island on the traditional territory of the K'omoks First Nation. Located within the Valley are the municipalities we serve, City of Courtenay, the Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, and the Regional District; each providing their own unique services and community cultures.

As a learning organization, we work closely with our educational partners to develop responsible, compassionate citizens and successful lifelong learners. Over 1,600 employees work to provide a comprehensive educational program to approximately 10,480 students from kindergarten to grade 12 in our 15 elementary schools, one (1) middle school, three (3) secondary schools, two (2) alternative schools, and an online learning school. Comox Valley Schools annual operating budget is approximately \$100 million.

Number of Students Across All Grades 2020/21

Student Group	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Others	Total
All Students	715	740	729	700	715	740	735	725	750	717	771	830	1,574	415	10,480
Indigenous	79	112	113	115	134	144	134	135	164	140	113	142	171	42	1,736
Students With Special Needs	14	23	24	35	63	93	99	88	190	88	87	94	181	mask	904

*Other includes elementary ungraded, secondary ungraded, and graduated adults in the school system

STRATEGIC PLAN

School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) Board of Education

Vision Statement - An inclusive learning community that embraces diversity, fosters relationships and empowers all learners to have a positive impact on the world.

Mission Statement - To inspire engaged, compassionate, resilient lifelong learners and cultivate a collaborative community together.

At the June 2019 Board meeting, the Trustees approved the motion to accept the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

2019-2023 Strategic Plan:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/StrategicPlanOnline2019.pdf>

By accepting the plan, the district committed to aligning its resources to support the direction outlined in the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan is the result of a journey the district embarked on with all our partner groups and the broader community. Our board heard what was important to our stakeholders and those values are evident in our plan.

The plan will serve as a guide for all schools as they continue to support student success and continuous improvement.

Vision

An inclusive learning community that embraces diversity, fosters relationships, and empowers all learners to have a positive impact on the world.

Mission

To inspire engaged, compassionate, resilient, lifelong learners and cultivate a collaborative community together.

Value Statement

We Value and Believe In

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trusting relationships based on respect, integrity, and ethical behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A commitment to Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equity, inclusion, dignity, and acceptance for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global awareness and environmental stewardship
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovation, creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accountability and shared responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open and engaging communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celebration of learning

Our Strategic Plan defines four strategic priorities and subsequent goals. Each one of the strategic priorities reflect the input from our stakeholders and community.

2019-2023 Strategic Plan:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/StrategicPlanOnline2019.pdf>

Strategic Priority One:

Educational Excellence

Goal: Optimize innovative practices and learning opportunities



Strategic Priority Two:

Community Engagement

Goal: Deepen integration of Indigenous ways and knowing

Goal: Foster relationships with community, parents, and educational partners

Strategic Priority Three:

Organizational Stability & Environmental Stewardship

Goal: Optimize infrastructure to support learning

Goal: Foster environmental stewardship

Strategic Priority Four:

Physical Health & Mental Well-Being

Goal: Invest in the holistic well-being of our people

Strategic Priority #1 - Educational Excellence

Improving student outcomes while allowing students to be successful in their educational journey is a key priority for Comox Valley Schools. Our commitment to allowing all students to experience success is critical. As such our focus is on all learners in our system, especially those that have struggled to find success. By optimizing innovative practices and creating meaningful learning opportunities we believe all our students can be successful.

A review of our 2020-2021 Strategic Plan Annual Reports (SPAR) Educational Excellence will show the numerous ways our schools created valued learning opportunities for all students.

2020-2021 Educational Excellence Annual Report:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Educational-Excellence-Annual-Report-2020-2021.pdf>

The past school year provided many challenges and opportunities for our schools and students. Our Secondary schools were required to shift to a quarter system (2 classes per day switching every 10 weeks) from a semester system (4 classes per day for 20 weeks).

This new way of delivering education required our staff to be innovative and creative as well it required our students to shift their focus and routines. The transition to a new way of doing things caused some unrest among partners. Some felt that students were not provided with adequate educational opportunities/progress. As the year progressed attitudes began to shift with regards to the new system. The district and schools reviewed some earlier data and discovered some interesting results.

In the grade 10 Numeracy and Literacy results when compared to the top two proficiencies on the grid between SD71 and the province (pre-COVID/COVID) we exceeded the provincial average on the quarter system for both assessments. Whereas in the traditional semester system we were below the provincial average in Numeracy.

*For Proficiencies 3 &4

Numeracy	Nov 2020 Quarter	Jan 2020 Semester
District	41.28	38.31
Provincial	38.99	41.75

Literacy	Nov 2020 Quarter	Jan 2020 Semester
District	74.39	76.36
Provincial	71.11	73.84

The above is simply one indication; however, it does require us to examine our structure and reflect on the year by asking what changes did we make that in fact proved to be valuable and improved student learning or created opportunities for student success.

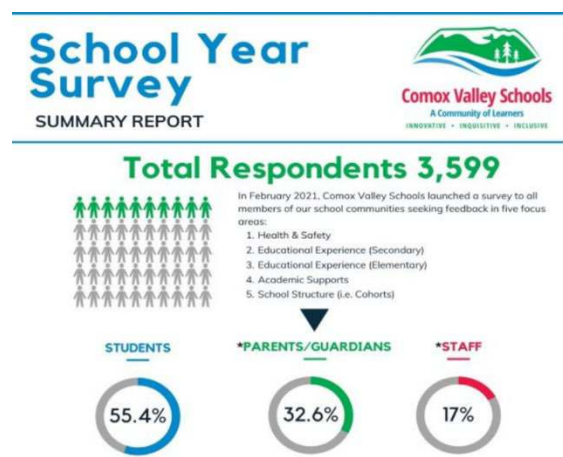
This past year our schools implemented flex time to support students who had fallen behind. The success of that initiative has led to keeping that structure in some of our schools.

This school year most schools returned to a traditional semester timetable with some slight alterations around providing guided independent learning time. Schools will engage in discussions and inquiry throughout the year and review their current format with an eye to create a learning structure that meets the needs for all learners.

This past year also saw significant growth in our Distributed Learning Program, North Island Distant Education School. Our enrolment grew by approximately 1200 students in a short period of time (Approx. 3 months) This growth is attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that families were looking for learning opportunities that would meet their specific needs.

As a result of the drastic increase in enrollment the district committed significant staffing and resources to meet the increased demand. Interesting enough the vast majority of students who enrolled in the program were located out of our district, we truly were a provincial provider of educational programs. We have noticed that many of the families that joined us last year have chosen to remain for this school year (2021-2022).

Although we were faced with many challenges and changes our schools provided exceptional learning experiences for our students. Overall, we were able to keep student and staff safe while maintaining educational integrity.



Strategic Priority #2 – Community Engagement

Deepen integration of Indigenous ways and knowing of fostering relationships with community, parents and educational partners are two goals in our strategic plan.

2020-2021 Community Engagement Annual Report:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Community-Engagement-Annual-Report-2020-2021.pdf>

The District's commitment to reconciliation is fundamental to our work with the K'omox First Nation Metis and all other First Nations represented in our school district. We understand and value the teachings of Indigenous people and are committed to strengthening our relationship and their presence in our schools. We are fortunate to have an extensive "Elders in Residence" program.

https://indigenouseducation.comoxvalleyschools.ca/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1064874&type=d&pREC_ID=1376077

The overall goal is to mainstream a presence in the school to encourage our understanding of cultural values, teaching and ways of knowing.

Our commitment to reconciliation can be seen in our participation in the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack legacy schools project. We were the first school district in Canada to have all schools participate.

<https://downiewenjack.ca/spotlight-comox-valley-schools/>

Each one of our schools have made a commitment to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

Youth Reconciliation Project Comes to Lake Trail Middle School:



<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/youth-reconciliation-project-comes-to-lake-trail-middle-school/>

Our Indigenous graduation rates continue to be above provincial average and the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students continues to decrease.

Indigenous Grad Rates:

https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NR_2018.19IndigenousGradRates.2019.pdf

Our district continues to strengthen, engage, and foster relationships with our community and partners. This past year we have partnered with two of our communities to create valuable childcare spaces. Denman Island now has a state-of-the-art childcare facility located on district property.

Opening of Denman Island Childcare Facility:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/new-denman-island-childcare-facility-opens/>

The district supported the Village of Cumberland in its applications for childcare spaces. This will be a joint project on district property that will be beneficial to the community and the district.

Throughout the pandemic we worked with all community partners to support our students and their families.

https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/cv_family_covid19_resource_guide.pdf

Strategic Priority #3: Organizational Stability and Environmental Sustainability

To optimize infrastructure to support learning and to foster environmental stewardship.
<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/strategic-plan/>

Our actions around Organizational Stability are to ensure long range facilities plans are aligned with 21st century practice. We also want to maximize the use of school and community facilities to support learning. The Carbon Neutral Action Report is done every year in SD71.

The 2020-21 report can be found using the following link.

https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2021/05/Comox_Valley_Schools_CCAR_sd71_2020.pdf



Our 2021 report will be completed in the spring. Previous reports are also archived on our school district website. Some of the specific work being done in the district around Organizational Sustainability includes updating school boilers. 16 school sites have now had their boilers completely updated. The five remaining sites are currently being worked on. We continue to maximize the use of our school and community facilities to support learning as well. We incorporate blended learning

programs in each of our secondary schools and we run 3 distinct blended programs across the district. Enter 1 at Aspen Park Elementary, Enter 2 at Highland Secondary and the Fine Arts E-cademy (FAe) at NIDES/Navigate.

<https://www.navigatenides.com/index.php/k-7/>

Our actions around Environmental Sustainability are to align outdoor and environmental learning opportunities for long term sustainability, to reduce carbon emission and environmental footprints, to support our school garden projects, reduce single-use plastics, augment Active Travel and implement strategies for zero waste by increasing recycling and composting efforts throughout our facilities. In order to facilitate this, we have invested in an Outdoor Learning Lead Teacher and each school has a volunteer Outdoor Lead Teacher. Each school also has a volunteer Sustainability Lead Teacher and community partnership with Earth Warriors to facilitate composting in some of our schools.

For a detailed list of our initiatives please see our District Strategic Plan Annual Report. Specifically pages 25-31. <https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Strategic-Plan-Annual-Report-2020-2021.pdf>

Please refer to our Environmental Outdoor Learning webpage for additional information. <https://learn71.ca/environmental-outdoor-learning-eol/>

Strategic Priority #4: Physical Health and Mental Well-Being



Investing in the holistic well-being of people has never been more important than it is today. The last 19 months have shed a light on the importance of mental and physical wellness of our staff and students. Each of our schools have developed goals in support of these priorities.

2020-2021 Physical Health and Mental Well-Being Annual Report:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Physical-Health-and-Mental-Well-Being-Annual-Report-2020-2021.pdf>

Comox Valley School Mental Health webpage:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/mental-health/>

In 2019, the provincial government announced that the Comox Valley School District would be one of 2 districts selected for the Pathways to Hope program. Little did we know at the time how valuable this resource would be. Seven months later the COVID-19 pandemic hit the province and impacted youth mental health and wellness.

The district has both responded to the urgent need for mental health support as well as been proactive in putting resources in place to support staff, students, and families. The district developed a Comox Valley Family COVID-19 Resource Guide that is intended to link families with community supports during the pandemic.

https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/cv_family_covid19_resource_guide.pdf



This past year several resources were created for students and families and these were designed as leading resources.

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/district-mental-health-kits/>

The district has committed personnel resources in the form of 2 full time outreach counsellors as well as the addition of 3 youth and family workers. These additional supports will ensure our schools and families have trained personnel who can assist those students who are struggling with mental health challenges.

A recent update of the districts commitment to supporting mental health and wellness can be found at:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/mental-health/>

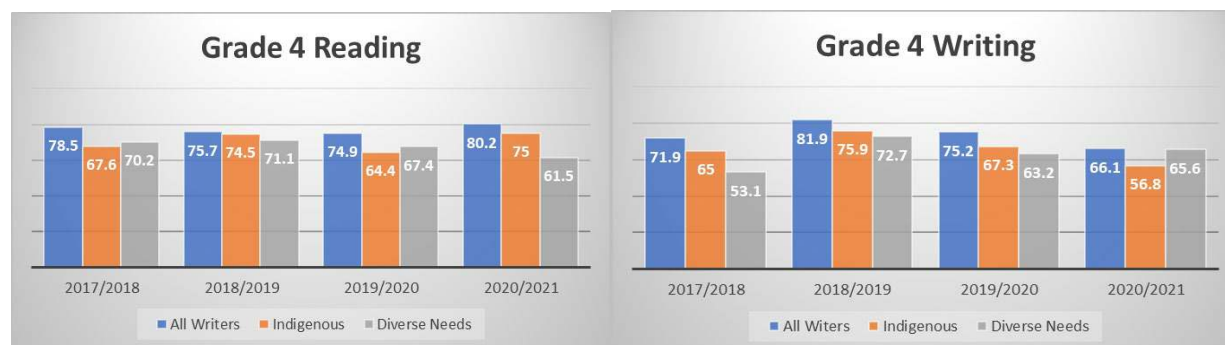
This past year the District continued to improve the Physical literacy of our staff and students by dedicating resources to have a physical Literacy head teacher who will work with teachers and schools to support physical literacy initiatives. The district also partnered with "Sport for Life" & "Viasport" with the common goal of improving physical literacy.

The Districts "Work to Wellness" program continues to be a very strong support program for all employees. The district continues to invest in the wellness of all our staff, students, and families.

Work to Wellness:

<https://www.comoxvalleyschools.ca/work-2-wellness/>

FOUNDATION SKILLS ASSESSMENT DATA





FSA Data Observations

GRADE 4

Literacy

Last year's FSA results indicate:

- An increase in the percentage of students who demonstrated “on track” and “extending” skills in Grade 4 Reading, however the students with diverse needs who participated in the assessment included nearly 40% who did not demonstrate “on track” or “extending” skills.
- A decrease in the percentage of students who demonstrated “on track” and “extending” skills in Writing when compared to the 3 previous years of Grade 4 cohorts.

Numeracy

Last year's FSA results indicate:

- An increase in the percentage of students who demonstrated “on track” and “extending” skills in Grade 4 Numeracy when compared with the 3 previous years of Grade 4 cohorts.
- However, the students with diverse needs who participated in the assessment included 57% who did not demonstrate “on track” or “extending” skills.

GRADE 7

Literacy

Last year's FSA results indicate:

- An increase in the percentage of students who demonstrated "on track" and "extending" skills in Grade 7 Reading when compared to the previous year's results.
- A decrease in the percentage of students who demonstrated "on track" and "extending" skills in Grade 7 Writing for all student groups when compared to results from the 3 previous years.

Numeracy

Last year's FSA results indicate:

- An increase in the percentage of students, including those with diverse needs, who demonstrated "on track" and "extending" skills in Grade 7 Numeracy when compared to the previous 3 year's results.
- The percentage of Indigenous student who demonstrated "on track" and "extending" skills in Grade 7 Numeracy has increased when compared to the previous 3 years, however 45% demonstrated "emerging" skills.

Cohort Data – Grade 4 to Grade 7

The same cohort of students participated in the Grade 4 FSA in the 2017-2018 schoolyear and the Grade 7 FSA in the 2020-2021 schoolyear. When comparing the results from Grade 4 (2017-2018) to Grade 7 (2020-2021), the following is noted:

Reading

A slight increase in the percentage of students who demonstrated "on track" and "extending" skills, however there is a decrease for both the Indigenous and Diverse Needs student populations.

Writing

An increase in the percentage of students who demonstrated "on track" and "extending" skills in all student populations.

Numeracy

An increase in the percentage of students who demonstrated "on track" and "extending" skills, including for those who have diverse needs. However, there was a decrease in the percentage of Indigenous students who demonstrated "on track" and "extending" skills.

Areas for Growth

Generally, the district recognizes the need for continuous improvement in all areas of literacy and numeracy learning. In addition, particular attention to how we support all learners, including Indigenous students and students with diverse needs is required. As a district, we will be working on staff development that enhances classroom learning, as

well as addresses targeted instruction in literacy and numeracy for students who may struggle in these areas.

Each of our elementary schools has a Curriculum Support Teacher who supports and collaborates with school-based colleagues to address the literacy or numeracy goal for their school. As a Community of Practice, this group will be meeting regularly to discuss the literacy and numeracy research and work on instructional and assessment strategies that they can share with colleagues. We will also explore ways to embed the First Peoples Principles of Learning, inclusive practices, and universal design into the everyday classroom community work that we do.

The FSA is one assessment tool that we consider when determining our next steps for continuous improvement. In addition, the district will be using and reviewing other assessment evidence in literacy and numeracy to enable a more fine-grained analysis of what students need in order to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. We are also participating in the Literacy and Numeracy Proficiencies K-12 trialling project with the Ministry and considering our next steps in Communicating Student Learning with the new Reporting Policy K-12 implementation in mind. Both of these significant assessment components will also need to be integrated into the development of a coherent assessment framework for both literacy and numeracy learning for our district over the next few years.



Observations

We have selected to show the data in a few different ways. The overall observation that we have made is the dramatic increase in completion rates when we review our Distance Learning school (NIDES). It is understood that due to the transient enrollment at NIDES, many students may enroll at NIDES then leave to return to their home District resulting in lower completion rates.

We feel that the accurate numbers for our district is represented in the BC Resident without NIDES Column as this truly reflects these students' enrollment and "continuing" in a community.

Generally, our 6-year completion rate is fairly consistent with an approx. rate of 91% over the past 4 years.

Our Indigenous rates again reflect similar observation as mentioned above. Once we remove the NIDES numbers our rates actually reflect what we feel is realistic. Although, our completion rates are lower than non-Indigenous students we are pleased at the growth we are seeing. Currently, we are seeing a completion rate of 83%. It is lower than the completion rate for all students and something we must continue to work together to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learns.



General Observations

As was mentioned earlier we are focusing our comment on the Graphics BC Residents with NIDES and Indigenous students without NIDES

Overall, our grade-to-grade transitions are acceptable; however, we must ensure our schools are able to track individual student to understand our transition rates.

We need to focus our energies on understanding why our grade 9-10 and 10-11 Indigenous students' transitional rates are 10% lower than the rates on either side in comparison to our non-Indigenous students.

STUDENT LEARNING SURVEY

The Student Learning Survey is conducted each year and completed by students in grades 4,7,10 and 12, along with Parents and Staff. The following are results taken from the learning survey over the past 4 years.

Do You feel welcome at your school?

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Grade 4	65%	76%	74%	73%	74%
Grade 7	59%	63%	61%	57%	65%
Grade 10	58%	60%	64%	66%	61%
Grade 12	72%	69%	65%	83%	69%

Is school A place where you feel like you belong?

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Grade 4	55%	57%	61%	57%	58%
Grade 7	47%	47%	48%	46%	45%
Grade 10	42%	42%	48%	48%	45%
Grade 12	51%	50%	46%	58%	50%

Do you feel safe at School?

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	202/21
Grade 4	66%	79%	76%	76%	79%
Grade7	64%	67%	71%	70%	72%
Grade 10	73%	71%	76%	74%	72%
Grade 12	86%	81%	80%	86%	77%

How many adults at your school Care about you? (responding 2 or more)

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Grade 4	80%	75%	70%	65%	62%
Grade 7	68%	65%	61%	53%	62%
Grade 10	64%	58%	70%	63%	59%
Grade12	77%	82%	75%	82%	84%

Observations

Generally, our results over the past year are consistent across the grades. To further understand the rates, we are asking our schools to engage in conversations with students to help with an understanding of their perspective as well as to see how schools can respond and help improve their experiences in schools.

STUDENTS TRANSITIONING TO POST SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS (PSI)

Number and Percentage of Students transitioning to Canadian PSI
within 1 to 3 Years

	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
	Cohort	Rate %	Cohort	Rate %	Cohort	Rate %	Cohort	Rate %
Resident	576	66	489	63	521	56	493	44
Indigenous	91	58	75	59	84	49	82	34

Observations

We note that our rates are consistent with many other school districts. We also notice that transition rates increase over time. We question what effects the Pandemic will have on PSI rates moving forward.



**INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT PROGRAM
COMOX VALLEY**

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