



Denman Island Community School



Comox Valley Schools

Annual School Growth Plan

2026-2027

Comox Valley Schools is committed to creating inclusive, wholistic, and personalized learning environments to enhance each student's development of the core competencies over time.

We acknowledge with an open heart the gift of being able to live and learn in peace and beauty on the traditional territory of the K'ómoks People, the Pentlatch, Sasitla, Sathloot, and Ieeksen, and express our gratitude for the stewardship of this land since time immemorial.



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Decolonizing, Indigenizing Commitment

Denman Island Community School is committed to decolonizing our practices and to upholding and embracing Indigenous ways of knowing and being. We are a small, community school immersed in relationship with each other and the greater community. We are connected through our shared voices that come from community organizations that support the school and island residents and advocate for the health and preservation of our natural world. We are connected through history and relationships.

The school is responsive to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by sharing the culture, history, and brilliance of Indigenous peoples. We work on incorporating Indigenous learning by embracing the natural world that surrounds us, learning about and practicing coexisting in peaceful and just ways, and acknowledging the gift of our relationships that are immersed in community. We share a sense of place by living, working, and learning together. We are in relationship through our school day, through our life together on an island, and through our connection with each other in community. We know that learning takes time and patience.

Our school growth plan is focused on addressing what we need to work on next, building on our current strengths to support growth in decolonizing and indigenizing the culture and institution of the public education shared at Denman Island Community School. Our Core Competency goal will focus on increasing both the knowledge of and experience with Indigenous ways of knowing and being, so that we are successful in increasing our measurable actions. The goal is to move to a place where expressions of decolonization and Indigenous ways become a felt part of our school community.

By implementing our specific Core Competency goals, we hope to see an increase in students reporting that they are learning about Indigenous ways and history, that both staff and students can identify ways we reflect Indigenous culture, and that we all learn and recognize some K'omoks language.

Context and Portrait of the School

Denman Island Community School is located on a small island, tucked between Vancouver Island and Hornby Island. Denman Island has a year-round population of approximately 1400. The 2021 Census indicated that 3% of residents are Indigenous. We are a ferry dependent, rural community with limited amenities. Several community health indicator concerns, as expressed by census data, include housing and food inflation, lack of affordable and safe housing, lack of full time/full year employment, and limited reliable public transportation.

Our school has approximately fifty-five students from Kindergarten to Grade 7, with an Indigenous enrollment of 5%. We are comprised of four multi-grade classrooms, including a Blended Learning classroom that supports home learners. Our school has a quality gym, a shared music room, a resource room, a small kitchen, an outdoor classroom, a school garden, a large soccer field, and a new playground and basketball court. We share our library and gym with the preschoolers.

The Community School model supports the social, emotional, and physical health of both the students and the greater Denman Island community. Community Programs (via the Denman Island



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Community Education Society) offers after school programs, recreational opportunities for students and the wider community, hot homemade school lunches three times a week, community connections to the day program, and runs the island Food Bank, Teen Night, and Youth Outreach. We are also supported by or connected to community resources such as Hornby Denman Health, Concerts Denman, Arts Denman, the Denman Island Readers and Writers Festival, Farm to Family, the Community Hall, the Activity Centre, Abraxas Books, Blackberry Lane Child Care Centre, local publications (Flagstone, Barnacle, Grapevine), and individual community volunteers.

Our previous year's focus, as indicated by the 2025-2026 growth plan, included building friendship skills, a focus on kindness, and expanding and improving Indigenous Education. We are connecting our past year's school growth plan to our 2026-2027 core competency focus through specific and measurable actions that will indicate we have increased our understanding of how to resolve problems through connecting how our actions affect others and shown measurable growth in a whole school commitment to valuing diversity through an embracing of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and brilliance.

Our Learners: What the Evidence Tells Us

Literacy/ Numeracy trends

It is difficult to accurately determine academic statistical trends using standardized assessment data given the small number of students in each grade. We can report general trends, but this does not mean they will hold over time or will be reflected in whole school initiatives. The most effective way to support growth in literacy and numeracy skills, given the small population, is to focus on the individual needs of priority learners.

The general trend of the standardized assessment results shows a growth of literacy skills as students move through grades, with most students testing at proficient in the upper grades. Numeracy trends show that results are within range, with scores indicating most students assessed are meeting expectations.

The most recent Student Learning Survey results indicate that students are on par or above the school district average for positive responses for the questions relating how students feel about their learning in reference to reading and writing. The district average of positive responses is in the 75-80% range.



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Core competency development

Resolving Problems:

The Student Learning Survey reflects that we are in line with district trends and there is still room for growth in the areas of solving problems in peaceful ways and thinking about others when making choices.

Valuing Diversity:

Though we trend higher than the district average in the Student Learning Survey for leaning about Indigenous peoples and diversity, there is substantive room for continued growth.

Attendance and engagement patterns

Our data on absences over several previous years shows that our school's chronically absent rate (defined by the province as missing more than 10% of school time) has been about 20% higher than the district average, while late arrivals to school were 2% higher than the district. There are several factors, in the context of the community culture, that could contribute to student absences and may need to be taken into consideration when looking at increasing regular school attendance. With statistics being drawn from a small population, a few individuals marked as chronically absent can increase the overall average with more impact than would be seen in a larger sample size. The limitations of geography, infrastructure, and population can mean that many families attend the same social events. This can result in illness spreading more rapidly and with greater reach, spiking student absences due to illness. Some families choose to have reduced attendance at public school so they can access alternate learning opportunities for their children, including recreational, sport, and arts activities that involve travel.

Equity Considerations and Priority Learners

Priority learners are served by a counsellor available two days a month, a Learning Support Teacher (LST) available four days a month, and Indigenous Support Worker (ISW) position of one day a week, and a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) available two days a month. Individual or small group academic support is provided by an Educational Assistant (EA) who also supports students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or other learning needs. Multi grade classrooms, buddy activities, and a strength-based focus that acknowledges and values individual abilities and potential also supports priority learners. End of the year LST assessments indicate growth in learning in all supported priority learners, while report card comments acknowledge growth in both academic and social skills in priority learners. Some students have shown slow and steady growth, while others have demonstrated a good enhancement of skills.



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Strengths

Our small size allows for authentic relationships, for more personalized learning, and is conducive to creating a feeling of connection and community both within and outside of the school day. Multi-grade classrooms allow for learning to take place at different rates and in diverse ways in a structure that can support students where they are and guide them to the next steps in learning. It is a model that makes it easier to adapt to meet a wide range of needs and abilities and to teach from a strength-based approach. We have been able to add a Blended Learning class that supports the home learners of Denman Island and connects them to school resources. Our structure as a Community School supports students in many ways, including through providing food security, connections to other supportive organizations that enhance us through the arts, social services, recreation, and relationship. For students transitioning to high school the academic data shows 89% of the grades for grade 10-12 Denman student attending Vanier are As (59%) and Bs (30%), and for grade 8-9 students 83% of the grades fall under Extending (24%) and Proficient (59%).

When focusing on the core competency area of Resolving Problems, we can build on the many relationships that are already in place. It is a strong starting point to move to increasing a development of empathy and understanding, reflecting how behaviour or choices impact others, and finding peaceful ways to resolve conflict. In addressing the core competency area of Valuing Diversity, we are starting with limited diversity in our school population. We will need to expand experiences within the school that add to a broader understanding of and experience with Indigenous culture. We can begin by noticing and acknowledging what we already have and do that aligns with Indigenous ways of knowing and being and add to that more specific knowledge-such as history, language, and arts.

District Context:

Every school will uphold and support literacy and numeracy development.



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Our School's Core Competency Focus Area for This Year

Social Awareness and Responsibility: Resolving Problems, Valuing Diversity

Student Outcome Shift: We will know that we are making progress when we see students:

Resolving Problems by showing through reflection or conversation an understanding of how their behaviour may impact others and finding ways to adjust behaviour to take into consideration others.

Valuing Diversity through sharing an appreciation and awareness of the richness and value of indigenous cultures.

Adult Practice Shift: We will know that we are making progress when teachers/ support staff /school leaders:

Resolving Problems – increase their use of language around the connection between behaviour and its impact on others when supporting students to resolve problems, by asking questions such as, “How do you think that would make that person feel” or “How do you think that would impact others,” “What could you do/say differently that would help prevent/solve this problem?”

Valuing Diversity-show a growth in teaching/practice/exposure/sharing of indigenous culture and language.

Design Principle chosen to positively impact Core Competency focus area:

Experiential Learning: Experiential learning involves collaboration, communication, reflection, and hands-on, real-world learning. It connects learners with their gifts, strengths, and interests, creating time and space for relationships with the community, land, and natural environment. This approach is inclusive of diverse perspectives, interconnected with an Indigenous worldview, and incorporates the First Peoples' Principles of Learning.

Monitoring and Evidence Cycle

The monitoring of the progress of our school growth plan goals will take several forms. The first approach will consist of staff reviewing together monthly what we are experiencing regarding the challenges and successes around literacy and numeracy growth, and our core competency focus areas. This focus will be on anecdotal, qualitative, and relationship-based observations. From this community and relationship-based approach we will create authentic and relevant responses to strengthening whole school problem solving skills, enhancing the embracing of diversity, and building literacy and numeracy skills that are timely and responsive to emerging needs.



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The second approach will focus on the formal, standardize assessments that provide trackable data. These include the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) administered in October, the district literacy and numeracy assessments in September and June, and the Student Learning Survey (SLS) taken in April. A significant focus area for us will be on the questions from the Student Learning Survey that relate to the core competency this growth plan is committed to enhancing. The specific questions we will be looking at are, “At school are you being taught about Indigenous Peoples,” “At school I am learning to understand and support human rights and diversity,” “I am learning to solve problems in a peaceful way,” and “When you make a choice do you think about how it might affect others.”

Thirdly, we will look at the student core competency self-reflections related to our school growth plan goals. The self-reflections will be done school wide in December, March, and June.

Impact Indicators

The qualitative/anecdotal impact indicators that we are progressing with the growth plan goals will include shared staff reflections on student problem solving skills in relation to both classroom and playground conflict themed interactions, observations of student interactions that require problem solving skills, student core competency self-reflection responses, and sharing of examples of observable increases in the representation and exploration of Indigenous culture and ways of knowing and being in the school community.

The quantitative impact indicators will be demonstrated through FSA, SLS, and district assessment results.

Implementation, Capacity Building and Resource Alignment

Professional learning to positively impact Core Competency focus areas:

Increasing our knowledge of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, culture, history, and language, and sharing collaboratively ways we can incorporate what we learn into daily school life.

Enhancing practical skills that support students in solving problems, building empathy, and valuing diversity.

Collaborative structures supporting implementation:

Small staff that consistently works together.

Formalized structure of monthly meetings to focus on the goals of the school growth plan.

Whole school and buddy activities and events that offer opportunities for school community to build on core competency focus areas.



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How staffing, time, and budget allocations align with core competency focus areas:

Dedicated time at monthly staff meeting to discuss core competency focus areas, with a commitment to review, adjust, and plan in response to qualitative and/or quantitative data.

Ensure that a reasonable portion of budget expenditures reflect alignment to the school growth plan.

Continue to find ways to effectively use the time and skills of a small staff to support student growth and learning, within the lens of the goals of the school growth plan.

Monitoring and Reflection Commitments

September-December:

Monthly staff meetings to share observations, successes, challenges, and next steps. ---

Literacy/Numeracy assessments

Foundation Skills Assessment

School based Professional Development Day

Student Core Competency Self Reflections

January-March:

Monthly staff meetings to share observations, successes, challenges, and next steps.

Student Core Competency Self Reflections

April-June:

Monthly staff meeting to share observations, successes, challenges, and next steps.

Student Learning Survey

Literacy/Numeracy assessments

Student Core Competency Self Reflections

Review of School Growth Plan with staff and PAC

If progress is not evident, we will review areas that do not show growth, reflect on challenges and successes, seek student voice input, and adjust accordingly.

Community Communication

Our Core Competency focus is on: Social Awareness and Responsibility: Resolving Problems, Valuing Diversity so we can build on our peaceful problem-solving skills, enhance empathy, and expand our knowledge and celebration of Indigenous culture and ways of knowing and being.



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Why it matters: By growing problem-solving skills, increasing an awareness of empathy by considering the impact of our actions, and broadening our understanding of and experience with diversity we grow positive relationships with others and increase peaceful ways of being in community.

How we will know we have shown growth: When we see more problem solving, more behaviours that demonstrate empathy, and a greater experience with and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

How Families can support learning: By showing curiosity about what their children are learning and doing at school and connecting with the school community in ways that feel positive and valuable to the individual families.

Communication methods: We will communicate through weekly school newsletters, teacher communication with parents, the school website, learning updates and portfolios, conferences, and presentations at Parent Advisory Council meetings,