

NIDES 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. At NIDES we are focusing on improving student communication skills as the foundation for developing proficiency in the Core Competencies and for improving their educational experience.

Decolonizing, Indigenizing Commitment

NIDES supports Indigenous learners and communities through a variety of means unique to each context. Our flexible, online platform and skilled, caring teachers provide opportunities throughout the province for individuals and communities to stay in community and participate in a robust, personalized learning journey. Our learning platform and priorities can enrich local relationships, identity, belonging, community, and cultures.

Three years ago, our Learning Community undertook educating ourselves to improve our practices. We started by doing a schoolwide book study of Jo Chrona's *Wayi Wah!*, dedicating staff meetings for this learning. Each group and department worked to remove offensive elements from courses and increase elements that reflected the First Peoples' Principles of Learning and the Truth and Reconciliation's calls to action. They have worked to improve connections for students with learning, community, and curriculum. This work continues as we work with our local Indigenous communities to further our learning.

Because of the place-based, contextual nature of our learning 'programs' Indigenous ways of knowing and being are integrated throughout our organization, where we strive to honour the unique histories, traditions, protocols, and ways of knowing of many First Nations throughout the province. Each year we report on the ways we are supporting our Indigenous students. In this work we took our local Enhancement Agreement and have applied the principles of it to our work in all communities.

With 425 students with Indigenous Ancestry last year, we were able to learn a lot and improve our supports. This coming year we will be using a redesigned Learning Management Structure from K – 7 that supports and emphasizes wholistic learning. Many of our blended programs are designed to support wholistic, place-based, learning.

Context and Portrait of the School

We respectfully acknowledge that our operations are based the unceded traditional territory of the Pentlatch, Ei'ksan, Sahtloot, and Sasitla people of the K'omoks First Nation. We also appreciate the many places we share with other First Nations across our province and are grateful for their stewardship of these great places rich in learning, culture, and history. We honour our relationships with all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples who reside in the territories we serve.

As a Provincial Online Learning School, NIDES is a leader in our province. This past school year we served the equivalent of 3,430 fulltime students which was approximately 20% of all students taking online courses in BC. Since the 2022/23 school year, our student enrollment has increased 51% with greater than 15%/year growth over the past two years. This is a provincial trend. Over that same period the number of fulltime Indigenous students working with us has increased from 227 students in September 2022 to 434 in May 2026. The number of students we support with designations has also increased from 145 in September 2022 to 242 in May 2026.

NIDES has been providing education to BC families since 1989 and was proudly one of the 9 original distance education schools in British Columbia. We are learning innovators and have embraced the principles of “blended learning” by using new technologies to enhance learning at home and to create meaningful connections between students, teachers, and their communities. We currently leverage our online platform to support almost 50 blended programs in BC that are unique to their local context and goals.

Our programming has evolved from a paper based correspondence model relying on the mail system with large delays in communication periods to a more dynamic online platform where interacting with learners in real time e.g. video calls/lessons (synchronously) or through other interactive ways at times that can be flexible for learners e.g. discussion boards (asynchronously) allows for deeper connections and "just in time" instructional strategies from teachers. We now offer a rich slate of online learning options such as K-12 blended programs, high school courses, adult education, programming partnerships, and the largest selection of international language programs in the Pacific Northwest.

Everything we do is grounded in the belief that effective, lasting education begins by empowering each student to learn in the way that works best for them. The embracing of this belief has led to a robust, complex, diverse organization that leans into authentic problem solving to support learner preference/need.

We work with students individually to identify their unique interests and passions, helping to inspire motivation and a lifelong love of learning. Our goal is to provide flexible learning opportunities that allow students to progress at their own pace and in a manner that suits their lifestyle and educational needs. At the same time, we offer the guidance, resources, and personalized support necessary to help every student achieve success.

Our school's guiding goals can be summarized in three points.

Personalization of Learning focuses on helping students develop greater independence and ownership of their educational journey. Students are encouraged to take an active role in setting goals, making choices, and directing their learning experiences.

Engagement in Learning supports students in discovering and pursuing their individual interests and passions. Through meaningful learning opportunities, students build mastery, confidence, and pride in their accomplishments.

Sense of Belonging ensures that students feel connected, safe, respected, and valued within the NIDES learning community. Strong relationships and supportive learning environments help foster a sense of inclusion and well-being.

Over the past two years we have worked as a learning community to reflect our goals and worked with the inquiry of "How will actively working to make meaningful connections impact student learning?"

In doing this work our Professional Development has focused on increasing our knowledge, understanding, and actions for reconciliation. Our teachers have worked to ensure their courses contain materials, resources, and curriculum that meaningfully reflect Indigenous cultures, history, values, language, and traditions where possible. The focus of our programs is on personalization and our teachers actively encourage local connections with and guidance from Indigenous Communities.

We have explored many avenues to increasing student engagement, including the use of intelligent agents and personal connections. We have also put mechanisms in place to quickly identify students who are not engaging with their learning programs.

At the end of this school year, as part of our reflection, we asked staff to identify areas of learning we should focus on based on their experiences over the past two learning cycles. We used this data to inform the planning summarized in this document.

Our Learners: What the evidence tells us

From our communal inquiry project “How will actively working to make meaningful connections impact student learning?” there were several evidence trends our teachers noticed.

Engagement & Participation

- Increased participation in:
 - Discussions, projects, and collaborative work
- Some evidence:
 - More students submitting work as communication increases
 - Previously disengaged students joining sessions

Student Outcomes

Observed improvements from increasing meaningful connections:

- Confidence and willingness to share
- Empathy and conflict resolution
- Creativity and depth of thinking
- Independence and self-advocacy
- Sense of belonging and well-being

Family Engagement Data Patterns

- Positive impact when families are involved in person
- Limited impact when expectations are unclear (e.g., Seesaw posting)
- Persistent group of hard-to-reach families

Online Learning Trends

- Students:
 - Prefer 1:1 connection over group Zoom
 - Engage more with interactive or creative tasks
- Barriers:
 - Attendance at optional sessions
 - Communication fatigue

Assessment & Learning Evidence

- More authentic, individualized work
- Reduced “formulaic” or AI-generated submissions
- Increased reflection on *how* students learn

When we shared the data from our inquiry work with teachers, the majority felt Critical and Reflective Thinking was the most important Core Competency to work on. Though it will not be our primary focus this year (explained below), we believe we will see significant improvements in student development of this Core Competency from the work we will be doing.

Why?

- There is a noticeable lack of reflection in student learning, with many not engaging with feedback on assignments.
- Critical thinking is essential, especially in subjects like Humanities where analysis and interpretation are key.
- AI and technology are contributing to reduced independent thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Students need strong critical thinking skills to evaluate the accuracy, bias, and credibility of information online.
- Increasing societal polarization and misinformation make critical thinking more important than ever.
- Reflection is a crucial part of deep learning, helping students understand their thinking and learning processes.
- Many students struggle to ask critical questions or meaningfully reflect on their work.
- Over-reliance on AI limits authentic learning and reduces students’ ownership of their thinking.
- Critical and reflective thinking supports independence, better decision-making, and stronger understanding across subjects.
- Developing this competency helps students become informed, thoughtful individuals who can navigate complex information and real-world challenges.

What evidence do you have to support your answer?

- Students frequently repeat the same mistakes despite receiving corrections, showing limited reflection on feedback.
- High levels of AI use (often ineffective or misused) are reducing students’ problem-solving and independent thinking skills.

- Many students submit work with little to no reflection, explanation, or personal engagement (e.g., photos or copied answers).
- Students struggle to distinguish credible information from misinformation, especially from social media and online sources.
- The overwhelming amount of digital content is making it harder for students to think critically about what they consume.
- Assignments increasingly show surface-level completion rather than deep thinking or analysis.
- Students often accept AI-generated or external answers without questioning accuracy or understanding limitations.
- Reflection and self-correction opportunities improve learning, but many students do not engage meaningfully in them.
- Open-ended, multi-step, and inquiry-based tasks are particularly challenging and require significant support.
- Developing critical and reflective thinking is essential for helping students evaluate information, become independent learners, and engage more deeply with their learning.

This was followed by the Core Competency of Communicating.

Why?

- Clear and consistent communication increases student motivation and engagement in online learning.
- Communication is foundational to all other core competencies, enabling collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.
- Authentic student communication is increasingly important in the age of AI and digital tools.
- Many students struggle with basic communication skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and expressing ideas clearly.
- Strong communication skills help students build confidence, explain their thinking, and identify misunderstandings.
- Online learning environments rely heavily on communication to reduce isolation and build meaningful connections.
- Direct communication with students (rather than through parents) strengthens ownership of learning and student voice.
- Intentional strategies such as Zoom calls, feedback, and personalized interactions help create authentic connections.
- Improved communication supports inclusion, positive behaviour, and stronger peer relationships.
- Focusing on communication prepares students for real-world success by improving self-advocacy, engagement, and independence.

What evidence do you have to support your answer?

- Real-time communication (e.g., meetings) helps clarify misunderstandings and improves student understanding.
- Increased direct contact (booking calls, check-ins) led to stronger communication and higher student engagement.
- Building relationships with students improves both engagement and course success.
- Many students struggle with literacy and communication skills, as shown through screenings and assessments.
- Students often submit final answers without explaining their thinking, highlighting gaps in communication skills.
- Strong communication is directly linked to success in assessments, especially when explaining reasoning and processes.
- Structured communication strategies (emails, reflections, videos, check-ins) increase participation and connection to learning.
- Explicit communication support can reduce behavioural challenges and improve peer interactions and confidence.
- Students are becoming more confident communicating (emails, video calls, IEP discussions) when given opportunities and support.
- Lack of communication skills can lead to isolation, confusion, and lower engagement, while strong communication builds independence, accountability, and connection.

The Core Competency of Personal Awareness and Responsibility was the third choice. Many recognized success in this area depends on communication skills.

Why?

- Personal and social awareness help students build stronger relationships and create safe, inclusive learning environments.
- When students feel safe, respected, and valued, they are more able to engage in deep learning.
- Personal awareness and responsibility are foundational skills for both academic and life success.
- Many students focus on completing tasks or achieving grades rather than engaging in the learning process.
- There are increasing concerns about ethical behavior and responsibility in relation to AI use.
- Younger students are showing decreased independence and require more support in developing self-management skills.

- Home learning environments can limit opportunities to build social awareness, responsibility, and independence.
- Developing personal responsibility helps students take ownership of their learning, including effort, integrity, and goal setting.
- Strong self-awareness supports emotional regulation, decision-making, and overall well-being.
- Focusing on this competency helps students become more independent, engaged, and prepared for future learning and life challenges.
- Students who feel connected and valued are more willing to participate, share, and take risks in their learning.
- Younger students often struggle with emotional regulation and empathy, requiring more explicit support.

What evidence do you have to support your answer?

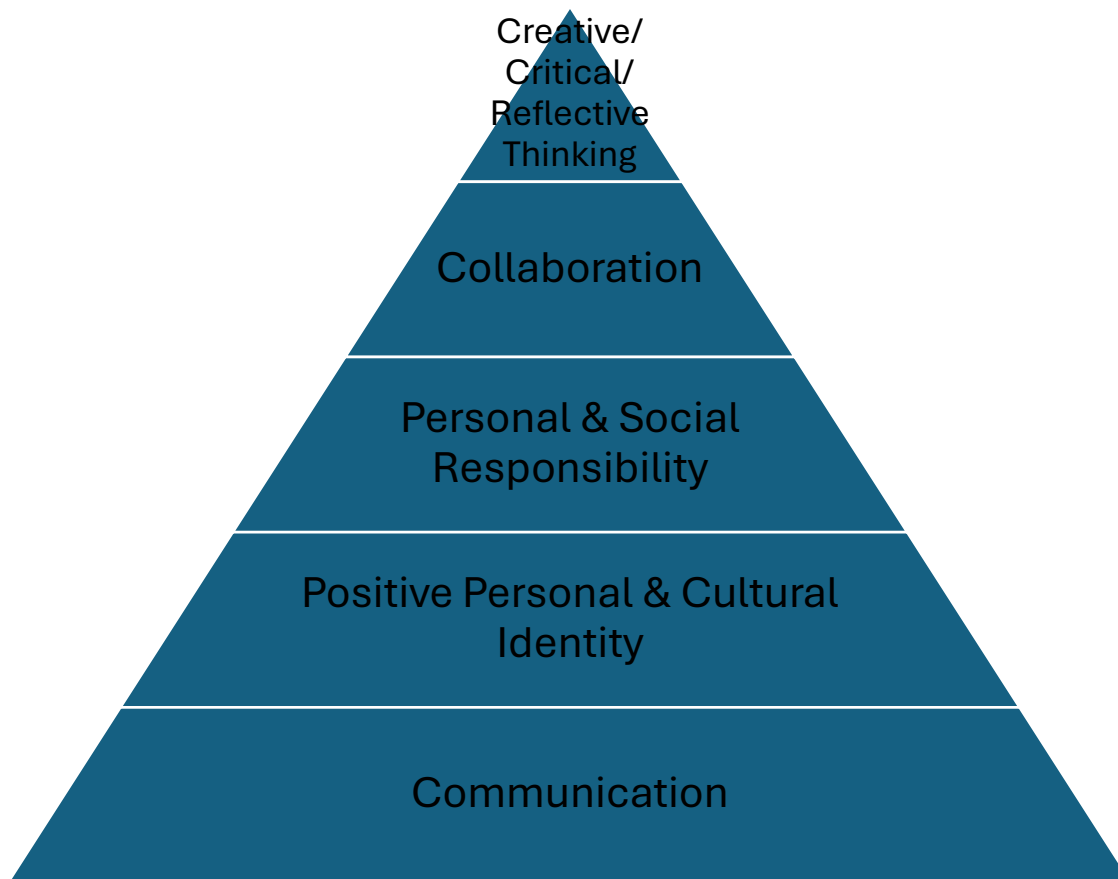
- Increased accountability and feedback are linked to improved student success and engagement.
- Widespread and often inappropriate use of AI highlights a lack of understanding of academic integrity and responsibility.
- Some students use AI to rush course completion or achieve high grades without engaging in real learning.
- Everyday behaviours (e.g., preparedness, sharing, responsibility) show gaps in personal responsibility and social awareness.
- Strong self-management skills (time management, goal setting, communication) are key indicators of success in online learning.
- Developing personal and social responsibility improves engagement, independence, well-being, and long-term success.

Our School Goal Committee took the data and in the subsequent conversations, the following idea was presented to our teachers with key data, including their responses from the previous month.

Communicating encompasses the set of abilities that people use to impart and exchange information, experiences, and ideas; to explore the world around them; and to understand and effectively use communication forms, strategies, and technologies. Communicating provides a bridge between peoples' learning, their personal and social identity, and the world in which they interact.

People who communicate effectively use their skills and strategies intentionally to ensure understanding their audience. They communicate in an increasing variety of contexts, for a variety of purposes, and often with multiple audiences.

The following graphic represents the thinking of our committee.



At our June Education Staff Meeting our teachers were put into semi-homogenous groups and all but two groups agreed that a focus on the Core Competency Communication was the appropriate way to go. Teachers indicated that communication is the foundation of learning, relationships, collaboration, critical thinking, and student success. Strong communication supports student engagement, self-advocacy, confidence, and ownership of learning. Effective communication is particularly important in online and blended learning environments where connection depend on intentional interaction. Communication helps address concerns around AI use, authenticity, and demonstrating genuine understanding. Many groups also noted that communication is an essential life skill that supports future education, employment, and relationships.

We know that communication skills need improving because students often provide limited, brief, or superficial responses in assignments, reflections, and discussions. Teachers frequently experience low student engagement and difficulty connecting with learners. Parents often communicate on behalf of students rather than students advocating for themselves. Students struggle with email etiquette, asking for help, responding to feedback, and participating in conversations. There is an increased reliance on AI-generated responses with reduces authentic student voice and communication.

District Context:

Every school will uphold and support literacy and numeracy development.

Our school's Core Competency focus area this year will be Communication.

Student Outcome Shift – “We will know that we are making progress...”

1. When we see increased frequency and quality of student-initiated communication with teachers.
 - a. Stronger relationships between students, families, and teachers.
 - b. Improved conflict resolution, collaboration, and sense of belonging.
2. When we see more detailed reflections, learning posts, assignments, discussions, and emails.
 - a. When we see better quality student work, deeper thinking, and stronger reflections.
3. When we see greater student confidence in sharing ideas, asking questions, and seeking support.
 - a. Improved confidence, self-esteem, and self-advocacy among students.
4. When we see improved engagement in courses, meetings, Zoom/Teams sessions, and classroom activities.
 - a. Higher levels of engagement, participation, and course completion.
5. When we see more evidence of authentic student voice and application of teacher feedback.
 - a. Reduced dependence on AI and greater authenticity in student learning.
 - b. Increased academic achievement and clearer evidence of student understanding.

Adult Practice Shift – “We will know that we are making progress ...”

- When we see teachers initiating more communication with their students.
- When we see teachers spending more of their time engaging with students than “marking”.
- When we see meaningful, productive conversations between our staff about improving communication skills for themselves and with their students.
- When staff conversations focus on positive student engagement.
- When teachers and support staff can identify improvements in the communication skills of each child they work with.

Design Principle(s) chosen to positively impact improvement in Communication Core Competency:

- Decolonizing and Indigenizing
- Inclusion
- Personalized Learning
- Student-Centred Assessment
- Social Emotional Learning
- Experiential Learning
- Flexible Learning Environments
- Digitally Enhanced Learning
- Land-Based Learning

While each of these Design Principles may not be evident in each program of our Learning Organization, each is a driver of our communal work.

Monitoring and Evidence Cycle

One source we will use is the Provincial Online Learning Survey. This is done twice a year and there are parts of it we can use to measure lagging impacts of our work. We have already been tracking these areas to inform our work and establish some baseline measures. Indigenous students (Ind Sts) have been highlighted as a priority sub-set of our student body to highlight areas of inequity so we can address them.

Student engagement

Do you feel you have a choice about what and how you learn? How many said “yes” or “most/all of the time”?

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	43%	46%			
NIDES Sts	57%	48%			
Ind Sts	40%	46%			
NIDES Ind Sts	69%	67%			
All Parents	56%	75%			
NIDES Parents	79%	75%			
Ind Parents	60%				
NIDES Ind Prnt	66%				

I am taught to take control/ownership of my learning “most/all the time” or “yes”

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	49%	52%			
NIDES Sts	59%	52%			

Ind Sts	40%	43%			
NIDES Ind Sts	69%	56%			
All Parents	55%	75%			
NIDES Parents	78%	80%			
Ind Parents	74%				
NIDES Ind Prnt	66%				

I am engaged and empowered at school “agree/strongly agree” or “yes”.

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	41%	43%			
NIDES Sts	45%	41%			
Ind Sts	34%				
NIDES Ind Sts	55%				

Agency and support

If I have a problem, I can get the help I need “most/all the time” or “yes”

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	59%	64%			
NIDES Sts	72%	68%			
Ind Sts	57%	59%			
NIDES Ind Sts	69%	69%			

Do the adults you connect with in your school welcome your questions “most/all the time” or “yes”?

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	66%	70%			
NIDES Sts	83%	75%			
Ind Sts	59%	64%			
NIDES Ind Sts	69%	67%			

Are you able to get extra help with your schoolwork from your teacher when needed “most/all the time” or “yes”?

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	56%	60%			
NIDES Sts	73%	56%			
Ind Sts	53%	58%			
NIDES Ind Sts	38%	50%			
All Parents	66%	71%			
NIDES Parents	75%	69%			

Ind Parents	71%				
NIDES Ind Prnt	72%				

If you do not understand something do you ask for help “most/all the time” or “yes”?

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	48%	49%			
NIDES Sts	58%	46%			
Ind Sts	42%	48%			
NIDES Ind Sts	69%	48%			

Are concepts explained in ways that you can understand “most/all the time” or “yes”?

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	60%	65%			
NIDES Sts	77%	65%			
Ind Sts	53%	58%			
NIDES Ind Sts	69%	61%			

Are you provided with feedback on how you could improve your learning “most/all the time” or “yes”?

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	55%	58%			
NIDES Sts	68%	60%			
Ind Sts	51%	59%			
NIDES Ind Sts	69%	60%			

I feel like my school is a culturally sensitive and inclusive learning community “agree/strongly agree” or “yes”.

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	58%	59%			
NIDES Sts	68%	58%			
Ind Sts	54%				
NIDES Ind Sts	90%				

I feel like I have access to the supports I need “agree/strongly agree” or “yes”.

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	64%	67%			
NIDES Sts	72%	68%			
Ind Sts	55%				
NIDES InSts	60%				

Learning Community

Do you feel welcome communicating with staff or visiting in person at your child's online school?
"yes"

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Parents	72%	78%			
NIDES Parents	91%	86%			
Ind Parents	83%				
NIDES Ind Prnt	94%				

As a parent/guardian are you involved in decisions at the online school that affect your child? "yes"

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Parents	57%	62%			
NIDES Parents	73%	70%			
Ind Parents	71%				
NIDES Ind Prnt	77%				

How satisfied are you with the frequency of the school's communication with you about your child's learning? "mostly/completely satisfied"

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Parents	63%	72%			
NIDES Parents	84%	76%			
Ind Parents	72%				
NIDES Ind Prnt	87%				

I am learning about Indigenous Peoples "most/all the time" or "yes"

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Sts	27%	31%			
NIDES Sts	45%	38%			
Ind Sts	32%	29%			
NIDES Ind Sts	69%	34%			
All Parents	60%	70%			
Ind Parents	61%				
NIDES Parents	73%	79%			
NIDES Ind Prnt	76%				

Does your child's school provide opportunities to participate in any Indigenous activities or celebrations? "yes"

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
All Parents	41%	52%			
NIDES Parents	61%	62%			
Ind Parents	53%				
NIDES Ind Prnt	88%				

Another source of data is MyEd.

- Course Completion Rates – this is simple K – 9 but very complicated at 10 – 12
- Average time for course completion
- English Language Arts Course Proficiency/Grades

Another source of data is Brightspace.

- Student engagement logs – Insights Portal
- Course feedback from students
- In our 26/27 Grades 10 – 12 Courses we have self-reflection quizzes (2/course) what they've learned so far in the course and how they will be incorporating teacher feedback in the second half of the course or moving forward.

The primary and most sensitive source of data will come from teachers as they ascertain the best ways to measure student engagement, communication, and authentic student voice. This will happen early in the new school year. Teachers will bring appropriate data to each staff meeting through the year to review with learning team members. This information will be collected in a visible way, likely using Padlet.

Our Administration Team will be responsible for monitoring and responding to progress reports.

Impact Indicators

- Teacher reflection on indicators designed by them.
- Student feedback forms.
- Course completion rates.
- Student engagement logs.

Implementation, Capacity Building & Resource Alignment (What we will learn together and what we will invest in)

1. September 21, 2026 – Professional Development Day – focus on identifying core communication skills and strategies to improve them.
2. Staff Meetings – each learning team will meet to discuss their learning from the previous month and make that learning visible. Resource allocation will flow from these reflections.
3. April – BCEDL Symposium – network provincially to develop more effective communication with students and families.
4. July – Deeper Learning Conference – developing multiple ways to demonstrate and deepen learning through cross-curricular, student driven, work.
5. We have allocated 1.7 fte to support curriculum development designed to improve static and dynamic communication with our students and home facilitators.
6. Our School Growth Leads K – 12 will be working with staff to identify needs/opportunities and guide growth and development.
7. We will facilitate a minimum of 3 learning retreats focused on improving communication skills with our students.
8. We will participate and engage with the Observable Impact Leadership Learning Network with our School Growth Plan being the focus of our work here.
9. We will improve our communication through our website.

Monitoring & Reflection Commitments

Our Administration Team will meet quarterly with our Curriculum Development and School Growth Teams to review progress, celebrate successes, and adjust as needed. As a diverse and geographically distributed school community, we support learners and families across a wide range of programs and learning pathways. Many students and parents build strong connections within their individual programs, which now number 47 and growing, while others engage with NIDES through fully online learning or individual courses designed to meet their unique needs and goals.

We recognize that fostering a shared sense of connection across our broader school community requires ongoing attention and intentional engagement. While we communicate regularly with students, families, and staff, we will continue to strengthen

opportunities for two-way dialogue and feedback. Through surveys, our PAC, personal connections, and other engagement strategies, we will continue seeking input to better understand community perspectives and inform our ongoing growth and improvement efforts.

Community Communication

What we are focusing on

At NIDES we are focusing on improving student communication skills as the foundation for developing proficiency in the Core Competencies and for improving their educational experience.

Why it matters

We believe that focusing on this area we will help increase student engagement and participation in their learning. Online and blended learning provide unique opportunities and challenges for learners from Kindergarten through Graduation and into Adulthood. Clear, effective, and authentic communication is key for student learning and success, especially when tangible, synchronous, 4-dimensional connections are not feasible.

How success will be measured

We will be monitoring our progress in this work by looking at various student engagement measures such as course completion rates, student engagement logs, course feedback quizzes embedded in courses, and direct feedback from students and home facilitators.

Early in the school year each teacher will identify measures they will use to gauge improvement in student communication skills. Each teacher will be part of a learning team where they will discuss progress made each month. This learning will be shared with our colleagues.

How families can support learning

Families can support this learning by encouraging their children to communicate directly with their teachers when substantive questions arise. They can encourage their children to advocate for themselves and can support them through this process. Home facilitators can help students engage meaningfully with their reflections and learning. It is important to focus on learning rather than grades and marks. Through this shift in focus parents can deepen the conversations with their children and with their child's NIDES teacher. This last piece is fundamental not only for individual communication, but also for success beyond "school".

Communication methods

We will share progress and learning through:

- Monthly staff meetings
- Monthly PAC meetings
- Learning updates

Strong communication between school and home helps ensure all students feel supported, connected, and successful.