

# STRATEGIC FOCUS

## Connecting Our Priorities



### September 2025 Highlights

#### WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL



As we begin the 2025–26 school year, I want to extend a warm welcome back to all students, families, and staff. Whether you are returning or joining us for the first time, we are excited to have you as part of our learning community.

Our school staff worked hard at school start-up to prepare for the year ahead. From ensuring classrooms were ready to creating engaging learning opportunities, their commitment to student success is at the heart of everything we do. We are fortunate to have passionate teachers, support staff, and leaders who work tirelessly to make our schools safe, welcoming, and inspiring places for learning for your children.

This year holds great promise for our students. Together, as families, educators, and community members, we share the collective responsibility of nurturing a sense of belonging, respect for self and others, reconciliation, empathy, equity, and perseverance. As a District we remain deeply committed to empowering students to become confident, curious, and caring individuals who thrive in their learning, relationships, and community.

I invite you to take a moment to read the September edition of our Strategic Focus publication. It captures the energy and dedication already shaping our schools – from the launch of the MathUP pilot project and early literacy supports for families, to meaningful acts of reconciliation and the professional learning that prepared our staff for a strong start. These updates highlight our shared commitment to creating inclusive, engaging, and supportive learning environments for all students.

On behalf of our entire team, thank you for entrusting us with your child's education. We look forward to working in partnership with you to make this school year one of growth, connection, achievement, and joy.

*Donna Kriger, Superintendent of Schools*

#### UPCOMING DATES

October 13	Thanksgiving, no school
October 15	<a href="#">Work Experience and Dual Credit Night</a> , J.L. Jackson
October 16	<a href="#">Work Experience and Dual Credit Night</a> , Salmon Arm Secondary
October 20	Student/Teacher/Family Conferences at all elementary and middle schools
October 21	<a href="#">Parents As Career Coaches</a>
October 24	Professional Development Day, no school for students

Stay up to date with important dates including holidays, professional development days, and school events ([2025-2026 School District Calendar](#) / [2025-2026 School Year Calendar](#)).

## INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Each student will develop their literacy skills, numeracy skills, and competencies to become their most capable self.

### MATHUP PILOT PROJECT



We are excited to pilot [MathUP Classroom BC](#), a comprehensive numeracy resource aligned with the BC Curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 8. Since January, a team of SD83 teachers has been exploring the program, and recently, Director of Instruction Jen Findlay shared an expression of interest to invite additional teacher to join the pilot team.

School teams from Armstrong Elementary, Bastion, Falkland, Highland Park, North Canoe, North Shuswap, and Shuswap Middle will meet for one afternoon in early November for a MathUP introduction, followed by a virtual session after school in February and an in-person session in April for planning, collaboration, and evaluation of the resource.

### MINISTRY EARLY LITERACY RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES

When we talk about early literacy, we are talking about what children learn about reading and writing before they can fully read and write. Before starting school, your child begins to build their first literacy skills that are essential for their success in school and beyond. In the early grades (Kindergarten to Grade 3), your child will continue to develop these skills and become readers and writers. You can support this development at home and help reinforce their learning at school. The brief [All about early literacy guide](#) will provide you with:

- Helpful tips to build your child's early literacy skills at home;
- An explanation of how teachers will support your child's early literacy in school; and,
- Steps you can take if you think your child needs extra support.

### SEPTEMBER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SESSIONS

September 16 <sup>th</sup>	POPEY: The Power of Explanations & Explicit Teacher, Improving Cognitive Load
September 18 <sup>th</sup>	UFLI Foundations – first of a 3-part series
September 25 <sup>th</sup>	Literacy Book Club, Teaching Phonics & Word Study in the Intermediate Grades (3-8)
September 29 <sup>th</sup>	Case Manager Day of Learning (LRTs, Counsellors, Bridge and Alternate Teachers) UFLI Explicit Phonics Instruction (K-2) – second of a 3-part series Numeracy Book Club, Mathematics for the Thinking Classroom (K-5) – first of a 3-part series Creating Resilient Classrooms – Embedding Mental health Support into Every Classroom (3-8) – first of a 6-part series AI Micro-sessions (K-12)

## HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Each student will feel welcome, safe, and connected to peers and adults in their school.

### STRONG 'STARTS' IN THE EARLY YEARS

This September, many of our Kindergarten students noticed one more familiar face on their first day of school. In addition to the warm welcome from Kindergarten teachers, principals, and school staff, a familiar face from StrongStart was there to greet them. Across the District, StrongStart facilitators and Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) started the year in classrooms, working alongside amazing teachers to welcome our new Kindergarten students. Kindergarten is a time of transition and marks the start of a child's formal educational journey towards graduation.



As with any transition, it can be a time of uncertainty and big feelings as children and families navigate new spaces, new routines, and new realities of Kindergarten. Seeing a familiar, safe, caring adult can make all the difference! It also means more skilled "hands on deck" to support, provide comfort, and engage in playful learning. Whether it was helping with shoes or backpacks, navigating recess and outside play, or helping children find their way to and from spaces in the school, the ECEs were there.

After gradual entry, our StrongStart facilitator returned to their programs to welcome new and returning families and future generations of Kindergarten students. Meanwhile, back in the Kindergarten classroom, the kids know the ECEs are still there. As one child remarked when walking by the StrongStart room, "That's my old teacher! That's my old classroom!". We are grateful to be able to support this sense of connection and belonging (a District value) right from the start.

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### DIGITAL DEVICE USAGE

We recognize that technology can be a powerful tool for learning; however, to ensure our schools remain focused environments where all students can thrive, we ask that personal devices such as cell phones are kept away during instructional time unless otherwise directed by a teacher for learning purposes. This expectation is outlined in our [Board Policy 310 Student Code of Conduct](#) and supported by [AP 311 Use of Student Personal Digital Devices](#), which guide appropriate use of personal devices in schools. Your support in reinforcing these expectations at home helps us maintain classrooms that are respectful, attentive, and free from unnecessary distractions.

### Use of Student Personal Digital Devices

FRIENDLY REMINDER FOR SD83 FAMILIES  
A Ministerial Order was implemented in 2024 which restricted the use of personal digital devices within all school districts across British Columbia.

**What is the reason for the restriction?**  
To provide an equitable and safe learning environment for all students.  
Personal digital devices are intended to support learning and are used for instructional purposes appropriate to a student's age and development.

**What does this mean for your child?**  
Elementary/middle schools: The use of personal digital devices is not permitted during the school day during both instructional and non-instructional time.  
Secondary schools: At the discretion of the teacher the use of personal digital devices is permitted during instructional time, for educational purposes, and during non-instructional time.  
In cases where a school includes both middle and secondary grades, the school's administrators will determine which procedure to follow.

**What is considered a digital device?**  
An electronic device that can receive, store, process, or send digital information. This includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, smart watches or other smart communication technology, and video or audio recording devices.

**Where can I find more information?**  
Visit our website at [sd83.bc.ca](http://sd83.bc.ca) and reference Board Policy 310 Student Code of Conduct (section 2.1) and Administrative Procedure 310 Student Use of Personal Digital Devices.

**Samples of digital devices**



BRITISH COLUMBIA [www.sd83.bc.ca](http://www.sd83.bc.ca) SD83



At **Highland Park**, teachers chose to teach a variety of lessons, in age-appropriate ways, that highlighted the importance of learning and growing together to better understand Canada’s history and the importance of the day. The Indigenous Education Worker, Laura Dolha, spent time with several classes reading stories and talking about Orange Shirt Day. Some of the grade 4/5 students went on a hike up Rose Swanson and used the day to appreciate the land. All of these activities worked to increase student awareness of the importance of Indigenous people in Canada and our local area. Learning will continue throughout the year, as teachers incorporate Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Indigenous content into the classroom experience.



**Pleasant Valley Secondary** held a whole school assembly that was organized by the semester one BC First Peoples 12 class with the help of Indigenous helping teacher, Ms. Tina Lepine. The assembly included “artifacts of reconciliation” that were created by the class and projected for the school to read. The artifacts were also printed in hard copy and posted around the school, temporarily, for students to review more carefully.

At the end of the assembly, they discussed the importance of the new District logo and name. They also practiced the pronunciation of the name as a whole school.

The foods class has been exploring Indigenous cuisine and what it looks like to modernize traditional ingredients. The culmination of these lessons was the creation of an appetizer that was shared with the whole school: Smoked salmon and cream cheese on a Bannock crostini.



As students exited the gym from the assembly, they could sample the appetizer after pronouncing Kwsaltktnéws ne Secwepemcúl’ecw’ to the servers.

**South Canoe** recognized Orange Shirt Day with a whole school assembly, followed by a “window walk” in which the students and staff took time to view the many beautiful stained-glass displays created to honour Truth and Reconciliation. Student presenters shared poems and their thoughts about Orange Shirt Day.

Also, division 6 and 7 students traveled by bus to the Kamloops Residential School for a guided tour.



## MONTHLY MINDFUL MOMENTS

We are excited to launch the Itinerant Counselling Team monthly Mindful Moments series. Each month, they will share helpful tips to support wellness in our school communities. September’s Focus was on Anxiety. Visit our [website](#) to access the [September Mindful Moments](#) and [Positive Coping Skills to Manage Anxiety](#).

September 2025

### Mindful Moments

Brought to you by the Itinerant Counselling Team

To help a child ease into the school year and manage back-to-school anxiety, establish a routine, visit the school, talk about worries, and practice relaxation techniques – this is valuable for all ages.

**Prepare for the Transition**

**Establish a Routine:** A week or two before school starts, resume school-year routines, such as setting a realistic bedtime, reducing screen time, and creating home routines that match school days (e.g., wake times, meal times).

**Visit the School:** Go to the school several times before school starts (as able), and do as much walking the halls as you can, to locate their classroom, the washroom, and the playground.

**Practice Drop-off:** Make a plan for the drop-off. Rehearse the drop off and spend time on the playground or inside the classroom if the building is open.

**Introduce the Teacher:** If possible, introduce your child to their teacher.

**Rehearse Common Interactions:** Discuss and even rehearse common interactions that your child will have with other kids and teachers. Give them words they can use to interact with others.

**Address Worries and Fears**

**Encourage Open Communication:** Create a safe space for your child to share their worries and fears.

**Validate Their Feelings:** Acknowledge that starting school or returning to school can be stressful.

**Problem-Solve Together:** Instead of offering reassurance, encourage your child to think of ways to solve their problems.

**Focus on the Positive:** Remind them of new situations they've dealt with and how they ended up fine. Adults can also share their own experiences and how they positively coped.

**Reassure them of your support:** Avoid rescuing. Instead, let them know that you are always there for them, and will help with their stress and anxiety.

**Prepare Relaxation Techniques**

**Deep Breathing:** Teach your child simple relaxation techniques like deep breathing exercises, meditation, or gentle yoga stretches.

**Mindfulness:** Ask your child to name 3 things they can see, identify 3 sounds they can hear, and move 3 different parts of their bodies. Model curiosity and paying attention to glimmers each day.

**Engage in Calming Activities:** Draw or paint, read a favorite book, play a favorite board game, or spend time outside.

Explore a number of strategies so your child can determine what works best for them.

Additional Resources: [Back-to-school Wellness](#), [Young Minds - School Refusal](#), and [Possibilities for Change - Help Youth Manage Anxiety](#)

## Positive Coping Skills to Manage Anxiety

Meditate

Dance or listen to music

Paint, draw, or colour

Stretch

Plan worry time - set aside 10-minutes to indulge your worries

Take a time out with a cup of tea

Write your feelings in a journal

Express gratitude

Go for a walk

Spend time playing with your pet

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Each student will develop the skills and competencies necessary to be successful in a career or community pathway of their choice.

### PARENTS AS CAREER COACHES



Education Planner BC will be sponsoring an event geared towards parents and their Grade 8-12 students who are interested in doing more career exploration beyond what SD83 students are exposed to when it comes to MyBlueprint. The session will take place on Tuesday, October 21, 2025, between 6:30 to 7:45 pm, virtually. For more information, visit the [SD83 Careers website](#).



### LEARN MORE ABOUT WORK EXPERIENCE AND DUAL CREDIT

There are many new ways for students to get valuable life experiences, and a head start on a post-secondary level program, most tuition-free, while they are still in secondary school. There are dual credit opportunities not just in trades, but also technology, academics and health.

Parents and students are invited to WEX Dual Credit Night at J.L. Jackson on October 15, 2025, from 5:30-7 pm or Salmon Arm Secondary on October 16, 2025, from 5:30- 7 pm. These sessions are open to Grade 9-12 students and their parents; however, younger students and their parents are welcome.



**SD83 Careers Department**

Parents and students you are invited to:  
**WEX DUAL CREDIT NIGHT**  
EARN POST SECONDARY CREDITS WHILE STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL!

**GET A HEAD START!**

**DON'T MISS THIS EVENT!**

**Many Opportunities**  
There are many new ways for students to get valuable life experiences and a head start on a post-secondary level program, most tuition-free, while you are still in secondary school! There are dual credit opportunities not just in trades, but also technology, academics and health.

**We are here to help!**  
All of our high schools have career coordinators to help students! As these programs are very popular and space is limited, it is important to begin thinking about your options for next year as soon as possible.

**J.L. Jackson - October 15, 2025**  
**Pleasant Valley Secondary - October 16, 2025**  
Both sessions run from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

These sessions are aimed at Grade 9-12 students and their parents. However, younger students and their parents are welcome!

For More Information <https://career.sd83.bc.ca/>

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

We will strengthen existing and develop new strategic partnerships in gap areas.

### INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HOMESTAYS

In the 2024-25 school year, SD83 and SD6 began transitioning the SD83 International Student Program to SD6. Full onboarding of management and services is taking place this school year. We are excited to continue welcoming international students from around the world to study, play, and explore our area. This year, approximately 42 international students are attending one of the following schools: Eagle River Secondary, J.L. Jackson Secondary, Pleasant Valley Secondary, or Salmon Arm Secondary.

RMISP (Rocky Mountain International Student Program) is looking for welcoming and caring host families for SD83 International students coming to our beautiful corner of the world. International students choose Canada as their destination for an abroad study experience because of Canada's reputation as a safe and stable country, the quality of the education system in Canada, and because Canada offers a society that is tolerant and non-discriminatory (Source: CBIE).

For a limited time only, host parents who apply by October 31, 2025, will receive a \$250 sign-up bonus (to be paid after successfully hosting a month). Host families come in all shapes and sizes – from single adult/parent homes to young families to empty nesters. Don't miss out on this opportunity and [apply now](#).

**Rocky Mountain International Student Program**

# Homestays Needed

**LIMITED OFFER**

APPLY BY OCTOBER 31 & COMPLETE ONE MONTH OF HOSTING TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR A

## \$250 SIGN-ON BONUS

CANNOT BE COMBINED WITH REFERRAL REWARD

Scan to learn more:



**Why host?**

- Global connections
- Cultural enrichment
- Lifelong friendships
- Community support
- Receive \$1050-\$1300/month

**SEE ALL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA & APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS ONLINE AT:**  
[rminternational.ca/homestay](http://rminternational.ca/homestay)

**For more information, contact:**  
Ulli Murtagh, Homestay Manager  
[ulli.murtagh@sd6.bc.ca](mailto:ulli.murtagh@sd6.bc.ca)  
(250) 432-5904

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We will develop and enhance procedures and practices that will assist in meeting the Strategic Priorities.

### STAFF SCHOOL START-UP

During the week of August 25-29, 2025, learning and planning sessions were held for principals and vice principals, clerical, bus drivers, and new teachers. These sessions supported a strong start to the year and assisted in ensuring staff were ready to welcome students back.

Virtual 45-minute sessions were held, throughout the week, to orient principals and vice principals on new processes, review updates, and provided an opportunity to ask questions related to each topic.



Approximately 35 clerical staff attended a session on the importance of Security Awareness and Privacy Training, updates related to the Education Data Exchange, MyEducationBC enhancements, the 1701 timeline, international student processes, and changes to timesheet and leave of absence processes.

School bus drivers participated in hands-on training, policy and procedure reviews, administrative updates, and safety and operational guidelines.



Twenty-four new teachers were welcomed to SD83. Their orientation included sessions on education technology, payroll, and health & safety, along with presentations from NOSTA, Indigenous Education, Inclusive Education, and Human Resources.

Full details on the sessions that were offered are available [HERE](#).

## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR SCHOOL – A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

At SD83, we believe that collaboration between families and schools helps students thrive. SD83 Leadership and the District Parent Advisory Council have worked together to create helpful guidelines for addressing and resolving concerns.

If you have a concern about your child, we encourage you to start by speaking directly with the staff member involved, or with the Principal or Vice Principal at your child’s school. If the concern continues, please reach out to your a [Family of Schools Lead](#) for additional support.

To learn more, please read our guide: [Communicating With Your School – A Guide for Families](#).



**K'wask'wáknéws ne Secwepemcú'ecw School District No. 83**  
**Communicating With Your School**  
**A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES**  
 Developed jointly by SD83 and the SD83 District Parent Advisory Council

### Ways to Build a Positive Relationship with Your Child’s School

**Be Involved**

- Support and work with your child’s teacher(s)
- Participate in your school’s Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
- Attend school events and activities
- Offer to help in the classroom
- Support your child’s learning at home
- Stay informed of your child’s progress at school

**Communicate**

- Take opportunities to get to know the people who work with your child
- Ask your child about their school day
- Keep the school informed about issues that may affect your child by reaching out directly to the school, first, to problem-solve
- Don’t wait for a small problem to become a large concern; your voice matters
- Stay updated on school activities via the school website and social media

**Resolving Issues and Concerns**

- Make an appointment** - Making an appointment ensures concerns can be heard without distractions. Everyone should be informed, in advance, of who will attend the meeting.
- Be Specific** - Communicate clearly about the concern. Making notes may help clarify your thoughts. Keep focused on what is best for the student. Collaboration is the key to success and both parents and staff are interested in the child’s success.
- Be Respectful** - Stay calm and be polite. Listen to everyone. Try to see the issue from the other person’s perspective and be prepared to explore various solutions. Confidentiality is important.
- Be Patient** - Give the process a chance to address the concern at each step before proceeding to the next step. Keep a record of actions taken.
- Be Transparent** - Confirm that everyone understands the decision reached and any timeline involved.

**Guidelines for Families to Follow When There is an Issue or Concern**

- 1 Start with the staff member whose action has given rise to the issue or concern.
- 2 If the issue is not resolved, contact the school’s principal or vice principal.
- 3 If the issue is still not resolved, contact the District Education Support Centre at 250-832-2157 and connect with a Family of Schools Lead.
- 4 If after working through the steps above, you have not received a decision or you disagree with the decision, depending on the nature of the issue you may be able to appeal to the Board of Education under Section 11 of the School Act: [Policy 220](#).

Other sources of support and guidance are your Parent Advisory Council (PAC) or the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC). Your school office can provide you with the names of your school’s PAC executive. The DPAC executive can be reached at: [sd83dpac@gmail.com](mailto:sd83dpac@gmail.com).

## FACILITIES SUMMER PROJECTS 2025



Over the summer, the Facilities Department completed a wide range of upgrades across the District, all of which directly support the goals outlined in the [2023-2028 Strategic Plan](#). Their work focused on creating safe, healthy, and functional learning environments for students and staff. Projects such as classroom flooring replacements, HVAC system improvements, irrigation upgrades, and infrastructure enhancements reflect our commitment to environmental stewardship, inclusive learning spaces, and long-term sustainability. These efforts not only improve physical comfort and safety but also align with the District's mission to empower students to thrive in their learning, relationships, and community.

To view some of the great work completed by the District Facilities Team over the summer, click [HERE](#).



## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Administrative procedures (APs) are established procedures and practices directed by the Superintendent of Schools and Senior Leadership Team. These procedures provide guidance for staff to ensure their work aligns with board policies and meets the organization's expectations or requirements. The following APs have recently completed the development and review process:

- [AP 322 Graduation Ceremony Participation](#)
- [AP 350 Supporting Inclusion of Students in Schools](#)

## EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The Board of Education will work to represent the interests of all students by actively advocating for student learning and well-being through Strategic Planning Policy and responsible Stewardship.

### ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING REPORT



**OUR MISSION**  
Empowering students to become confident, curious, and caring individuals who thrive in their learning, relationships, and community.

**OUR VISION**  
Preparing students to become educated citizens who contribute to a dynamic, sustainable, and diverse world.

**OUR VALUES**  
Belonging  
Respect  
Reconciliation  
Empathy  
Equity  
Perseverance

Each year, every school district in British Columbia publishes an *Enhancing Student Learning Report* in accordance with the provincial *Enhancing Student Learning Reporting Order*. This report highlights the District's ongoing efforts to improve student learning outcomes with a strong emphasis on equity and inclusion.

At the September 23, 2025, Regular Board Meeting, the Board passed a motion to approve the *Enhancing Student Learning Report 2024-25*. In accordance with the Ministry of Education and Child Care's Framework for Enhancing Student Learning Order, the Report has been submitted to the Ministry of Education and Child Care and is available on the District website: [Enhancing Student Learning](#).



### 2024-2025 AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

At the September 23, 2025, Board meeting, the District's auditors, KPMG, issued a clean audit opinion on the Financial Statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, confirming that the statements are fairly and accurately presented and comply with generally accepted accounting standards applicable to school districts in B.C.

The Board approved Financial Statements are submitted to the Ministry of Education and Child Care and are available on the District's website: [2024-25 Audited Financial Statements](#). The 2024-25 Financial Statement Discussion & Analysis is available [here](#).