

Framework for Enhancing Student Learning



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5
SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY

School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) Indigenous Education

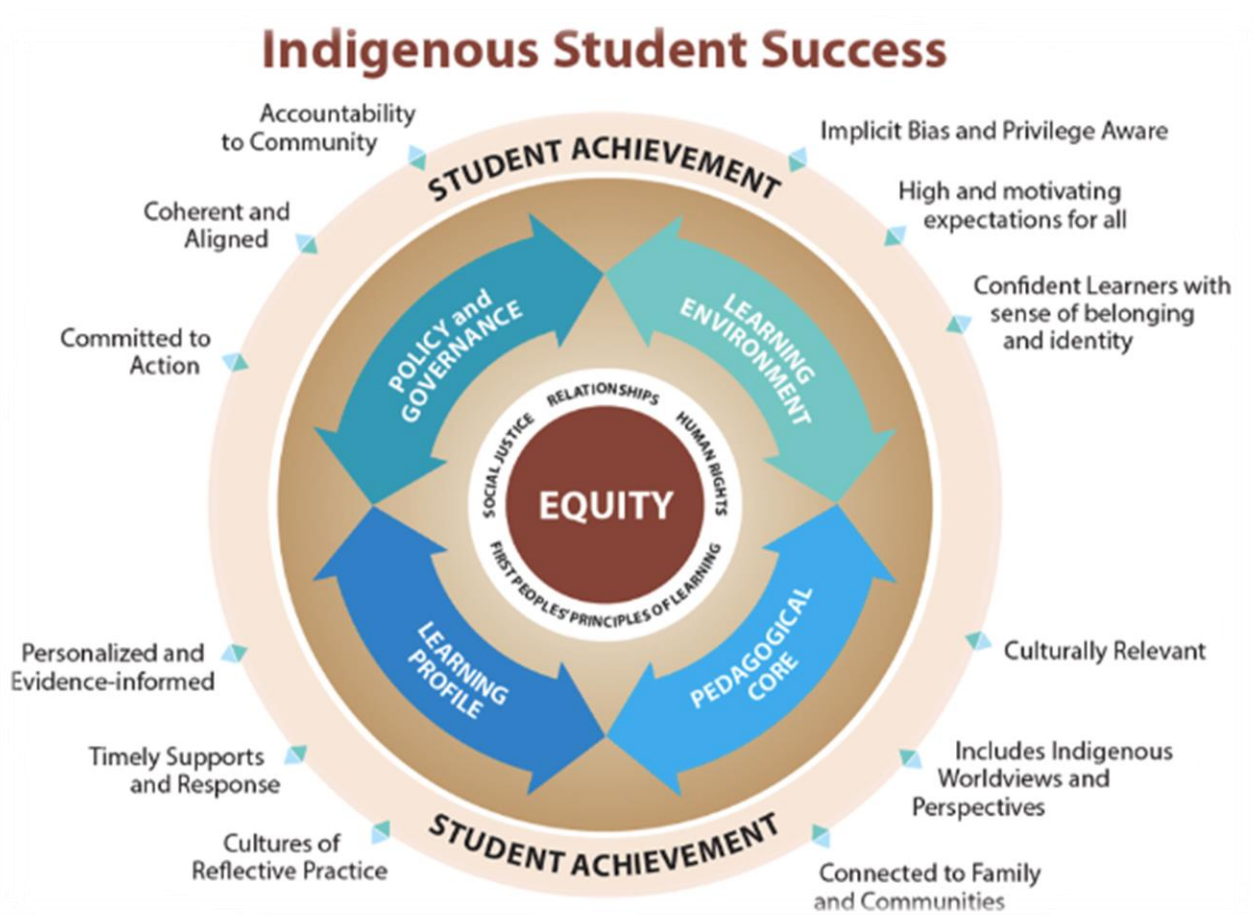


September 2025

Indigenous Education

Priority 3 of the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning focused on ensuring that all students transition successfully from secondary school with the competencies and confidence to achieve their life and career goals. This priority aligns directly with the Indigenous Education Enhancement Agreement, which emphasizes both a strong sense of belonging and improved academic achievement for Indigenous learners.

At the provincial level, the Ministry of Education and Child Care has made closing equity gaps for Indigenous learners a central commitment. Through the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) Action Plan and recent amendments to the School Act, the Ministry is working with FNESEC, First Nations Rightsholders, Métis Nation BC, and Inuit partners to strengthen student outcomes. Initiatives such as Indigenous Education Councils, Local Education Agreements, and the BC Tripartite Education Agreement provide structural supports for accountability and meaningful collaboration.



Completion Rates and Academic Achievement

The District data reveals mixed progress. While there have been improvements in the six-year completion rate for Indigenous learners and gains in senior academic courses such as Foundations of Math 12 and English First Peoples 12, challenges remain. Participation in earlier gateway courses, including Science 10 and Foundations and Pre-Calculus 10, requires ongoing attention.

These patterns underscore the importance of the Enhancement Agreement's twin goals of belonging and achievement. Academic outcomes cannot be considered in isolation from the broader cultural, relational, and systemic supports that shape the experiences of Indigenous students.

Attendance and Critical Focus






Attendance has emerged as a central focus for both the District and the province. Families, schools, and communities continue to navigate changing patterns of engagement following the pandemic, and Indigenous students have been among those most affected. While the full picture of current attendance is still being understood, it is clear that consistent attendance remains essential to academic success and to fostering a strong sense of belonging.

To support this work, School District 5 has launched a four-year research partnership with Dr. Dustin Louie from UBC. This project is just beginning and will focus initially on relationship building, community dialogue, and analysis of district attendance data. Grounded in Indigenous methodologies, the research uses an appreciative inquiry approach that avoids pathologizing students and families, instead seeking to understand the push and pull factors that influence attendance. As the project develops, it will move toward co-creating and implementing interventions with students, families, schools, and communities, with evaluation built into each stage.

Locally, the District has already implemented an attendance support model based on the First Nations Education Steering Committee's (FNESC) Attendance Counts framework. This approach emphasizes wraparound supports at the family, school, District, and community levels. The collaboration with Dr. Louie builds on this foundation, ensuring that future interventions are guided by both community voice and evidence.

Community Partnerships and Supports

The District continues to expand programming that fosters both academic success and belonging. These include:

-  Increasing support for Indigenous Support Counsellors and Elders in Residence, who provide cultural, emotional, and academic guidance.
-  Supporting the role of the Exploitation Prevention Coordinator, who works across the District to strengthen safety, prevent exploitation, and build a stronger sense of belonging for vulnerable learners. This work includes collaboration with local First Nations to design strategies that respond directly to Indigenous community needs.
-  Strengthening partnerships with ʔaǰam and Yaǰit ʔa·knuǰi'it through Local Education Agreements, which now include student success meetings and formal consultation on programs.
-  Enhancing Indigenous Gathering Places in schools, ensuring they are vibrant spaces for learning, connection, and cultural practice.
-  Co-developing professional development with partners such as Aqamnik School, College of the Rockies, and Indigenous educators like Jo Chrona and Leona Prince.

These initiatives align with provincial goals to integrate Indigenous culture, languages, and perspectives into schools, while also meeting local priorities of connection and community engagement.

Summary

In 2024/25, Priority 3 of the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning and the Strategic Plan guided Indigenous Education initiatives across the District.

Locally, the District celebrated progress in course completion and strengthened cultural supports, while also recognizing attendance as a key area of focus moving forward. Provincially, these efforts are reinforced by the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), amendments to the School Act, and the shared goal of closing equity gaps for Indigenous Learners.

By embedding cultural knowledge, supporting students through counsellors and Elders, building community partnerships, and addressing exploitation prevention, the District has laid a foundation for belonging and achievement. The newly launched research partnership with Dr. Dustin Louie represents an important next step, ensuring that attendance interventions are grounded in Indigenous voice, rigorous evidence, and a commitment to decolonizing education. Together, these initiatives demonstrate the District's dedication to ensuring that Indigenous learners in Southeast Kootenay are supported, valued, and equipped to achieve their goals.