

LEARNING TOGETHER

NO. 24



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Congratulations 2026 Grads
Strategic Plan In Action



LEARNING TOGETHER IN SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5 (SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY)



May is always one of the busiest and most memorable months in our schools. Across the District, students are performing on stage, presenting their learning, competing in athletics, exploring career pathways, and preparing for graduation. This month continues to reflect our strategic priority of Fostering Student Engagement Through Participation and Belonging. When students feel connected to their schools and communities, incredible things happen, and this spring has provided many examples of that throughout the Southeast Kootenay District.

One of the highlights of my month was attending the District Dogwood Scholarship presentations. These presentations are always inspiring because they showcase the passion, creativity, and leadership of our students in such authentic ways.

I had the opportunity to hear from a student who developed and published a handbook for grade seven students to help support their transition into secondary school. Another student created and delivered a professional development session for teachers focused on Online Grooming Awareness: Supporting Educators in Student Safety. Both projects demonstrated remarkable maturity, initiative, and a genuine commitment to supporting others within their school communities. These presentations reflected not only academic excellence, but also compassion, leadership, and a strong sense of responsibility toward helping others. ~~~~~♥~~~~~

May has also been filled with outstanding student productions across the district. I had the pleasure of attending *Seussical The Musical* in Elkford, which was absolutely wonderful. The creativity, humour, and enthusiasm that students brought to the stage made for a truly memorable evening. It was clear how much effort students and staff invested into every detail of the production, from the performances to the music, costumes, and staging. Productions like these provide students with opportunities to build confidence, collaborate with others, and share their talents with their communities. Mount Baker Secondary School's production of *SpongeBob the Musical* was also very well received and is another excellent example of the incredible talent and dedication of students and staff throughout the District. 🎓

As graduation season approaches, excitement is building across our secondary schools. Graduation is an important milestone that marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. I encourage all students to celebrate responsibly and safely while enjoying this special time with friends and family. These are moments that will be remembered forever, and we want every student to have the opportunity to look back on them positively.

School is about so much more than academics. It is about friendships, experiences, involvement, and creating lasting memories. Whether students are participating in theatre productions, athletics, trades programs, leadership opportunities, or community events, these experiences help shape who they become both inside and outside the classroom.

Our Ready, Set, Learn events have continued throughout our communities with wonderful success. These events provide an important first connection for our youngest learners and their families as they begin their educational journey.

Community engagement also remains an important focus for the District. Elkford hosted the Elk Valley Engagement Night on May 19, bringing together families, students, staff, and community members for thoughtful conversations and valuable feedback. Cranbrook's Engagement Night will follow on May 26, and we look forward to continuing these important opportunities to connect with our communities and hear directly from those we serve.

Another exciting opportunity this month was Project Heavy Duty, hosted in Cranbrook. This incredible hands-on experience allowed grades eleven and twelve students to explore careers in the trades and heavy equipment industries firsthand. Students had the opportunity to interact with industry professionals and experience operating equipment in a safe and engaging environment. Programs like this provide students with valuable exposure to potential career pathways while highlighting the many opportunities available right here in our region.

As we move into the final weeks of the school year, I want to thank all staff, students, families, and community partners for the continued care, energy, and support you bring to our schools each day. It is a privilege to witness the accomplishments of our students and the strong sense of community that exists throughout the District.

V. Johnson

Viveka Johnson,
Superintendent



Indigenous Education



Congratulations to Faye O'Neil, Indigenous Education Coordinator, for being honoured with the Ktunaxa Citizens Excellence Award for Education.



Blue Jean Jacket Day - June 6

Blue Jean Jacket Day was launched in 2023 in Edmonton on June 6 to create awareness about missing, murdered and exploited men and boys.

For more information, please see the [article from CBC](#).



Red Dress Day

The Red Dress Day event was held on Tuesday, May 5 at Rotary Park. Students and staff from Laurie Middle, Mount Baker Secondary and Parkland Middle gathered at Rotary Park alongside Elders, Nation members, families, and community members to honour and remember Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people.

With hearts united, they stood together in reflection, listening to the powerful words and stories shared by speakers Bonnie Harvey and Janice Alpine. Students from Laurie Middle School also shared poems and read aloud the names and ages of missing women and girls, ensuring their lives were acknowledged and remembered.

Tour of Universities

Students from Mount Baker Secondary, Kootenay Education, Laurie Middle and Parkland Middle recently took part in an educational field trip to Lethbridge Polytechnic, the University of Lethbridge and the University of Calgary.

The purpose of the trip was to expose students to post secondary opportunities.

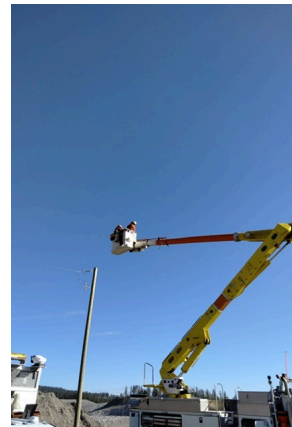
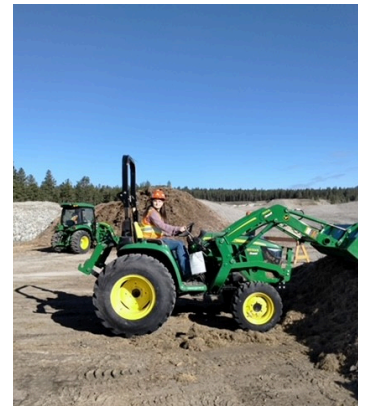


Supporting Pathways to Graduation - Project Heavy Duty



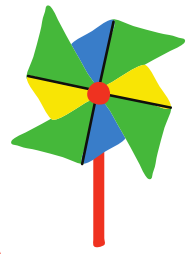
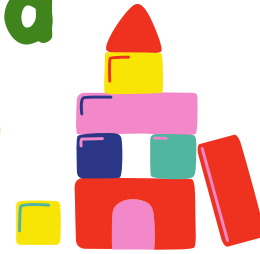
Photos contributed by Tristan Taylor

Students in grades 11 and 12 from Mount Baker Secondary and Fernie Secondary participated in Project Heavy Duty at the beginning of May. The event took place in Cranbrook this year and is scheduled for Sparwood in 2027.



Early Learning and Child Care

District Principal of Early Learning and Child Care,
Laura-Lee Phillips



May is Child Care Month

May is Child Care Month in British Columbia, a time to recognize and celebrate the important role child care providers play in the lives of children, families, schools, and communities.

Across our region, child care providers create safe, caring, and welcoming spaces where children can learn, play, grow, and build meaningful connections. Their work supports children's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development, while also helping families feel connected, supported, and confident.

We are grateful for the dedication, patience, creativity, and compassion child care providers bring to their work each day. Whether they are working in schools, child care centres, family child care homes, preschools, StrongStart programs, before- and after-school care, or community-based early years programs, their contributions make a lasting difference.

This month, we celebrate and thank all child care providers and early learning professionals for the care, commitment, and heart they bring to children, families, and communities every day.

MAY IS CHILD CARE MONTH

Thank you to the many dedicated child care professionals, providers and partners, for the valuable services you provide and the significant contributions you make to support families and children in our community.





Online Learning Update

Vice Principal, Deirdre Bailey



Summer Online Learning: Flexible Options for Grades 10-12

The Southeast Kootenay online learning programs for Grades 10, 11, and 12 remain open all summer, giving students a flexible way to stay on track, get ahead, or create more room in next year's schedule. Enrollment is continuous. Learners can begin a course at any time and all coursework is fully asynchronous, allowing students to work independently, at their own pace, from wherever summer takes them.

Cross-enrollment is available to all current Grade 8–12 students, as well as graduates and adult learners working toward their Dogwood diploma. Whether you're hoping to upgrade a mark, accelerate your progress, or build a schedule that better fits your goals, the District's online courses offer a pathway that adapts to you.

Both the Fernie and Cranbrook campuses will offer weekly summer drop-in hours for students seeking in-person support, guidance, or a quiet workspace.

If you're looking to upgrade, gain additional flexibility, or prioritize electives, sports, or other commitments, consider exploring what the District's Online Learning can offer.



SUMMER ONLINE LEARNING

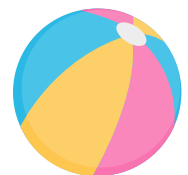
CROSS-ENROLLMENT INTO GRADE 10, 11 AND 12 ONLINE COURSES IS AVAILABLE FOR CURRENT GRADES 8-12 LEARNERS IN SD 5

ENROLL NOW



Visit our website or contact kds.mailing@sd5.bc.ca to learn more

**DID YOU KNOW
KDS IS OPEN
DURING THE
SUMMER??**



Click here to complete your online course request.



News from District Teachers

District Literacy, Laura-Lee Phillips



Read Anywhere, Read Anything: Encouraging Summer Literacy

As summer approaches, families often ask how they can help their children continue growing as readers while school is out. The good news is that summer reading does not need to look like homework. In fact, some of the most meaningful reading happens when students have choice, time, and encouragement to explore what interests them.

Reading over the summer helps students maintain confidence, build vocabulary, strengthen comprehension, and stay connected to learning. Just as importantly, it can help children see reading as something enjoyable and useful in everyday life.

Families can support summer literacy in simple ways. Set aside a few minutes each day for reading, visit the local library, listen to audiobooks during car rides, or invite children to read recipes, menus, maps, instructions, comics, magazines, sports articles, or graphic novels. All reading counts!

For younger readers, reading aloud together is one of the best ways to build language and comprehension. For older students, summer can be a great time to discover a new series, revisit a favourite author, or explore nonfiction connected to hobbies, sports, animals, science, history, or current events.

Families can also encourage conversation about reading by asking simple questions: What was your favourite part? What surprised you? Would you recommend this book to someone else? These conversations help children think more deeply and see reading as something worth sharing.

This summer, we encourage every student to read anywhere and read anything. Whether it is a novel under a tree, an audiobook on a road trip, a comic at the kitchen table, or a bedtime story shared with family, every reading moment matters. Small habits over the summer can lead to big benefits when students return to school in the fall.

Families do not need to do anything complicated to support literacy over the summer. A few minutes of reading, listening, talking, and storytelling each day can make a meaningful difference. The links below offer practical ideas and free resources to help make summer reading enjoyable for everyone.

Literacy Links for Parents:



- BC Summer Reading Club: Free summer reading program through public libraries for children ages 5-14. <https://bcsrc.ca/>
- Sora - Student Digital Library: Access ebooks, audiobooks, magazines, and graphic novels through participating school libraries. <https://soraapp.com/welcome>
- Reading Rockets: Literacy at Home: Practical reading and writing tips for families. <https://www.readingrockets.org/literacy-home>
- Reading Rockets: Reading 101 for Parents: Grade-by-grade guidance for supporting reading development. <https://www.readingrockets.org/literacy-home/reading-101-guide-parents>
- Read Aloud 15 Minutes: Encourages families to read aloud daily and offers supporting resources. <https://readaloud.org/>
- Storyline Online: Actors read children's books aloud in engaging videos. <https://storylineonline.net/>
- Unite for Literacy: Free online picture books with audio narration in many languages. <https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/>
- Common Sense Media Book Reviews: Age-based book reviews and guidance for families. <https://www.common Sense Media.org/book-reviews>
- International Children's Digital Library: Free digital children's books from around the world. <https://www.childrenslibrary.org/>



News from District Teachers



District Numeracy Teacher, Nicole Fulton



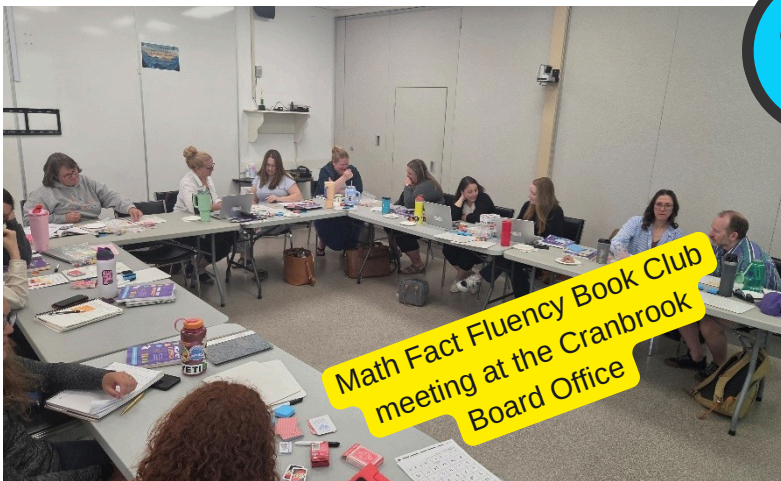
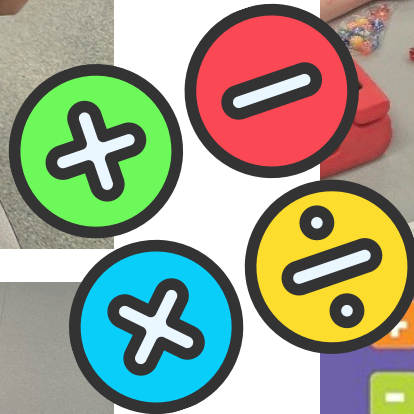
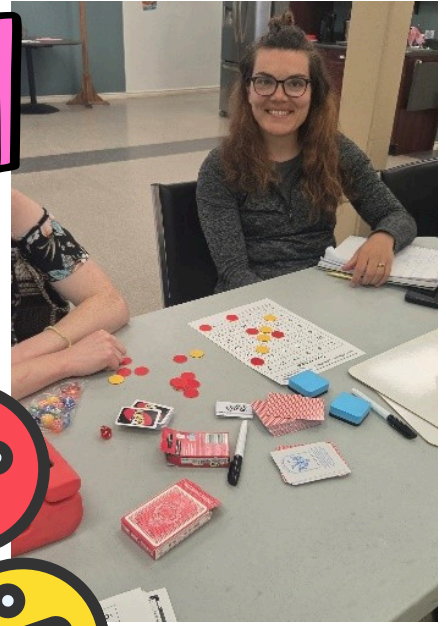
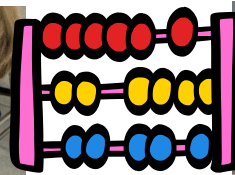
This month's classroom visits focused on building mathematical understanding through games, discussion, and hands-on exploration.

In a Grade 2/3 classroom at Highlands Elementary, students began exploring the foundations of division through the idea of fair sharing. We started with the picture book *The Doorbell Rang* by Pat Hutchins, where cookies must be shared among more and more children. Students then used the "flower method" to divide petals evenly among groups, helping them build a concrete understanding of equal sharing and division.

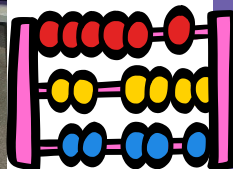
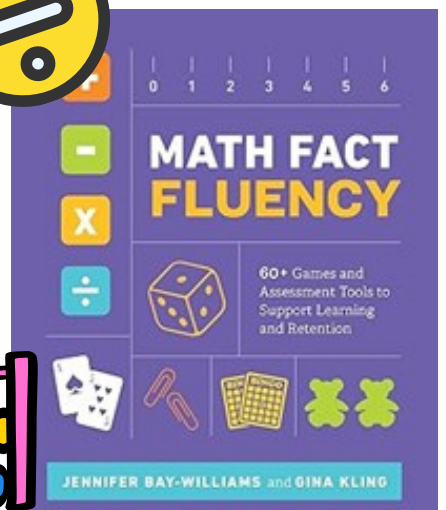
A major focus this month was exploring how games can support student learning and help make mathematics fun, engaging, and accessible for all learners. Games provide opportunities for students to build fluency, develop flexible thinking, and strengthen confidence while learning through play and discussion.

Teachers participating in the district book club on *Math Fact Fluency* by Jennifer Bay Williams met this month to discuss ideas from the book, play games together, and create fact fluency kits to bring back to their schools. Our conversations focused on the idea that fact fluency is much more than memorization. True fluency develops when students understand number relationships and can use flexible and efficient strategies with confidence.

As we move into the final months of the school year, it has been exciting to see students building confidence and joy in mathematics through hands-on learning, collaboration, and play.



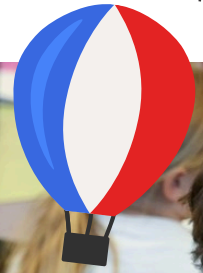
Math Fact Fluency Book Club meeting at the Cranbrook Board Office



News from District Teachers



District French Curriculum Support Teacher, Marzia Bottoni



The District's French Immersion elementary & senior high school students have been buddying up to read, write and speak in French together.

Félicitations

Kamryn Meulenbeld and Jude Osborne for representing Southeast Kootenay French Immersion at the provincial French speech contest, Le Concours d'Art Oratoire, held at Simon Fraser University Surrey this year.

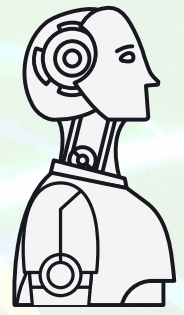
Congratulations



French Immersion students went wild for the French rapper Missy D, who performed in Fernie and Cranbrook. Youpi!



DISTRICT DESIGN LABS



Teachers of Transformative Learning,
Ryan McKenzie and Kim Froehler

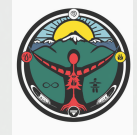
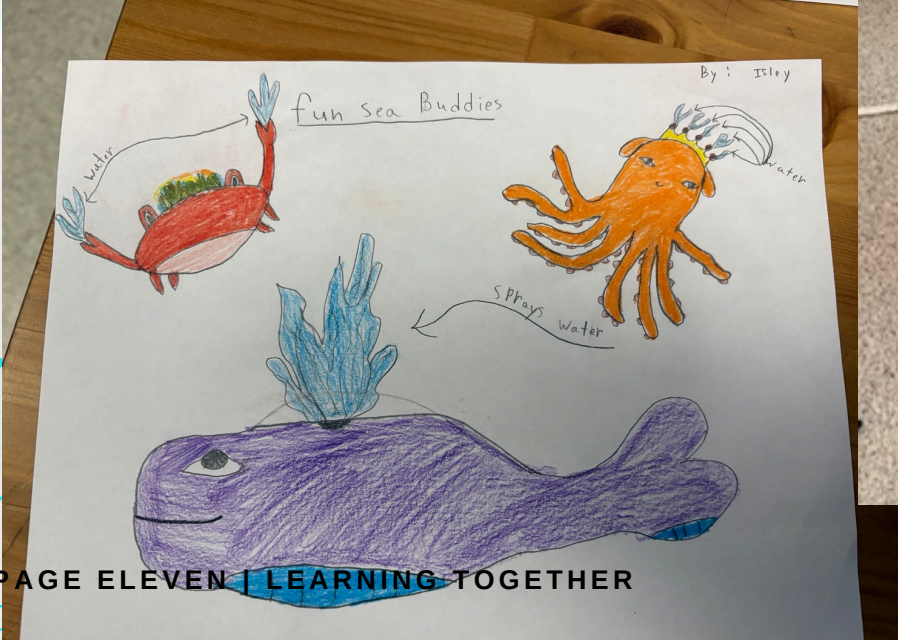
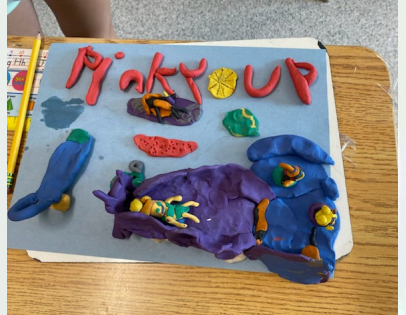
Steam Fest 2026

Students across the District are engaging in hands on, creative, open ended activities that encourage critical thinking and problem-solving during the **2026 STEAM Fest**.

Students are engaging in the design thinking process to solve possible design solutions related to the theme of water. Some classes will participate in short one day or half day activities, while other classes may culminate their learning into a class or school based STEAM Fest.

Here are some photos following the theme of "Dive Into Design". Students were challenged to brainstorm ideas and design a prototype that promotes fun, movement, safety, comfort, and creativity in the water.

Some classes used hand sketches and 3D modelling in Minecraft Edu, while others used crafting materials such as plasticine, tin foil, sticks, and more to represent their ideas.





OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION




Mount Baker Secondary EAP 11

Over March and early April the outdoor careers program did avalanche awareness and learned winter camping skills, such as shelter building, navigation, meal preparation and safe stove use. They tested out their packs and headed to Kootenay Pass for an overnight trip, with all weather conditions to provide great learning conditions! Persistence and amazing attitudes, along with great teamwork and preparedness got everyone through this awesome experience.

Students have been learning about food security and how they can help with this in the community, and have grown seedlings and helped with gardening at the Cranbrook Food Action garden.

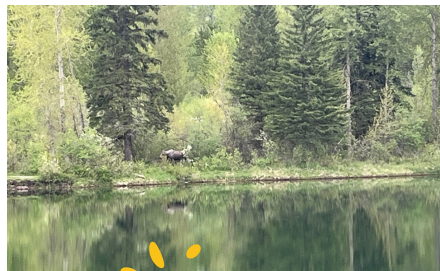
Lastly the students are partnering up with the local Rotary group to coach elementary kids in the We Bike Program. In the picture our students learn what we will help coach the kids to do!

Fernie Secondary Outdoor Education



Grades seven and eight students biked along the Elk River, looking up at the Lizard Range as they made their way toward the James White Park disc golf course. After practising disc golf skills at school, students put their technique, control, safety, and course etiquette into action on the course.

Students showed strong biking skills, were polite and respectful with members of the public along the way, handled a little rain, and even had a classic Fernie moment with a moose sighting near Maiden Lake.





IN THE SCHOOLS

News from Schools Across the District



Track and Field

The third annual Mount Baker Secondary invitational track meet was held on May 5.



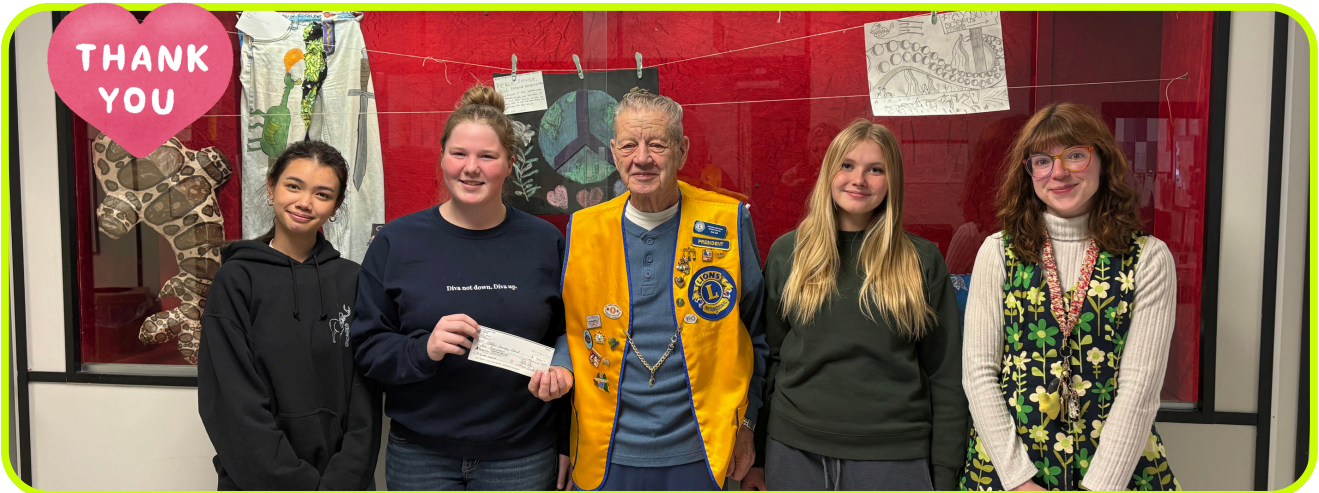
Trash Bash at Fernie Secondary

The annual Trash Bash was held at Fernie Secondary on April 28.



Archery at Sparwood Secondary

Sparwood Secondary students received archery lessons at the local archery range with the help of the Sparwood Fish and Wildlife.



Elkford Secondary Musical Theatre

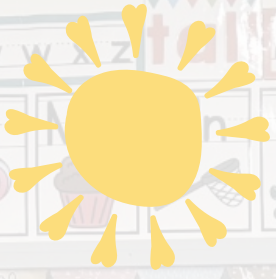
The Musical Theatre class at Elkford Secondary had the opportunity for three of the leads, Zoey, Suri and Kinley to speak to the Elkford Lions Club about the need for a new sound system for the upcoming musical and all school events.

The Lions Club was extremely generous by donating a \$500 cheque as well as giving Elkford Secondary the month of April Bottle collection to help pay for the new system.

Elkford Secondary is grateful for community partners such as the Lions Club for their generous support of the community and the students!



A Picture Says a Thousand Words...



CONGRATULATIONS

2026

GRADS!



STRATEGIC PLAN IN ACTION

In the Southeast Kootenay School District, our Strategic Plan guides the work we do each day to support student success, belonging, innovation, and lifelong learning. This month's stories highlight many of the ways our schools, staff, students, and communities are bringing the Strategic Plan to life.

Human and Social Development

Cultivating student well being, belonging, creativity, and community connection.

- Red Dress Day
- Blue Jean Jacket Day
- Outdoor and Environmental Education
- Musical theatre and athletics

Intellectual Development

Encouraging curiosity, creativity, literacy, numeracy, and innovation.

- Summer literacy resources
- Math Fact Fluency work
- STEAM Fest and District Design Labs
- French Immersion collaboration

Early Learning and Child Care

Supporting strong foundations for learning and successful transitions for children and families.

- Kindergarten Orientation
- Ready, Set, Learn events
- Early learning supports

Career Development

Helping students explore pathways to graduation and future career opportunities.

- Project Heavy Duty
- Online Learning opportunities
- University tours
- Dogwood Scholarship projects

Technology and Innovation

Empowering learners through creative and ethical uses of technology.

- Minecraft Education design work
- Online Learning
- Student STEAM projects

Community Partnerships

Strengthening relationships with families, Indigenous partners, organizations, and local communities.

- Engagement Nights
- Community collaboration across the District

