

LEARNING TOGETHER

NO. 17





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



As we move towards the end of October, I want to extend a warm welcome back to everyone across the District. September always feels like a whirlwind, full of energy, anticipation, and reconnection, and this year was no exception. The hallways, classrooms, and fields across the District were once again alive with learning and activity. Thank you to our operations and maintenance staff for their hard work in ensuring our buildings and grounds were ready to welcome students and staff for the new school year.

Across our schools, it has been inspiring to see so many positive and engaging events underway. Students are participating in paarlauf relays, volleyball, soccer games, cross-country meets, rugby and the Terry Fox Run, all of which build teamwork, perseverance, and school spirit.

Our elementary band programs are in full swing, filling our spaces with the joyful sounds of collaboration and creativity. These opportunities remind us that learning extends beyond the classroom, nurturing confidence, relationships, and a sense of belonging.

At the end of September, our schools took part in Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, reflecting together on the importance of truth, remembrance, and ongoing reconciliation. I want to thank all educators, students, and communities for the meaningful ways they engaged in learning and conversation. We are also deeply grateful to the Elders who continue to share their wisdom, guidance, and teachings with students and staff. Their presence enriches our understanding and strengthens our connections. I am also pleased to share that the Indigenous Education Council (IEC) has completed its Terms of Reference, establishing a strong foundation for collaboration. We look forward to working together with the IEC as partners to support Indigenous learners and ensure that Indigenous voices and perspectives continue to guide our collective journey.

The Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (FESL) for 2025–2026 has now been posted on the District website. The FESL outlines our shared goals and commitment to continuous improvement in three key areas:

- **Improving literacy and numeracy for all learners.**
- **Enhancing well-being and belonging, ensuring every student and staff member feels connected, valued, and supported.**
- **Strengthening transitions to help students move confidently through their learning journey from early years through graduation and beyond.**

These goals guide our collective efforts and reflect the heart of our work: helping every learner reach their full potential.

As we continue implementing the 2024–2028 Strategic Plan, I want to highlight an area we have not spoken about much yet, our focus on Sustainability and Stewardship. This includes fostering a culture of environmental responsibility, promoting sustainable operations, and teaching students and adults to care for the world around them. Whether through energy-efficient facilities, outdoor learning opportunities, or student-led environmental initiatives, we are building a future that reflects care for both people and the planet.

Thank you for all that you do to make schools vibrant, welcoming, and inspiring places to learn. The commitment of staff, students, and families are what make the District such a special community. I look forward to continuing this journey of learning together in the months ahead.

Viveka Johnson (she/her)
Superintendent of Schools
Southeast Kootenay (School District 5)



Early Learning, Child Care and Literacy

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



Starting school is an exciting milestone for both children and their families. As your child begins learning to read, know that their early literacy skills are being supported every day in the classroom. Early literacy skills are the foundational abilities children develop before they can fully read, and they are essential for becoming confident, lifelong learners.

The essential components of early literacy and reading development include phonemic awareness, phonics, accurate and fluent reading of connected text, reading comprehension, and vocabulary and language skills. Phonemic awareness and phonics help children understand how sounds and letters work together to form words. As children practice reading, they develop accuracy and fluency, allowing them to read smoothly and with expression. Strong vocabulary and language skills support comprehension which is the ability to make meaning from what is read. Together, these skills form the foundation for confident, successful readers.

Here are some great ways to support your child's learning at home: Reading together each day, visiting the local library, and sharing stories. These are simple yet enjoyable ways to build a love of reading. There are many free and playful activities that help your child develop early reading skills such as like learning letter names, hearing sounds, and discovering new words. Most importantly, remember that the greatest gift you can give your child is sharing the joy of reading: talk about stories, ask questions, and celebrate their progress along the way.

Thank you to Erin Jones for the QR codes below:



News from the School Food Coordinator

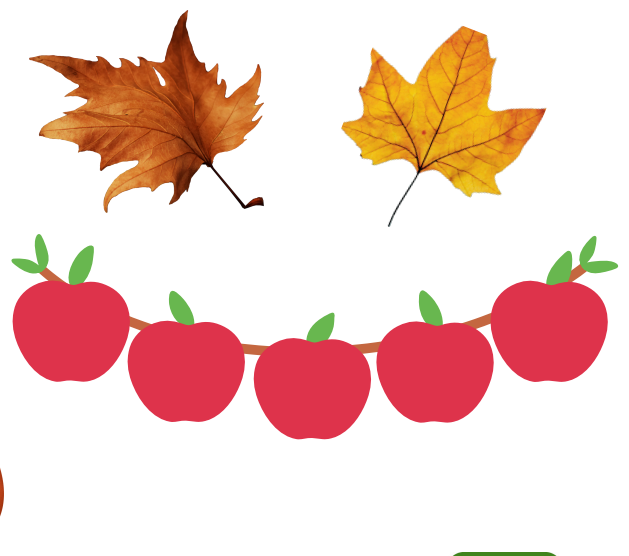
School Food Coordinator, Vince Girimonte

Feeding Futures was honoured to the Truth and Reconciliation gathering at Steeples Elementary on September 29. Steeples was joined by students, teachers and elders from ʔaḡam School, and community members for a ceremony and circle walk together in the field, followed by soup and rolls in the gymnasium. Thank you to Cyndi Andrew for organizing this important gathering in our school community, as well as Community Connections Kitchen (Chef Scott) for his wonderful contribution.

Wednesday hot lunch is back at Gordon Terrace, Parkland, Pinewood and Steeples! We have adjusted the menus based on favourites from last year, such as Beef Tacos and Penne Bolognese. The lunch continues to be 'pay-what-you-can' and we encourage all students and families to sign up.

In the Elk Valley, Frank J. Mitchell's school kitchen was updated with new countertops, cabinets, a large sink, a commercial dishwasher and a commercial refrigerator. This renovation will allow school staff to better serve students in a safe, efficient environment. Thank you to Frank J. Mitchell staff for their help and feedback on the new kitchen.

Students from the College of the Rockies Nursing Program have started a project at Mount Baker Secondary that seeks to get a student perspective on the future of food in their school. Mount Baker students will be participating in a survey on subjects such as eating spaces, food access, and healthy options on campus. This is the third practicum run by Feeding Futures in collaboration with the College of the Rockies. It has been great to see these two school communities work together and learn from each other while tackling such important issues.

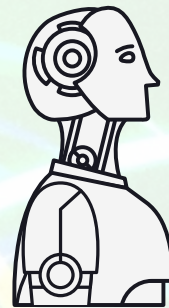


Vice Principal, Deirdre Bailey

KDS offers a flexible and accessible learning option for high school and adult learners, allowing students to learn from anywhere and at any time. This flexibility helps learners balance school with extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, or family responsibilities.



DISTRICT DESIGN LABS



Teachers of Transformative Learning Ryan McKenzie and Kim Froehler

Pinecone Pets

Ms. Malmberg's class at Kootenay Orchards Elementary kicked off the year with an imaginative dive into the Design Process through a hands-on Transformative Learning Team Activity. Students explored iteration by constructing pipe cleaner towers and crafting Pinecone Pet Shelters, inspired by a custom AI-generated story about a pinecone preparing for winter. Each student brought a pinecone to life with simple craft materials, then headed outdoors to build snow-resistant shelters out of natural materials. Their designs were put to the test using reams of paper which was an inventive way to simulate snowfall and evaluate structural strength!



Fourth Annual Arcade

Over 120 students at Laurie Middle School brought imagination to life during this year's Caine's Arcade challenge. Inspired by the story of a young boy in East Los Angeles who built his own cardboard arcade, students designed and constructed their own games using only cardboard and crafting supplies. This year's creations were some of the most inventive yet featuring hits like Horseshoes, Rope Ring Toss, Plinko, Whack-A-Mole, and Skee-ball. The event wrapped up with a gym full of laughter and excitement as students played and celebrated each other's arcade masterpieces.



Digital Tools Across the District

This year, students and teachers across the District are embracing digital platforms to enhance learning and communication. Over 750 students have joined Typing Pal and Tap'Touche, boosting their digital literacy skills in both English and French. Seesaw continues to thrive, with more than 40 classes and nearly 1,000 students sharing their learning and connecting with families. As high school teachers transition to Microsoft Teams, the Transformative Learning Team (TLT) has stepped up to support by meeting educators in schools, online, and helping with account setup to ensure a smooth shift into modern learning environments.



3D Pen Halloween Tealights

Students from Mme. Roe's class at Ecole Isabella Dicken Elementary participated in a design project at the lab where they crafted Halloween tealights using 3D pens.

Throughout this creative process, they not only honed their artistic abilities but also developed skills such as perseverance and patience! Also, a big shout out to Ms. Whitson for her amazing help and support with the students.



OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Michael Kelly, Director

Sparwood Secondary Outdoor Education

Outdoor Education at Sparwood Secondary is off to a fantastic start this year! Students kicked things off with a scenic and challenging hike up to Lizard Lake, taking in the fresh mountain air and stunning fall views. It was the perfect way to build teamwork, enjoy the outdoors, and set the tone for an exciting year of adventure and learning.



Fernie Secondary School

Students from Fernie Secondary teamed up with the Fernie Trails Alliance for two days of trail building. Nearly 40 students rolled up their sleeves and got to work on the new connector trail at the bottom of Swine Flu.



In the Garden at T.M. Roberts Elementary

Students at T.M. Roberts enjoy a Fall harvest of vegetables!



Mount Baker Secondary

The Mount Baker Environmental Awareness Program explored in the Hughes Range, along the 5 passes trail. They had three days of glorious sun and loads of huckleberries.

Gordon Terrace Elementary

The RDEK donated two new compost bins to Gordon Terrace Elementary. Gordon Terrace has been composting organic waste from students' lunches for over 17 years.



Fernie Secondary Hockey Class

Hockey students hiked 15 kilometres on the Old Growth and Spineback Trails.



Indigenous Education

Exploring Yoho National Park and Raven's Nest Campground

Indigenous Leadership groups from Mount Baker, Laurie Middle and Parkland Middle along with District elders and staff recently embarked on a memorable field trip to Yoho National Park located within the traditional lands of the Ktunaxa ʔamakʔis. The trip offered students the opportunity to experience the breathtaking beauty of the mountains, waterfalls, and forests while deepening their understanding of the land's cultural and ecological significance.



Element Ceremony at Laurie Middle

The Laurie Middle School Elements Ceremony was held once again this school year, bringing together students and staff for a celebration of culture and community. The event featured powerful drumming from the Sookenai Singers and impressive grass dance performance by Dreyden Williams. In addition, Joe Pierre spoke about the importance of the elements and their deep symbolic and cultural traditions. Laurie Middle School students and staff are divided into four house teams representing the four elements: ʔa-kinčuku (fire), ʔamak (earth), Wuʔu (water), and ʔa-kuʔmi (air). The teams will take part in a series of challenges throughout the year.



Hoop Dancing at Kootenay Orchards Elementary

Professional Hoop Dancer, Jay Genaille, performed for an awestruck audience at Kootenay Orchards Elementary.



Baskets at Fernie Secondary

Studio Art class students worked hard to learn a weaving technique that was used for making Woven Paper Baskets. This project was linked to Indigenous Ways of Knowing.



Indigenous Education

September 29 - Orange Shirt Day Across the District

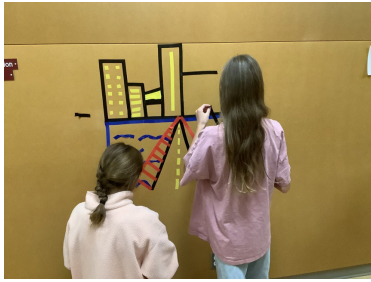




IN THE SCHOOLS



News from Schools Across the District



Sparwood Secondary Art

Students in grades eight and nine are working together to create a large mural in the hallways of Sparwood Secondary.



Pinewood Elementary

Students at Pinewood were well represented at the third annual Idlewild Cross Country Race.



Bus Success!

Liam, a Grade 11 student at Fernie Secondary, is taking an exciting step toward greater independence! He began riding the school bus on his own. With the support of his school team and family, Liam is building confidence in navigating his community and demonstrating the life skills that will support his future success.



School Tours

Schools in the Elk Valley welcomed members of Board of Education and District Management in September and October. Trustees visited schools in Elkford, Sparwood and Fernie.



A picture says a thousand words...



Inclusion Calendar

Stories from Our Schools



TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

September 30, 2025

Across the district, orange shirts demonstrated a shared commitment to reconciliation, remembrance, and ongoing learning.

- Commemorative walks, Orange Shirt Days, rock garden, drumming circle, communal lunch, tree of reconciliation, reflection and learning.

ADHD AWARENESS DAY

October 1, 2025

This day was used as an opportunity to celebrate diverse learners and share messages of awareness and inclusion. Announcement facts, contests, celebrations, ADHD displays, Idlewild cross country invitational.

BSW APPRECIATION DAY

October 2, 2025

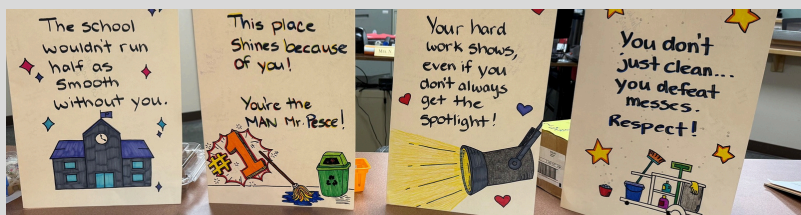
The district and school staffs recognized the essential work of custodial staff who keep learning environments clean, safe, and welcoming.

- Thank you cards, gift baskets, "Wall of Thanks" with sticky notes, announcements, chocolate bars.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

October 5, 2025

Schools took time to celebrate and appreciate the work of educators. Treats, personalized cards, announcements, and messages of gratitude.





School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)

2025-2026 Annual School Calendar (Effective June 25, 2025)

July 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
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27	28	29	30	31		

August 2025						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

September 2025						
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October 2025						
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

November 2025						
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

December 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

January 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



School Breaks



Professional Development Day



Stat Holidays



Administrative Day

Approved by Ministry of Education and Child Care
March 7, 2025

