LEARNING TOGETHER

NO. 25



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A Picture Says a Thousand Words...

2026-2030 Board of Education

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



As October comes to a close, I want to take a moment to reflect on what has been a busy and, at times, challenging start to the school year. With students returning on September 8, September seemed to pass in the blink of an eye, and October has been just as full!

Just days before the start of school, Gordon Terrace Elementary experienced a partial roof collapse that impacted three classrooms. What could have been a significant disruption became an incredible example of teamwork and collaboration. Our operations and maintenance staff, teachers, support staff, and school administration worked together to prepare alternate learning spaces and ensure students could remain at Gordon Terrace. I want to extend my sincere appreciation to everyone involved. Your flexibility, creativity, and commitment to students were remarkable.

Throughout September and October, our schools have been busy! From Terry Fox Runs and volleyball to rugby, soccer, cross-country running, and elementary band programs, students have been reconnecting, building relationships, and finding opportunities to participate in school life. These experiences are an important part of creating a sense of belonging and connection to school.

We recognize that the cost of school activities can sometimes be a barrier for families. We want every student to have the opportunity to participate and feel included. If financial assistance is needed, we encourage parents and caregivers to reach out to their school staff. Support is available, and no student should miss out on these valuable experiences due to financial circumstances.

September provided opportunities for reflection through Orange Shirt Day assemblies and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Across the District, students and staff engaged in learning and conversations that remind us reconciliation is an ongoing responsibility, one that extends well beyond September 30.

On September 18, we came together for the district-wide professional development day with Leslie Caye, a Ktunaxa Nation member and educator with extensive experience in Indigenous curriculum development. His teachings reminded us that Indigenous Nations and their traditional territories transcend international borders, and that language, culture, and identity are not defined by those boundaries.

Leslie reinforced that embedding local Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into K–12 learning is both achievable and meaningful. This work begins with relationships, a willingness to learn, and collaboration with local Indigenous communities and Knowledge Holders. His message was an important reminder that reconciliation is reflected in what we do in our classrooms every day.

We are now in the third year of our 2024–2028 Strategic Plan. Our commitments to Student Success and Well-Being, Equity and Inclusion, and Relationships and Partnerships are reflected in much of the work happening across the District. As schools continue refining their growth plans, the focus remains on improving student learning while creating environments where every student feels connected and supported, with a strong sense of belonging.

October also brought local elections and opportunities for new voices and perspectives in public leadership. Change is a natural part of any organization, and I am grateful to those who put their names forward to serve. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Trustees Ayling and Turner, who chose not to seek re-election. Their dedication, commitment to public education, and service to the students, families, and communities of the District are greatly appreciated. While leadership may change, our shared commitment to public education remains constant.

As we look ahead to November, I want to thank our staff for the energy, care, and professionalism they bring to the schools each day. The past two months have reminded me once again of the strength of the District and what we can accomplish when we work and learn together.

V. Johnson

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

Early Learning, Child Care and Literacy

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



Early Literacy Screening: Helping Every Child Grow as a Reader

This year, families may hear more about early literacy screening in kindergarten to grade 3. Screening helps teachers understand how children are developing important early reading skills.

Early literacy screening will take place three times during the school year for students in kindergarten to grade 3. Screening may look at skills such as recognizing letters and sounds, hearing sounds in words, reading words accurately, and developing reading fluency.

The information helps teachers plan classroom instruction, provide small-group or individual support when needed, and monitor student progress over time. Children learn to read at different rates, and early screening helps us respond quickly when a child may benefit from extra support.

Most importantly, screening is only one piece of the picture. Teachers also consider classroom observations, student work, and daily learning experiences. Our goal is simple: to understand what each child needs next to continue growing as a confident reader.

Families are important partners too. Reading together, talking about books, playing with words and sounds, and encouraging children to share their ideas all support literacy development. If you have questions about your child's reading progress or screening results, please connect with your child's teacher.

- 2026-27 Letter to parents and caregivers of kindergarten to grade 3 students
- Early literacy screening information: Parent and caregiver brochure



We look forward to welcoming you to the Community Open House to learn about the new child care facility being developed at the Amy Woodland Elementary School site in Cranbrook.

This is an opportunity to view the proposed building design, floor plan, and site location.

Come learn more about the project and ask questions!

Date: November 19, 2026
Time: 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Cranbrook Board Office
940 Industrial Road 1
Cranbrook, BC

Come Join Us!

News from District Teachers

District Numeracy Teacher, Nicole Fulton



As the school year gets underway, it's been great to reconnect with teachers and students and begin exploring math together!

In September, a Numeracy In-Service for new teachers brought educators together to explore number sense, math fact fluency, instructional routines, games, and manipulatives to support student learning and confidence. I've also enjoyed visiting staff meetings to share numeracy ideas and connect with teachers about how I can support them in their classrooms.

Classroom collaborations are also underway. In a grade 5/6 class, students explored fractions using the Concrete–Representational–Abstract (CRA) approach, building understanding through hands-on materials, visual models, and symbolic representations. In grade 2, students created their own 100-bead strings, a versatile tool for exploring number relationships, counting, place value, and addition and subtraction strategies.

District French Immersion Teacher, Marzia Bottoni

Celebrating Grade 12 French Students

Following a suggestion from the French Advisory Council, schools celebrated Grade 12 Core French and French Immersion students in a variety of ways last June. At Fernie Secondary, French Immersion students designed their own commemorative hoodies to mark the occasion. The hoodies are awesome!

Learning French Through Games at Elkford Secondary

Games have been a hit with Grade 10 Core French students at ESS. Students played Va à la Pêche to practice asking and responding to questions while developing their verb conjugation skills. Youpi!

Welcoming Our New Middle French Immersion Students

The new grade 4 middle French Immersion students were welcomed with their own books featuring audio support for French pronunciation, along with stickers and other resources to help them begin their second-language learning journey.

Engaging Students in French Reading

Who says reading in French isn't fun? Students have been exploring new comprehensible-input novels featuring high-frequency vocabulary and a diversity of themes, making French reading more accessible and engaging.

New Resources for French Language Learning

French education assistants and students have been enjoying new resources designed to support small-group and one-to-one learning. These materials provide engaging opportunities to develop French vocabulary and sentence structure.







Alternate Pathways - Learning Online

Vice Principal, Deirdre Bailey

Kootenay Discovery School (KDS) is offering a few new course options for students. All online courses are continuous enrolment (start anytime), fully asynchronous (remote), and self-paced (1-year timeline). A full list of course options and registration information is available on our website.

The KDS K-3 learners worked together to come up with a personal land acknowledgement in their first few weeks of blended programming. "K–3 blended learners at KDS spent the first few days of classes talking about how land acknowledgement is more than naming the land we are on. It is an opportunity to begin learning from Ktunaxa ways of knowing and being — through relationship, responsibility, gratitude, and care for the land and for one another. Students reflected on what they value about living and learning here, and on what it means to care for the places that care for us. Their ideas were simple and meaningful: be thankful, take care, and only take what we need."

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.

Traffic Safety in Schools



The Cranbrook RCMP will be developing a speed watch program that will be made available to school Parent Advisory Councils (PAC) within the Cranbrook RCMP zone thanks to funding from ICBC.

The program will include the creation of three speed watch kits (mobile speed boards, personal protective equipment) as well as a program manual. They will host RCMP-led train-the-trainer sessions for PAC traffic safety champions, who can then train additional volunteers within the school community to participate. Volunteers will need to pass a background check and must be 19 years of age or older.

Based on the progress made to date and product delivery timelines, the program will be available for PACs to request kits in early 2027.

More information will be shared as it is available. This program will also be extended to the Elk Valley.

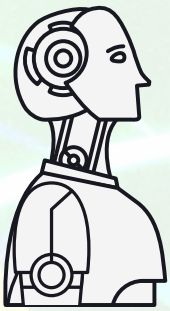
In September, the Kin-Club of Cranbrook volunteered as crossing guards at Pinewood Elementary on King Street. It was wonderful to have additional support promoting safety and visibility in the school zone.







DISTRICT DESIGN LABS



Teachers of Transformative Learning Ryan McKenzie and Kim Froehler

LEGO Computer Science and AI

Students can now explore the new LEGO Computer Science and AI kits at the Cranbrook and Fernie Design Labs.

Using a combination of LEGO bricks, motors, sensors, coding, and data-based activities, students will learn about computer science, machine learning, and the safe and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) when using these kits. These kits are just one part of the Design Lab offerings for teachers and students. Classes will continue to visit the Design Labs to brainstorm, tinker, and create using a variety of advanced tools such as the 3D printers, the laser cutter or Cricut, or using other maker tools such as the Makedos and Chompsaws to design and prototype with cardboard.

Furthermore, as part of the District's focus on digital and AI literacy, the goal is for students to begin understanding how AI tools and technologies make decisions, as well as the responsibilities that come with using these emerging technologies in their learning and everyday lives. For instance, students in the Careers 9 class at Elkford Secondary School have been exploring AI data and bias using various tools, while learning how to write effective prompts to produce specific outputs. Expanding AI literacy will also be a key focus for the Transformative Learning Team in 2026/2027.



OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

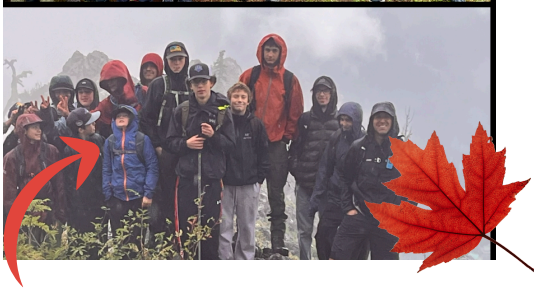
Michael Kelly, Director

Sparwood Secondary Outdoor Education

Outdoor Education at Sparwood Secondary is off to a fantastic start this year! Students had a great day of learning the skills of kayaking and canoeing.







Fernie Secondary Hockey Class

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

Mount Baker Secondary School

The Mount Baker Environmental Awareness Program explored the trails at Island Lake Lodge in Fernie in preparation for their multi-day backpack in the Hughes Range, along the five mountain passes trail.

The landscape on the Hughes Range became the Geography classroom as students read evidence of past glaciation, explored the ancient geology and mining history and learned how mountain passes and alpine landforms have been shaped over time.







Initial Attack and Unit Crew Wildland Firefighters

Mount Baker students spent an afternoon with the BC Wildfire Service.

Indigenous Education

Wood Day

Students and staff from Laurie Middle, Parkland Middle and Mount Baker Secondary came together for another successful Wood Day out at ʔaqam. Students worked alongside others to chop, gather, and prepare firewood to deliver to community members' homes. This meaningful annual initiative is a wonderful example of students giving back to their community, demonstrating teamwork, and showing care and respect for Elders and community members. Through their hard work and generosity, students learn the importance of helping others and strengthening community connections.





Elements Ceremony at Laurie Middle

Laurie Middle School recently brought staff, students, elders, and community members together for an Elements Ceremony celebrating the four elements represented in the District's Indigenous logo: wuʔu (water), ʔamak (earth), ʔa·kinq̓uku (fire), ʔa·kuʔmi (air).

Staff and students were divided into four teams, each representing one of the elements. The event provided an opportunity to learn about Indigenous knowledge, cultural traditions and the important connections we share with the natural world. Sookenai Singers opened with the Honouring Song, which created a meaningful and respectful beginning to the gathering, and Dreyden Williams shared a traditional dance demonstrating cultural traditions of the Ktunaxa.

Ms. Juanita shared her knowledge of traditional Ktunaxa games, highlighting the importance of cultural teachings, connections, and learning through play. Joe Pierre spoke about the significance of the four elements in each of our lives and reminded us of our responsibility to care for and protect them.

The Elements Ceremony was a meaningful opportunity for the LMS community to come together, celebrate Indigenous knowledge and culture, and reflect on our shared responsibility to care for the land and the elements that sustain us. Through these teachings, students and staff were reminded that stewardship begins with respect, awareness, and the actions we take every day.





IN THE SCHOOLS

News from Schools Across the District







Sparwood Secondary Foods Class

Sparwood Secondary Foods Class made octopus eggs and Thanksgiving-themed turkey brownies. They also created their own sourdough starters and gave each one a name.

Happenings at Highlands

Highlands Elementary created a school-wide Social Emotional Learning mural. They used their Friendology knowledge to build a wonderful H.E.A.R.T. Rainbow.



Cross Country - Idlewild Invitational

Almost 150 runners competed in the third annual Mount Baker Secondary Cross Country Running Meet.



A Picture Says a Thousand Words...





















Welcoming the 2026-2030 Board of Education



2026-2030 Board of Education Trustees

Pam Berry	*Irene Bischler*	*Cheryl Christensen*
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