School Community

Gold Bridge Community School is a one-room rural school located 106 km south of Lillooet in the community of Gold Bridge in the Bridge River Valley.

Gold Bridge Community School currently enrolls three students, one in Kindergarten, Grades 2 and 5. Two students have registered to begin Kindergarten in September 2015. Student programs are delivered through a combination of classroom instruction, the Arts, hands-on and outdoor learning experiences, guest speaker presentations, and field trips.

Despite its rural location, the school is able to access a variety of resource people including: Public Health Nurse, Speech-Language Pathologist, District Learner Support staff, Dental Health Workers, and Infant Development staff. In 2014-2015, for the third consecutive year, the School is involved with the Coho in the Classroom project in partnership with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Nlakapamux Nation Tribal Council. Students will join other schools at Sekw’el’was Lower Spawning Channels on May 29th for the release of salmon smolts, and related events.

Some challenges of the school are related to its small size and remote location. The low number and multi-age nature of student enrollment restricts peer social opportunities for students and limits student participation in team sports. Therefore, students are visiting George M. Murray Elementary in Lillooet after every spring swimming lesson to have lunch, recess, and participate in an afternoon class. As well, students will train in various track and field events and attend the Sports Day at George M. Murray Elementary this year.

While the school population is small, students benefit from the family-like dynamic and low student-to-teacher ratio. The teacher, students and families are able to form highly collaborative relationships. The lack of a gymnasium at the school facility means that most of the physical education program takes place outdoors. Students are able to participate in a variety of unique outdoor experiences including nature walks, cross-country skiing, sliding, and skating.

Gold Bridge Community School also houses a parent-run “preschool” in an extra unutilized classroom. The school is open to parents and children (<5 yrs) in the local community. “Preschoolers” and school students have the opportunity to play together during lunch recess, and older “preschoolers” are invited into the main classroom for special activities.
Reflection on 2014-2015

The 2014-2015 Inquiry Question asked: “How can project-based learning experiences, with the addition of community sharing of that learning, increase student engagement and achievement?”.

The response was to expand the cross curricular project approach to include an emphasis on teaching and learning through the Arts. This shift has been extremely successful and noticeably fostered heightened levels of student engagement and enthusiasm for learning. Academic achievement and social-emotional growth in students has substantially increased, and students are very eager to share their learning with their parents and the community—both daily and at gatherings or events. Given such positive evidence, the long term goal for 2014-2015 has been accomplished, and perpetuity of such is planned to follow.

Teaching through art has allowed for inclusive learning opportunities that can accommodate all grade and ability levels, and has contributed to building a community of learners who are supportive of one another, feel valued, and have a strong sense of belonging. From this foundation, the Inquiry Question for 2015-2016 will be directed at building upon learning through the arts, and expanding student critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Creative ways to connect with the community and implementation of hands-on, experiential learning experiences relevant to student interests, will continue to be a large part of the educational framework at Gold Bridge Community School.

Inquiry Question: 2015-2016

To what extent can learning through the Arts and inclusive educational practices assist a diverse grade level of classroom students with developing problem solving and critical thinking skills, and embodying School District 74’s Successful Learner Traits?

Long Term Goal

By April 2016, all students will demonstrate a measurable increase in problem solving skills—both academic and social-emotional—and progress in further developing Successful Learner Traits, as reflected in term three report cards.
Research Foundation

In a research-into-practice series produced by a partnership between the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and the Ontario Association of Deans of Education, Dr. Rene Upitis opened her research monograph by stating that “Student engagement is central to learning. Those students who are fully engaged are ready to learn in every way – physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. The arts play a vital role in ensuring that students remain engaged by encouraging them to learn in physical and embodied ways, by inviting them to collaborate with peers, by requiring them to respond emotionally and by calling upon their cognitive capacities as they learn in through and about the arts. Integrating arts in the classroom can help to engage all students and improve the quality of their lives in school and beyond.”

The aforementioned findings are based on research that involved close to 7000 students in grades one to seven. “Some students were from LTTA schools. Other students (the control group) were either from schools with other school-wide initiatives (such as a focus on technology) or schools with no special programs in place. After three years, the LTTA students scored significantly higher than students in the control schools on tests of estimation and computation, equivalent to a difference of 11 percentile points.” (Upitis, 2011).

In addition to the research project, Dr. Rene Upitis’ references included:


Canadian research affirms that spending time in the arts does not come at the expense of achievement in other subjects, but improves estimation and computation skills and enhances student engagement in school learning overall.

Dr. Rene Upitis, Queens University, 2001

Math Art

An array based on a Kandinsky style of art work. Featured alongside of the student’s painting are corresponding number sentences for multiplication, addition and fractions.
Action Plan for 2015-2016

Students will continue learning through the Arts, acquiring skills in a broader repertoire of mediums and a deeper understanding of their applications for art as a learning tool across the curriculum.

Hands-on and project based learning experiences will be supplemented with Hands-On curriculum resources for Science, Social Studies, and problem solving. Problem solving centers and interactive games are to compliment the Hands-On program.

Higher order thinking in numeracy and literacy will continue to be a focus, through balanced, engaging programing.

Student-hosted gatherings (formerly tea parties) and outreach activities will be held at the School throughout the year as an opportunity for students to interact with members of the community.

Fall 2015
- Conduct pre-growth assessments for problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Multiple Intelligence Survey
- Student review of School District 74 Report Card and Successful Learner Traits

Ongoing
- Students will maintain problem solving portfolios. Summative assessments are to be complimented with student self-assessment (rubric) and teacher/student conferences
- Expansion upon the Principles and Elements of Design in the Arts across the curriculum
- Monthly and/or bi-monthly community gatherings and outreach activities

Spring 2016
- Conduct post-growth assessments for problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Refer to third term reports to determine growth in embodying the Successful Learner Traits
Evidence

In May of 2015, data was collected from Student Engagement Surveys and results were consistent with those obtained in the Spring of 2014: 100% of students reported being Sometimes and Fully engaged. Furthermore, two out of three students responded as being Fully engaged to thirteen out of fourteen questions. This survey will be administered in the Fall of 2015 and again in the Spring of 2016.

In September of 2015, base line data will be collected to measure student problem solving and critical thinking skills. Ongoing assessments will continue throughout the school year, and post-assessment and evaluation of results will form evidence reported upon in the 2016-2017 Action Plan for Learning.

The results of growth in student Successful Learner Traits from terms one and three report cards will be analyzed and contribute to evidence provided in the 2016-2017 Action Plan for Learning.
Support and Connections for Success

How will we provide for staff development and collaboration?
- Join teachers from other schools for professional development opportunities
- Invite community members to collaborate with staff through presentation delivery and assistance with learning activities (pending a criminal record check)

How will we involve parents and caregivers?
- Share and celebrate student progress with families on an ongoing basis, and work with parents and caregivers to support learning
- Welcome parents and caregivers to join students on field trips and for special events
- Daily student planners/agendas
- Encourage parents and caregivers to share their skills and talents in the classroom

How will we communicate our work in the school and community?
- Student projects and school updates will be submitted to The Mountain Telegraph
- An open invitation to school events will be posted at the post office and billboard beside the General Store
- Students will discuss progress with parents during Student-Led Learning Conversations
- Students will continue outreach and helpful activities in the community
- A bulletin board at the Library that features student work will be maintained