

# Improving the Individual



**each learner at a time**

# NWSS Priorities: Personalized learning through intellectual engagement

During the 2016 – 2017 school year, we clarified our priorities to provide the very best opportunities and environments in which our young people can develop the capabilities they require in order to thrive as capable, responsible and passionate participants in our communities.

**Stay tuned for our ibook where you will read our stories on student engagement in our Living Report to the Community.**

## Community Profile

NWSS is the only high school in New Westminster, BC, with roughly 2000 students between the grades of 9-12. We service a very diverse population. Being the only high school in the city, we offer many different types of programs for students including International Baccalaureate, Honours (Advanced Placement), Construction Diplomas, Red Seal Apprenticeships, French Immersion, and one of the largest online virtual schools in BC.

The Ministry of Education's 2015-2016 'Student Statistics' for NWSS were as follows:

- 2069 total student headcount
- 46.6 % female student population
- 53.4 % male student population
- 4.3% Aboriginal student population
- 6.1% ELL student population
- 13.3 % French Immersion
- 7.9 % of student population have Individual Education Plans

## 1. Visioning: What we believe at NWSS

These three areas shaped our growth plan focus on engagement:

### A) Appreciative Inquiry : A strengths-based approach

In September, Staff took part in an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit. AI is a strengths-based approach to designing an ideal future and finding solutions. This generative framework involves reflecting on what's working or has worked instead of trying to solve a problem. It is also about working together and working in large groups and getting to know everyone's point of view because we cannot do anything of value alone. Through a facilitated process of structured dialogue and questioning, ***we believe that Relationships are foundational to all learning experiences.***

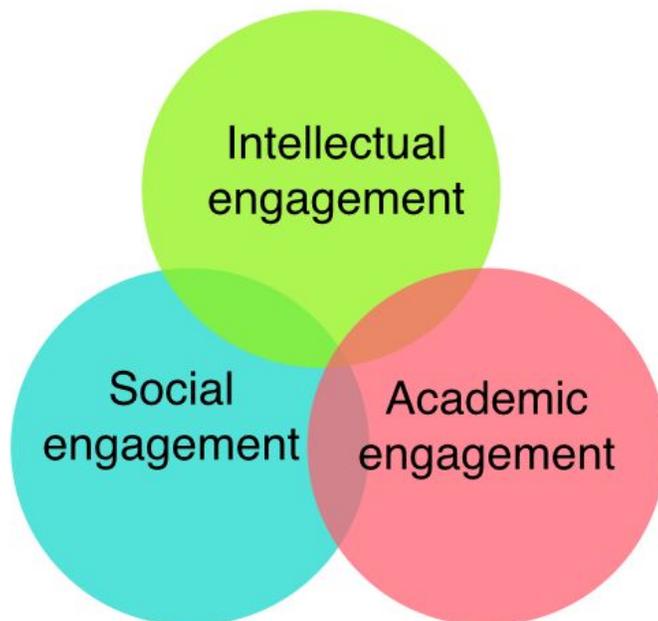


## B) Research-based practices

The Canadian Education Association (CEA) is a primary source used by NWSS to inform our thinking about student engagement. Engagement is described as the extent to which students identify with and love being at school, have a sense of belonging, participate in academic and non-academic activities, strive to meet the formal requirements of schooling and perhaps more importantly, make a serious personal investment in learning<sup>1</sup>. Engaged students earn higher grades, report a greater sense of belonging, attend regularly, participate meaningfully, earn credits and are better able to set and meet personal goals. The CEA's national study, *The National Portrait of Canadian Middle and Secondary Schools – What Did You Do in School Today*, examines how engagement influences learning and focuses on the **powerful concept of Intellectual Engagement**.

*Engagement in learning – intellectual engagement – develops when students encounter work that is relevant, interesting, and connects with their aspirations and interests; when the work they do is authentic, challenging, deeply conceptual, highly social, and collaborative; when the ideas of each student are valued; and when the relationship between teacher and student, and among students themselves, is both reciprocal and generous in spirit<sup>2</sup>.*

This multi-dimensional framework (below) categorizes engagement into three main components: social, academic and intellectual engagement. These three areas are interrelated and interdependent.



Each of the dimensions – social, academic, and intellectual – frames the conditions and outcomes of engagement differently. The *What Did you do in school today?* report showed that many students were engaged in school (social

<sup>1</sup> Friesen, S. *Exploring student engagement: what did you do in school today?* CEA-ACE, Galileo, Learning Bar.

<sup>2</sup> Dunleavy, J & Milton, P. (2010). *Student engagement for effective teaching and deep learning*.

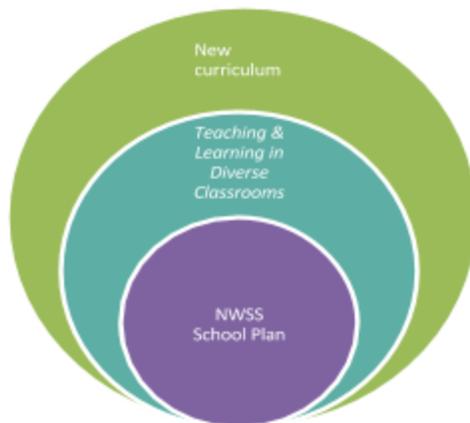
and academic engagement) but few were emotionally or cognitively invested in learning (intellectual engagement).<sup>3</sup> However, the three engagements are also overlapping and intertwined; for example, social support by itself is unlikely to produce a deep commitment to learning.

### C ) Core Competencies: Communication, Thinking, Personal & Social

The Core Competencies also shape our thinking about engagement. The core competencies – problem solving, experimenting, thinking critically, collaboration - are the types of skills students need to be successful in learning and life. The Core Competencies provide a framework to help teachers and learners see the connections between the learning of individuals to the lives of their communities and the future of their societies. <sup>4</sup> One of the specific strategies for the coming years is for the newly formed assessment and technology school committees to guide us through emerging practices that embed the core competencies in each area of learning.

*“Competencies come into play when students are engaged in “doing” in any area of learning. This includes activities where students use thinking, collaboration, and communication to solve problems, address issues, or make decisions. The ultimate goal is for learners to employ the core competencies every day in school and in life, and for the core competencies to be an integral part of the learning in all curriculum areas.”<sup>5</sup>*

### D ) Alignment with District vision



The District’s vision and values as outlined in *Teaching and Learning in Diverse Classrooms: A blueprint for learner success* also set the tone of the growth plan. *“Engagement and personalized learning are key elements of the current educational transformation in British Columbia. Is it important to tap into individual learner preferences and passions to ignite their motivation and desire to learn.”<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> Dunleavy, J, Willms, J.D, Milton, P & Friesen S.(2012). *What did you do in school today ? Report number 1: The relationship between student engagement and academic outcomes*. Toronto,ON: Canadian Education Association.

<sup>4</sup> Hargreaves, A., Shirley, D. (2009). *The persistence of presentism*. Teachers College Record.

<sup>5</sup> BC’s New Curriculum: Core Competencies.

<sup>6</sup> TLDC (November 2015), page 46.

## 2. Engagement at NWSS: An inquiry-based approach to growth planning

Our 2016-2017 growth plan is a response to the new educational environments required for students to thrive in the 21st century. While traditional forms of school planning often focused on a discrete number of initiatives, the complex demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution <sup>7</sup> demand a more sophisticated and qualitative approach to school planning. Inquiry-based thinking means allowing teachers varied and creative ways in which they can design learning experiences for students as well as experiment with new approaches to teaching and assessment. Further, we believe growth planning via Inquiry will provide a model to follow so that students develop an similar orientation to original work, collaboration and confidence as knowledge-builders.

### **Focus area: Social Engagement**

Inquiry question:

1. Which teaching practices increase social engagement among learners?

### **Focus area: Academic Engagement**

Inquiry question:

1. Which teaching practices increase academic engagement among learners?

### **Focus area: Intellectual Engagement**

Inquiry questions:

1. Which teaching practices increase intellectual engagement?
2. How can teachers learn more about intellectual engagement ?
3. What specific systemic practices (scheduling, use of learning spaces) increase intellectual engagement ?
4. How do we remove the barriers to success that many of our vulnerable learners face regarding engagement ?

<sup>7</sup> World Economic Forum. *The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What it means, how to respond*. (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org>

## 3. School Profile : Our strengths

### A) Our Relationships

NWSS staff is proud of its ability to connect and work together. We believe that relationships are foundational to engagement with school. Our young people need to have positive and supportive relationships with the adults they interact with in our schools. We also need to provide our learners with exemplary opportunities to interact with the community and to bring parents as welcome partners in learning.

*"Students learn better when they feel connected to their school, teacher, and school community."* Mathematics Dept: Guiding Value.

### B) Program choices

We are a learner-centered, full inclusion school that supports and challenges each student while differentiating instruction. Students pursue their passions through programs that support their learning and growth and are aligned with their interests, cultural background, talents, and strengths. Our team of educators is continuously collaborating to develop tools that provide quality learning environments.

Social engagement	Academic engagement	Intellectual engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• School wide events, assemblies</li> <li>• Communities events</li> <li>• Anecdotal observation</li> <li>• Safe Schools</li> <li>• Student satisfaction survey</li> <li>• Breakfast Club</li> <li>• RockSolid</li> <li>• Pro D event: Mental health</li> <li>• Drug and Alcohol prevention program</li> <li>• Healthy Schools</li> <li>• Athletics; Music</li> <li>• LGBTQ Collective</li> <li>• Core competencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom instruction</li> <li>• Aboriginal graduation coach</li> <li>• Continuous emphasis on literacy &amp; numeracy</li> <li>• Assistive and digital tools</li> <li>• Innovative assessment practice</li> <li>• Alternate / online / blended schooling options</li> <li>• Math contests</li> <li>• IB, AP, French Imm course options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interdisciplinary teaching</li> <li>• Hockey academy</li> <li>• Music programs</li> <li>• Increased course selections</li> <li>• Anecdotal observation</li> <li>• Apprenticeships</li> <li>• Take Your Kid to Work Day</li> <li>• Field trips</li> <li>• WE day</li> <li>• Redesigned curriculum: Big Ideas</li> <li>• Professional learning</li> <li>• Technology committee</li> <li>• Assessment committee</li> </ul>

### C ) Our stories

We share our experiences through the newsletter, videos, photos, blogs, and social media. We are able to continuously document what our students are learning so others can be inspired by these experiences.

We understand the process of growth planning as a **living document**. This means that we will use a multi-media, narrative approach to track progress towards our engagement goals.

**Stay tuned to our ibook where you will read, see, and hear our stories on student engagement in our Living Report to the Community.**



Sources of NWSS stories:

@nwsslibrary

@ChefDehghan

[nwsslibrary.ca](http://nwsslibrary.ca)

@CoachOatway

@NWSSHyacks

<http://nwssitestories.blogspot.ca>

@HyackFootball

[nwssmusic.com](http://nwssmusic.com)

## D) Professional Learning and Development

Departments, collaborative groups, Innovation Teams, and informal alliances do important work in setting the foundation for student learning. Innovative and engaging teaching requires a flexible mindset that allow teachers to try new things, to take risks, reflect, and adjust their practice accordingly. We also acknowledge that mastering a challenging craft such as teaching requires collaborative and sustained effort over time. Strengthening and supporting the important work that teachers do is critical as the foundation for student engagement in school.<sup>8</sup>

*“Develop individualized teaching to find the value and strength of every student within practicality.”* Technology Education Dept: Guiding Value 2.

*“Schedule regular collaborative time with colleagues - first Friday in Science lunch room”.* Science Dept: Goal 2.



<sup>8</sup> *Teaching the way we aspire to teach: now and in the future.* Canadian Education Association.2012.

## 4. Next Steps: Strategies for continuous improvement

### *Which strategies will move us towards our engagement goals ?*

The following activities contribute to one, two and sometimes three of the components of engagement:

#### **A. Social engagement: Learners feel respected, safe and empowered to take risks; teachers value a culture of collaboration and inquiry.**

- Service Hours
- Safe School initiatives
- Healthy School initiatives
- Extra-curricular and in-school opportunities:  
Music programs, Athletics, Rock Solid,  
Global Issues Week, ArtStarts grants.
- Drug and Alcohol School-Based Prevention Program
- Inquiry-based Pro-D opportunities
- **NEW:** Year-end barbecue / pancake breakfast

#### **B. Academic engagement: Teachers challenge and support students to achieve at the highest levels**

- School Wide Literacy Assessments
- Provincial exams
- Varied forms of assessment
- Differentiated instruction ie: Specialized computers, software and adapted devices as dictated by IEPs
- Implementation of redesigned curriculum in grade 9
- Piloting of new curricula 10-12
- **NEW:** access to Wi-Fi

#### **C. Intellectual engagement: Learners experience creative work that is meaningful and relevant to real world opportunities and challenges. They see value and authenticity in all aspects of learning and school experiences.**

- Music programs, Athletics
- Interdisciplinary teaching approaches
- Apprenticeship programs
- Student leadership groups
- **NEW:** Access to Wi-Fi
- **NEW:** Increase course selections
- Professional learning opportunities: training in GAFE
- **NEW:** Technology focused Collaboration Days
- **NEW:** Technology and Assessment committees
- **NEW:** Inquiry Book club
- **NEW:** Open Learning Days

## 5. Specific programs for our vulnerable learners

There are numerous student activities, teacher strategies and school programs that we believe are assisting vulnerable students to be engaged in their learning.

**A) Response to Intervention and UDL** are strategies that are embedded in NWSS. They manifest in specific ways at school such as:

- Differentiated instruction - including project-based learning, technology and maker spaces
- Student support programs: Enhance School Based Team, CCYW, Counsellors, Resource teachers, administrators provide access to in-school, district, municipal, and provincial supports.
- Peer tutors; Tutoring after school (EAs)
- ELL and International Education Resource Teachers

### **B) Social belonging in school life**

- Parental involvement - PAC meetings, newsletter, website, parent/student/teacher conferences
- Safe learning environments
- Core competencies assessment in grade 9
- Mental health supports

### **C) Ensuring graduation**

- Planning 10 and GTP 12 : All students understand the graduation requirements, develop their employability, and have a transition plan.
- Apprenticeship programs
- Cross curricular opportunities (Field trips, Hockey Academy)
- Counsellors will monitor students with “I” standings.
- Monitor rates of high absenteeism and tardiness

### **D) Aboriginal learners**

- Continue to utilize the attendance database to track student attendance.
- Foster relationships with parents to encourage high school attendance.
- Aboriginal Education programs - Rite of Passage graduation ceremony, literacy feast.
- Incorporate Aboriginal culture across the curriculum and in school culture: ie: Orange Shirt Day; Blanket Exercise
- Support the **Aboriginal Graduation Coach** in these and other areas:
  - Providing academic support for students
  - Assisting students in accessing scholarships and bursaries for post-secondary education.
  - Providing mentorship to students in the areas of academics, postsecondary, work experience, and transitioning journey.
  - Updating students about what is going on at the school or in the community.

- Dialoguing with parents about student programs, needs, and areas of concern.
- Celebrate and learn about the history, culture and traditions of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples

*“Collaborate to develop comfort with respectful delivery of Aboriginal literature.”* English Dept. Goal 2.



Chief Rhonda Larrabee

## 6. Indicators of success : Which data will we use to monitor progress ?

We believe that engaged students earn higher grades, report a greater sense of belonging, attend regularly, participate meaningfully, earn credits and are better able to set and meet personal goals while achieving increased levels of success. We will use a variety of sources of evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, to monitor increases in engagement among our students. Some examples include student assessment information, report cards, attendance data, professional judgment, anecdotal data, Student Voice sessions and Parent Advisory Council (PAC) feedback.

## 7. Conclusion: Design thinking

*“Fine tuning through failures is OK.”* - John Tyler, NWSS Principal.

This is a transition year on many levels and thus involves an element of risk and exploration. As we get through the year, we'll stop to identify milestones and ask questions to see if we are further ahead. What we see forming is a school culture where we focus on the teacher, student, and curriculum in equal parts. The curriculum is the parameter within we exist, but *how* we deliver it is up to us. We *own* what kind of stamp we put on how curriculum is delivered at NDub.

