

**Rocky Mountain**  
School District No. 6

# Enhancing Student Learning Report

## September 2024

In Review of Year 2023-2024 of Strategic Plan 2024-2028



Approved by Board on September 10, 2024

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## Section B: Moving Forward

### *Planning and Adjusting for Continuous Improvement*

#### Introduction: District Context

Rocky Mountain School District No. 6 is proud to serve students in the Columbia Valley from Golden to Kimberley, and grateful to reside on traditional territory of the Ktunaxa and Secwépemc peoples. Rocky Mountain recognizes its valued relationships with all Indigenous Peoples and strives toward learning the truth of Indigenous experience. The District is committed to true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Our Indigenous partnerships are essential to the success of this plan and together we will journey toward a better future that acknowledges the past and paves the way for better outcomes for all students. The Board of Education for Rocky Mountain engaged in the development of a strategic plan, building the vision, mission, values and priorities that set the stage for the 2023-2027 years. The four priorities of the Board of Education: 1) Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, 2) Success for Each Learner and 3) Growing Capacity for Self and Others 4) Stewardship for the Future lay a solid foundation for continuous improvement. Engaging with our community partners (including District Parent Advisory Council, Rights holders and partners, Unions, Principals, Staff and Students), the annual plan combines community ideas with data determined targets into a consolidated plan to improve outcomes for all students and to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners. This report was prepared under the direction of the Board of Education in accordance with the responsibilities under the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. The Board of Education is committed to using the results in this report to ensure that all students can acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to be successful.

In Rocky Mountain there are 18 schools, including three alternate schools and one online school in three zones: 1) Golden, including the community of Nicholson, 2) Windermere, including Edgewater, Invermere, and Canal Flats, and (3) Kimberley, including Marysville. The District serves approximately 3400 students, employs approximately 700 staff. There is roughly a 20% Indigenous student population with small populations of students (49) living on Akisqnuq First Nation and Shuswap Band Reserves. There is a population of approximately 55% Indigenous students identifying as Métis. There are fewer than 10 designated students in care across the district and roughly 12% of students are diagnosed with diverse needs according to Ministry Special Education Policy. Nine Trustees make up the Board of Education. Its mission, vision, and values guide all decisions. The District welcomes approximately 90 international students each year. These students from around the world enroll in our schools to study and experience the unique environment that we have to offer in the Columbia Valley.

The geography of the district often presents an immutable challenge to many operational aspects of the district including, recruitment, costs of professional learning, and establishing standardized practices to name a few. In working toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and in the interests of other stakeholders, reconciling the differences of geography can prove challenging and require additional time and resources.

#### Current Strategic Plan Priorities

The district is currently in year 2 of a four year strategic cycle. There are four priorities within the plan

1. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion – Students who are engaged and connected at school have a greater chance of doing well in all aspects of learning. Rocky Mountain School District sets this priority in

order to focus on removing barriers to equity, embracing the strength of diverse populations and identities, and ensuring all students experience belonging at school.

2. Success for Each Learner – All students are provided the instruction and activities to ensure they are able to demonstrate proficiency in literacy and numeracy.
3. Growing Capacity of Self and Others – all adults and students are learners and through high quality professional learning opportunities, the district will improve its service to students.
4. Stewardship for the Future – this is a forward-looking priority to ensure students are connected to communities beyond the classroom in a world that is sustainable.

The continuous improvement plan of Rocky Mountain School District follows an iterative cycle of monitoring and reviewing evidence of learning according to strategic school planning. Based on opportunities for growth, schools create yearly plans informing the operational objectives of the district. These objectives are described in the yearly operational plan. District staff provide assurances to the Board of Education throughout the year to ensure the plan is on track or adjusted.

[Strategic and Operational Plan.](#)





## Looking Back on the Year: Effectiveness of Implemented Strategies

Looking back on the 2024 school year, Rocky Mountain School District has accomplished much of which to be proud. The list of actions below were taken last school year and represented ongoing growth in identified areas or new initiatives that are themselves continuing to grow. Many of these actions required the partnership of Indigenous Rights Holders and community partners.

### **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

1. Early learning community engagement
  - a. The district hosted 8 Ready Set Learn events embedded in communities across the district in partnership with early learning program and service providers.
  - b. More parents are aware of the free programs and services offered in the community for early learning. This initiative began in 2020 when 33% of parents reported on the CHEQ that the biggest barrier to participation in pre-K programs and services was not knowing about available programs. In 2023 only 5% of parents reported this as a barrier.
  - c. Rocky Mountain participated in offering JUSTB4 to the community in Kimberley.
2. Racial Equity
  - a. Rocky Mountain developed a web resource for educators and leaders in the organization with supporting materials from the Ministry on racial equity action.
  - b. All district principals and vice-principals participated in a full day of learning with a consultant from UBC on leading for racial equity.
3. Strengthening Interagency Partnerships
  - a. Accomplished the goal of bi-annual meetings in 3 communities with community service agents – this objective allowed the school district to better identify and design a district practice for students with unique needs.
  - b. In partnership with the RCMP the district established a local situation table to address acute needs among students in the community.
4. Improved Communication
  - a. The district designed a communication strategy which has led to:
    - i. Enhanced presence on social media platforms
    - ii. More direct communication to parents on information items like bus routes, school meetings, and other deadlines and reminders.
    - iii. An improved relationship with media outlets in all the communities
5. Workplace Wellness
  - a. The district sought to and achieved:
    - i. Conducting the guarding minds survey for all employees
    - ii. Striking a representative employee workplace wellness district committee
    - iii. Set three workplace wellness district strategies for 2024-2025

### **Success for Each Learner**

1. Improve Kindergarten Transitions
  - a. Standardized Kindergarten transition practices across the district using community input in each case.
2. Increased Student Success in Literacy and Numeracy
  - a. Implemented a district literacy assessment grades 4-7 aligned with the BC Learning Pathways proficiency language
  - b. Full implementation of district numeracy assessment at grade 8 and 9 based on the proficiency language of the BC Learning Pathways.
3. Improved Social Emotional Learning
  - a. All students K-7 received direct learning from school counselors in the Mind Up program
  - b. All PHE 10 students received a mental health literacy module as part of the course.
  - c. The district rolled out the Mental Health in Schools strategy

4. Applied for and received grant to enhance dual credit programming

### **Growing Capacity of Self and Others**

1. Improved Instructional Capacity.
  - a. All principals and vice-principals participated in monthly leadership meetings with a focus on assessment and data literacy
  - b. Principals were introduced to the BC Learning Pathways and this language became normalized in schools according to anecdotal evidence.
2. Increase the Frequency and Quality of Collaboration
  - a. Many opportunities were offered from the district to improve collaboration
    - i. Early Learning Framework Community of Practice
    - ii. Numeracy and Literacy Leads Networks
    - iii. Technology Leadership Team
    - iv. Indigenous Education Teacher Leads for grad requirement collaboration
  - b. All schools began in 2020 to develop a collaborative model plan. All have now implemented plans for on site teacher collaboration
  - c. The Human Resources department has hired six (6) unassigned contract teachers to provide reliable release time for teacher collaboration across the district.

### **Stewardship for the Future**

1. Advance Truth and Reconciliation
  - a. Almost all schools have completed the Blanket Exercise with all staff and several schools are engaging students in the learning opportunity.
  - b. All existing staff, and all future on boarded staff will complete the Four Seasons of Truth and Reconciliation. This has created a baseline awareness of Truth and Reconciliation across the organization.
2. Food Programming
  - a. Universal breakfast programs were implemented in all schools. 20% of students participate on any given day across the district.
3. Building Upgrades
  - a. All lighting has been upgraded to LED
  - b. Moved white fleet to electric vehicles and build charging infrastructure in operations buildings.
  - c. Reduced paper usage in schools by reducing the number of printing devices and establishing a base line of paper usage from analytics software.

As seen in Section A, it is safe to conclude the continued positive trends in student outcomes can be attributed to collective affects of these strategies. Students feel connected to a greater number of adults and are beginning to report they are learning the tools needed to manage their mental health. As reported in the Dual Credit and Trades information in this section, and in section A, the district is seeing an increasing amount of interest in these programs. This is a direct result of the attention paid to students seeking options for success. Enhanced trades and dual credit options seem to be improving outcomes especially for students with diverse needs and for students who are Indigenous. There is some initial data to suggest these programs also have an impact on students living on reserve. However, this group of students is few in number and care should be taken to draw conclusions from small cohorts too soon.

A number of partnerships have been essential to community relationships in support of students. The district has taken strong efforts to more frequently engage the RCMP, MCFD, Early Childhood Educators in the community in order to formalize processes where there are shared interests. For example, the Child Care providers reported a lack of knowledge about kindergarten practices. Kindergarten teachers reported the same about what goes on at day cares. The district developed a project in 2021 bringing these community partners together with kindergarten teachers throughout the year. Over 85% of each

group now report a solid understanding of the ways their work connects with each other. This program continues with refinements each year.

With First Nations, the district is participating in conversations and essential relationship building integral to student success. Four times last school year, the Shuswap Band hosted education circles between district staff and members of the Band. Conversation was led by the Band and provided essential learning by all involved. These were often the only spaces where members of the community felt comfortable engaging with the school district. For the first time, last school year district staff were invited to Akisqnuq First Nation Chief and Council to talk about education for Ktunaxa students on reserve. Currently, LEA negotiations are underway with both Nations and will be integral to the school district, the Bands and the future success of all Indigenous learners.

Each year the operational strategies of the district lead to improved engagement with Indigenous partners and more detailed and important input from them. For example, to improve equity of Indigenous resources this past school year, the district sought to centralize the distribution of resources for Indigenous learners. This included the equitable allocation of human resources as well as material resources. Indigenous partners accepted the invitation to contribute to this conversation and help design the way the district would achieve this objective.

The engagement of Rights holders assisted in the current Land Acknowledgement of the district. This past year, the district engaged and sought guidance from the two local Bands on revising the district's Land acknowledgment. Through shared conversation and space, the district was able to learn from partners and be confident that the current land acknowledgment supports the ongoing positive relationship and the success of students.

Evidence suggesting that these strengthened relationships and improved communication benefits students are found in many sources of the data in section A. However, a few sources are worth pointing out:

1. All students living on reserve who were set to complete with a Dogwood did so in 2024.
2. The gap to parity for school completion is under 6%. The narrowest gap in the organization's history.
3. Indigenous students are more likely to claim strong adult connections on the Student Learning Survey.
4. On early number sense district assessment, Indigenous students are nearly at parity with non-Indigenous students on the Spring assessment cycle.

## Existing and/or Emerging Areas for Growth

### Numeracy

Data and evidence about numeracy highlights the relative urgency of supporting student success in this area. Despite some data trends moving in positive directions, overall, student achievement is not at the level the district would expect to ensure ongoing student success. This urgency is reflected in FESL data sources but also locally on district wide assessment. Similar to literacy evidence, data extracted from report card data does not reflect the level of urgency in numeracy reflected in district and provincial assessments. Clearly understanding and describing this difference in system and local data will be critical for ongoing growth.

### Literacy

A new area of growth that emerged from follow up on the district literacy assessment was that students have good proficiency up to and including skills of summary comprehension. However, when the aspects of applying the meaning made come into play, students have low levels of proficiency. For example, data from this assessment in both Fall and Spring shows students are generally not proficient and connecting

themes between texts, the world, or personal experience. They are not proficient at analyzing and comparing themes between texts or media. This will become a focus of many school plan strategies in the coming year as well as the focus of follow up from the assessment and the literacy community of practice.

#### Feeling Welcome, Safe, and a sense of Belonging

This data area presents the district with a significant challenge to continuous growth. Despite academic data trends improving, and the efforts of school planning for social emotional well-being, data in this area for Rocky Mountain has remained flat over the last 4 years. The district is obviously curious to learn where it is missing the mark to make notable improvements in this area.

There is an additional challenge for the district to understand the differences in the information gathered from school – based local surveys, the MDI and YDI, and the provincial Student Learning Survey Data. Data from local surveys and instruments contradicts the provincial data in two ways.

1. Growth is evident on local site-based measures.
2. Significantly higher numbers of students report feelings of safety, belonging, and feeling welcome.

It will be important to continue to investigate the possible reasons for the differences between data sources. It is possible that the Student Learning Survey requires additional stamina to complete the lengthy survey compared to the 5-10 question local surveys or the instruments that require personal interaction and conversation about the survey items.

#### Elders in Schools

The Indigenous Education Department of the school district has been working with the local Bands and other Indigenous partners to develop a personalized contact resource for schools to facilitate the presence of Elders and Knowledge Holders in schools. This work can only be done in close collaboration and relying on strong relationships where Elders and Knowledge Holders feel safely invited into schools. This work has been going on for the past two years and in 2025 it is expected to be shared among schools looking to bring Elders and Knowledge Holders into classrooms in the district.

#### ECE and Dual Credit

In the upcoming operational year there will be a focus on the inclusion and enhancement of dual credit programming for secondary students. These programs have always been available and popular with students who know about them. Using the available grant received, the current plan is to expand dual credit options and to enhance the trades options in the communities of Golden and Kimberley. The data reveals the uptake in dual credit is commensurate with efforts to grow these options. This work will continue as student interest seems to be growing in line with opportunity.

#### Digital Citizenship and AI

With the implementation of new BC legislation on the use of smart devices and the ever-increasing dangers to students online, the district believes in the importance of using the Technology Leaders Team to design and implement a strategy for teaching digital citizenship and safety. The district began this work in 2024 by providing White Hatter presentations for all students, parents, and staff. Also, the district provided print resources to schools about online safety as well as providing all tools on the district web site. These are the beginnings of a strategy that will continue to take shape in the upcoming operational plan.



## Mentorship Programs for New Teachers

The district is excited to partner with the teachers' union locals to design a shared mentorship program for teachers. With improving labour relations comes the opportunity to address a need for mentor programs. This need was expressed in the community and staff engagement cycle this past spring. While there are district programs for new teachers and ongoing orientation to the district and the curriculum, an emerging program will provide for the development of ongoing professional teacher partnerships within the district.

## Attendance Protocols

More and more the district is seeing the impact of poor and inconsistent student attendance at school. While poor attendance is only a metric reflecting students' sense of belonging and engagement, the district must get students to school regularly to have any chance of building engagement and connection. For this reason, the district will be developing a response protocol for students aimed at different levels of absenteeism. The need for this work has arisen out of conversations with First Nations about the well being of their students. In LEA conversations, the need for improving attendance is prevalent as the foundational barrier to solution design.

## Racial Equity Work

The district has begun this work, however, it is in the stages of infancy. Growing this work will be an important aspect of the district's EDI operational strategies because there are likely barriers and biases in this area yet to be revealed. As the district rolls out further training across a broad range of employees and the community as part of an intentional plan, the district should better be able to identify and address barriers to equity. The district has begun by training school leaders to be more confident in leading conversations about racial equity, but much more work is to be done.

## Employee Wellness

In 2024 the district partnered with the ED Can Network and Well at Work to complete an employee wellness scan of the entire district. This was led by a contractor from Well at Work. The results suggested many areas to which to apply efforts aimed at improved employee wellness. Areas like psychological safety, communication, and change management were on top of the list of areas for immediate growth. The district struck a representative employee committee to design a district wellness plan. This work continues in the upcoming year. Anecdotal data suggests this work is welcomed by employees. As well, this issue arose as an ongoing need during the spring engagement cycle.

## Ongoing Strategic Engagement (Qualitative Data)

In prior years, the district hosted community engagement evenings in all three communities. Consultation occurred and feedback was received over dinner on all aspects of strategic and operational planning. Each school also hosted an evening to engage with community about their plans. However, attendance and participation were very poor despite active advertising on radio, in print, and at schools.

This past spring, the district decided to try to improve representation from the community by hosting three online engagement sessions at three different times during the day and then to provide a video of the session along with a survey that people could complete on their own time. The district received more items of feedback, but fewer items were received in context and many of them were very off topic or inflammatory.

The district also met with rightsholders and stakeholders individually to solicit feedback on the operational plan for the coming year. The district met with the District Parent Advisory Council, CUPE, and the BCTF as well as with non-unionized staff. The Indigenous Education Department shared planning with rightsholders

through education circles held in community and through Chief and Council invitations. The Acting Superintendent shared the plan with principals and Parent Advisory Councils to provide feedback.

All information was collected on a survey using Microsoft Forms. It was then grouped according to theme.

The district created a “what we heard” report to circulate back into community. Some of the feedback themes received were:

1. Increase Academic Rigour
2. Increase Professional learning and resources
3. Improve accountability
4. Improve student and staff wellness

Certain areas of the operational plan DRAFT were adjusted based on the feedback received. The 2024-2025 operational plan includes consideration of the following, all of which received common feedback on the survey.

1. Safe spaces for students and staff to voice their views and be heard
2. More supports for school teams to meet the needs of diverse learners
3. Increased ratio of school digital devices
4. Plan to address the impact of social media and Artificial Intelligence in schools
5. Working in partnership with community Indigenous groups and rightsholders
6. Create mentorship opportunities to support all staff

## [What we Heard Report](#)

### Adjustment and Adaptations: Next Steps

Using information from the district assessment cycle in fall and spring, the provincial data sources, and information from thorough community and partner engagement, the district monitors and adjusts the operational plan yearly and the larger strategic plan on a 4-year cycle.

Each year the district team and schools review their plans. While they have been monitoring and adjusting throughout the school year based on evidence of learning, each year a new plan is developed and set in place. At the district level, it is an operational plan and at the school level they are school plans. During this process strategies are adjusted, refined, created, or deleted and this information shared with the educational community.

If data suggests a strategy is working for all students, it is continued and refined. An example of this is the district’s development and implementation of a numeracy assessment at grade 8 and 9. This was an area of very little information and students’ achievement was declining between grade 7 and grade 10. Teachers and principals could not describe the learning patterns between grade 7 and 10. Since the implementation of this assessment, students have shown increasing performance on the provincial numeracy measure as well as year to year growth in the district’s assessment cycle. Teachers gather informative evidence leading to a better understanding of areas for growth and can predict outcomes between grade 7 and 10 with greater accuracy.

Sometimes the feedback the district receives informs the creation of an operational strategy that fans out across the district. An example of this would be the feedback received about the importance of student attendance at school as connected to student success. Attendance was rated very high on the engagement

survey by most respondents. As such, as part of the operational plan in 2025, the district will develop attendance protocols at all school levels.

Another strategy that has been refined based on community feedback is a strategy related to student voice. All secondary schools have some mechanism for students to formally express their voice about aspects of school that affect them. But students still reported they did not feel a direct impact on the decisions taken or the design of programming. Based on this feedback, the district is seeking to build a greater sense of agency into student involvement. This means going beyond just providing their voices to partaking in the leadership actions required to cultivate curiosity and lead changes.

Responding to employee feedback about improving workplace wellness, the district struck a representative committee of employees to design a strategic approach. In this case, strategies were developed from organizational feedback, but were shared by all in the implementation and design. The feedback informed new operational objectives like developing a communication protocol and providing psychological safety training for people in positions of leadership.

The strategy to implement a district wide shift to a competency-based IEP practice, was informed by feedback that the deficit model was not motivating to students or an accurate description of their abilities. The CB IEP focuses on student competencies and aligns with provincial language in curriculum and assessment: beginning from a position of the student's proficiency. This strategy is new and requires refined and continue training in this iteration to build user confidence and leadership. However, it is a strategy that will continue based on the positive results the district is noticing for students with diverse abilities, such as the improved completion rate.

The school district has implemented Truth and Reconciliation training for all staff through the First Nation University in Manitoba. This is also required as onboarding for all new employees. This training ensures that Indigenous students will receive education from professionals who have a base level of training in understanding and awareness of Truth and Reconciliation. This also contributes, in part, to the success evident for these students at all levels of the system. This training developed from feedback from a couple of years ago from the First Nations that the district needed to develop ways to seek the truth within the organization. This strategy will continue based on the ongoing importance of Truth and Reconciliation but also because school districts are experiencing high rates of employee turnover and all employees are responsible for this learning.

## Alignment for Successful Implementation

### **Plans in Place in Rocky Mountain**

Strategic Plan – 4 years

Operational Plan – Yearly

School Plans – Yearly

Departmental Plans – Yearly

One LEA

Business Alignment Plan – Yearly

The Rocky Mountain Planning cycle is effective and well-aligned for continuous growth because the cycle ensures each department begins their planning conversations using the Strategic Plan. The goals they develop then become a commitment to action in the operational plan.

Individually, all staff complete a professional growth plan each year and share that plan with a mentor by the end of October.

Principals, vice-principals and exempt staff complete one of either a full cycle performance review, a formal evaluation, or a professional growth plan each year.

All personal professional growth plans are aligned with learning required to advance objectives outlined in the operational, school, and strategic plans.

The district ensures overall alignment through monthly review meetings with departments and schools to monitor growth with respect to the operational and strategic plans. Each year the schools work through an iterative process to monitor their existing school plans while gathering information to inform the upcoming plan. Each month district staff visit schools to review their planning and adjust their strategies according to evidence of learning.

On the business side of the organization, all resources are leveraged toward the strategies in the operational plan. For example, the Human Resource Department coordinates a strategy with schools to hire six (6) unassigned contract teachers, two to each community, to ensure reliable teacher release for collaborative strategies identified in the strategic plan and in detail, in school plans. The Finance department meeting with school principals after principals complete their school plans to ensure financial resources are allocated in alignment with school objectives. This type of alignment is realized through routine collaborative meetings that use the operational plan as a guide for all allocation of resources within the district.

Through tight alignment between systems planning through to individual professional goal setting, Rocky Mountain School District is able to ensure the greatest likelihood of achieving identified outcomes for students.

## **Conclusion**

The data and stories used to inform this report are trending in positive directions in Rocky Mountain. This means students are doing better each year. Completion rates are climbing, assessment literacy is growing, and student literacy and numeracy rates are improving. Strategies related to student wellness and agency will continue to cultivate overall student success. While not a directly student-centered initiative, Rocky Mountain plans to focus resources on some staff wellness strategies this current year with the hope of strengthening the district's foundation of people who make good things happen for students.

The continuous growth cycle in Rocky Mountain reveals that such approaches as strengthening relationships with rightsholders, providing resources and learning to teachers, an expectation for academic rigour, and creating inclusive environments in schools is having a positive impact for all students and on the success of students with diverse needs and students who are Indigenous. Additionally, continuing to implement Calls to Action as part of the organizational journey towards Truth and Reconciliation will position the school district to continue to increase capacity in meeting student need.