

## Burnaby School District – School Plan

### Our Story

#### **Who we are?** *(With considerations for ELL, Inclusive Ed, CYOC, Indigenous students)*

At University Highlands Elementary, we are a collaborative, compassionate, and committed learning community. Our staff describe themselves as connected, respectful, and supportive—working together as a cohesive team to create a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all learners.

We serve a dynamic and diverse student population, including many learners with complex needs. Our strength lies in our ability to adapt, stay grounded, and meet students where they are—fostering strong relationships, emotional regulation, and growing independence. We take pride in validating all learners and creating meaningful opportunities for them to connect with both peers and adults.

Since opening in 2010 with just six divisions, UHE has experienced steady and significant growth—expanding to 20 divisions in 2025. Our community is incredibly diverse: more than 30 languages are spoken in our students' homes, and approximately 50% of our learners are developing English language proficiency. Currently, five families identify as having Indigenous ancestry, and about 12% of our students have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Our school's unique location—situated atop Burnaby Mountain within the SFU campus—contributes to a high level of student mobility, with frequent arrivals and departures throughout the school year. This ongoing turnover has highlighted the importance of fostering connection and belonging within our school, and has directly shaped the focus of our current school plan goals.

## What are we doing well?

At University Highlands Elementary, we are doing well in creating multiple, meaningful opportunities for students to build connections—with peers, adults, and the broader school community. Staff highlighted a variety of strategies and structures that support student connectedness, including:

- **Pods and Tree Pods:** These cross-grade groupings have helped foster relationships across divisions and build a stronger sense of school community. Assemblies and activities organized by pod are especially valued and help create shared experiences.
- **Leadership Opportunities:** Students have taken on meaningful roles through student ambassadors, music leadership, green team, and other leadership activities. These roles empower students and increase their sense of belonging and purpose.
- **Clubs and Extracurriculars:** A variety of extracurricular clubs (e.g., sports club, Green Team, Diversity Club, intramurals, Friends of Simon, Rock Band, etc.) provide students with structured, inclusive ways to engage with others and explore their interests.
- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Programs like Everyday Speech, Zones of Regulation, RULER, and community circles have helped students develop communication, regulation, and relationship-building skills. These approaches are used consistently across classrooms and support a culture of care.
- **Inclusive Support Structures:** Staff noted the importance of shared support models, where EAs and classroom teachers collaborate to provide flexible, student-centered care. Open communication, flexibility, and trust among staff help ensure that students' social and emotional needs are met.
- **Individualized Supports:** For students with diverse needs, the use of tools such as TouchChat, usage of our new sensory room, and the intentional reduction of pressure have made a noticeable impact on student confidence, communication, and independence.
- **Supporting students' unique learning styles** through a variety of supports (e.g. Reading programs such as ReadWell/Lexia; in class & pull-out support; talking tables and guided reading interventions, etc.)

Overall, we feel that the strength of our school lies in our collaborative team, our commitment to inclusive practice, and the wide range of opportunities for students to feel seen, supported, and connected. These strategies are having a positive effect and should be sustained and built upon in the coming year.

## How do we know?

- FSA Scores
- Report Card Assessments
- Kindergarten Screening
- ELL Testing
- LSS Assessments
- Teacher Observations and Informal Assessments
- To implement in 2025-2026: yearly student connectedness surveys

## Our focus:

Goal 1: **SEL:** How does a focus on building student to student as well as student to adult connections within the school community improve student connectedness in our school?

Goal 2: **Literacy:** How can we effectively support Grade 3-4 students who are not yet reading to build foundational decoding and comprehension skills?

## STRATEGIES: (to support Focus)

Goal 1: A number of supports, strategies and initiatives have begun, and we will continue to focus on and implement the following:

- Pod family cross-grade community activities and challenges
  - Student Ambassadors- students who support newcomers to UHE, and new for 2025-2026, will be on "supervision" daily to help students with minor conflicts outside/support connection building; periodic check ins through the year
  - School jobs by grade- e.g. grade 5's do morning announcements, grade 7's on lunch supervision, etc, to build a sense of responsibility within the school culture
  - Grade 7 service program
  - Continue using the language of Growth Mindset, Zones of Regulation and RULER Language
  - Everyday Speech lessons to support peer interactions, communication and problem solving
  - Continue to build on school run connection activities throughout the year: house teams, school wide song, grade by grade community events, student leadership to lead school wide activities, photo walls, teacher swaps (e.g. read alouds), monthly spirit days as a yearlong points project, student leaders teacher game play for recess/lunch, etc)
- Collect data: Fall and Spring – Student reflections about connection

Goal 2: Based on assessment data and in the spirit of individualizing support to meet student needs, we will focus on the following interventions to support grade 3/4 students who are not yet reading:

- LEXIA intervention program
- ReadWell program
- In class programs including: Heggerty, UFLI, Sounds to Spelling, Daily 5, etc
- When needed, access the support of the Literacy Intervention and/or Enhancement Teachers
- Grade-group protected guided literacy time built into the 2025-2026 calendar
- Continued use of diagnostic assessment will support ongoing direction for these students- DART, PM Benchmarks, UFLI assessments, DIEBELS screener, etc.