

STRATEGIC FOCUS

Connecting Our
Priorities



November 2025 Highlights

WELCOME TO THE NOVEMBER STRATEGIC FOCUS

As we move into the winter season, our District remains focused on the priorities outlined in the [Strategic Plan](#), ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive. This publication, *Strategic Focus – Connecting Our Priorities*, highlights the meaningful work happening across our schools and communities that directly supports these strategic pillars.

Recent highlights include professional learning in literacy and numeracy, where educators engaged in the UFLI Learning Series, Teaching Phonics & Word Study sessions, and Numeracy Residencies to strengthen evidence-based practices. Our Early Childhood Education team has focused on supporting early literacy by exploring structured literacy strategies and resources to build strong foundations in reading. Career development activities include Take Our Kids to Work Day, post-secondary recruiter visits, and trades-focused field trips, which provide students with valuable insights into future pathways. Community partnerships and well-being initiatives such as *Mindful Moments* and new family resources on digital media literacy are helping to promote mental health and healthy technology habits.

This season is also a time to celebrate community and creativity. We invite families and community members to attend Winter Concerts at our schools. This is a wonderful opportunity to experience the talent and hard work of our students and staff. Your presence makes these events even more special.

Stay connected and informed by visiting our [District website](http://www.sd83.bc.ca) (www.sd83.bc.ca) for important dates, news, and resources.

REMINDERS

December 16	Elementary/Middle Written Learning Updates
December 19	Last day of school prior to Winter Break
December 22 – January 2	Winter Break
January 14	2026 Kindergarten, French Immersion, Outdoor Learning Registration Opens

Stay up to date with important dates including holidays, professional development days, and school events ([2025-2026 School District Calendar](#) / [2025-2026 School Year Calendar](#)).

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Each student will develop their literacy skills, numeracy skills, and competencies to become their most capable self.

UFLI LEARNING SERIES



On November 4, 2025, educators came together for the final session of the UFLI (University of Florida Literacy Institute) Learning Series. This professional learning opportunity focused on evidence-based strategies for teaching foundational reading skills, supporting educators who are new to UFLI Foundations.

Participants engaged in collaborative discussions and practical activities designed to strengthen early literacy instruction. Each attendee received a UFLI Foundations manual to help implement these strategies in their classrooms.

TEACHING PHONICS & WORD STUDY IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES

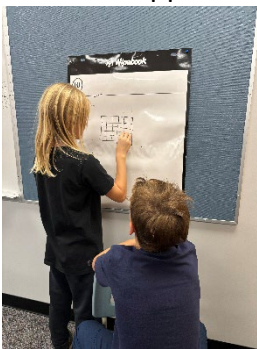


On November 5, 2025, teachers gathered for the concluding session of the Teaching Phonics & Word Study in the Intermediate Grades Learning Series. This professional learning opportunity, based on Wiley Blevins' *Phonics From A to Z*, provided strategies aligned with the science of reading to strengthen phonics instruction for Grades 3-8.

Participants explored high-impact routines, differentiation techniques, and intervention models to support older students who need additional literacy support. Each attendee received a complimentary copy of the resource book to continue applying these practices in their classrooms.

NUMERACY RESIDENCY

The first [Numeracy Residency](#) took place at Sorrento Elementary School, bringing a collaborative and innovative approach to math instruction. Numeracy Helping Teachers Christine Blacklock and Marlee Penner are working with three Intermediate classrooms, taught by Ange Nitschke, Madison Dickie, and Melissa Green, every Wednesday for eight weeks.



To support this work, vertical whiteboards and flexible learning spaces have been introduced throughout the school. These tools are central to the *Building Thinking Classrooms* framework by Peter Liljedahl, which encourages student engagement, problem-solving, and mathematical discourse.

This initiative supports the Intellectual Development priority in the [District Strategic Plan](#), which focuses on helping students meet or exceed literacy and numeracy expectations while develop the competencies needed to become their most capable selves. By embedding expert support into classrooms and using research-based strategies, the Residency enhances both teacher practice and student learning.

NUMERACY PRO-D SESSIONS – NOVEMBER 10, 2025

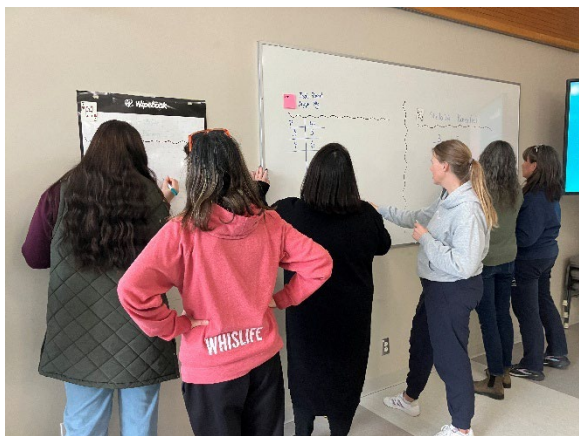
Developing a Comprehensive Math Program (K to 8)

This first session started off virtually in the morning with school teams from 11 elementary schools participating, facilitated by Jen Findlay, Director of Instruction/Early Years. School teams then collaborated in person to strengthen their instructional numeracy practices and routines using a variety of shared resources.

Mathematics Tasks for the Thinking Classroom (K to 5)

Kindergarten to Grade 5 teachers gathered for Session 2 of a 3-part learning series, focused on *Mathematics Tasks for the Thinking Classroom: Grades K-5*. This series builds on the acclaimed work *Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics* by Peter Liljedahl and Maegan Giroux, exploring strategies to engage students through rich, meaningful math tasks.

This session was facilitated by Numeracy Helping Teachers, Christine Blacklock and Marlee Penner. Participants from eight different elementary schools collaborated, shared ideas, and experienced hands-on activities designed to foster deep mathematical thinking.



SUPPORTING EARLY LITERACY

On November 20, 2025, the SD83 Early Childhood Education team came together for an engaging professional learning session focused on Supporting Early Literacy. The session explored components of effective reading instruction, including:

- Models of Reading and the Science of Reading;
- The Five Pillars of Reading Instruction: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension;
- District resources such as Heggerty and UFLI, along with decodable texts; and,
- Strategies for structured literacy, small group support, and playful ways to support literacy.



NOVEMBER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SESSIONS


- | | |
|-------------|--|
| November 4 | UFLI – Phonics (K-2) |
| November 5 | Teaching Phonics & Word Study in the Intermediate Grades (3-8) |
| November 10 | Mathematics Tasks for the Thinking Classroom (K-5) |
| | Developing a Comprehensive Math Program (K-8) |
| | STEM (secondary) |
| | AI Micro-sessions (K-12) |
| November 24 | Creating Resilient Classrooms – Embedding Mental Health Support into Every Classroom (3-8) |

Strategic Plan Report:
Connecting Our Priorities

HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Each student will feel welcome, safe, and connected to peers and adults in their school.

MONTHLY MINDFUL MOMENTS



SD83

November 2025

Mindful Moments

Brought to you by the Itinerant Counselling Team

Sleep is so important to your child's overall well-being! Nowadays we are hearing more and more about kids who are not getting enough sleep for various reasons. Kids in elementary/middle school need 9-12 hours of uninterrupted sleep every night. That means if your child has to be awake by 7 am, they need to be asleep by no later than 9 pm. Some kids need more sleep than others. By October kids are tired.

Impacts from Lack of Sleep

Lack of sleep impacts us in many ways. KidsHealth.org lists ways which lack of sleep effects our kids, including:

- Falling asleep during the day
- Hyperactivity (especially younger children)
- Trouble paying attention
- Struggling with school work
- Crankiness, whiny, irritable, or moody
- Behaviour problems

Effects of Lack of Sleep

- Growth delay
- Poor school performance
- Frequent infections
- Difficulties focusing, making decisions, and solving problems
- An increased risk of heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and stroke
- Abnormal onset of puberty
- Behaviour problems
- Obesity
- Night terrors

Source: DrLaurasKitchen.com

Good Sleep Hygiene

Establish a regular routine

- Same bedtime and wake time every night
- Try not to sleep in more than a half hour on the weekends (unless sick or sleep-deprived)

Screens off at least one hour before bedtime

- Try something quiet like a puzzle, reading, Lego, listening to a story, talking about the day, bathe/shower, stretch

Remove all electronics from the bedroom


Limit bright lights/nightlights at bedtime

Get exercise and outside time (sunlight daylight) every day for at least an hour - Set limits on screentime

Limit caffeine during the day - no caffeine past 3pm

Keep bedroom cool, dark, and quiet

How much sleep do kids need?



Age Group	Hours per 24-hour sleep period
Infants: 4 to 12 months	12 to 16 hours (including naps)
Toddlers: 1 to 2 years	11 to 14 hours (including naps)
Preschoolers: 3 to 5 years	9 to 12 hours
Gradeschoolers: 6 to 12 years	9 to 12 hours
Teens: 13 to 19 years	8 to 10 hours

If these are ideas you would like to try, add them in gradually.

If you are shifting bedtimes, do so by shifting 15 minutes each day instead of all at once.

Further Reading: Kids Health Resource (kidshealth.org/en/kids/not-tired.html)

Did you know that quality sleep can boost mood, improve learning, and support overall health? In November, the Itinerant Counselling Team shared why sleep matters and shared practical tips for better rest.

Discover more: Visit our [website](#) to read [November Mindful Moments – The Importance of Sleep](#).

Further Reading: [Kids Health Resource](#).

BUILDING BETTER TECH HABITS: A NEW SELF-GUIDED WORKSHOP FOR FAMILIES



[MediaSmarts](https://mediasmarts.ca) (<https://mediasmarts.ca>) has launched a new, free self-guided workshop to help families develop healthier technology and screen-time habits. Building Better Tech Habits provides practical, research-informed strategies for managing family screen use and addressing common digital challenges at all ages.

The workshop is available 24/7 and can be completed at any time, making it easy to fit into busy schedules. Access the workshop here: [Tutorials & Workshops](#)

Explore more FREE resources: [MediaSmarts Digital Media Literacy](#).

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Each student will develop the skills and competencies necessary to be successful in a career or community pathway of their choice.

TAKE YOUR KIDS TO WORK DAY



On November 5, 2025, Grade 9 student, Callie, spent Take Our Kids to Work Day in the Finance Department, where she got a close-up look at the daily operations that keep things running smoothly. Callie supported the team by shredding documents, photocopying materials, reconciling bank statements, and organizing files, contributing to the smooth operation of the department.

It was a special day for Callie and her mom, Raelene, who works as an Accounting Coordinator. The experience offered a meaningful glimpse into the professional environment and highlighted the value of mentorship and family connection in the workplace.

Take Our Kids to Work Day is an annual career exploration initiative in Canada where students in Grade 9 spend a day in the workplace of a parent, caregiver, or volunteer host, gaining real-world experience and exploring potential career paths.

MAKING SPACE FOR FUTURE INDIGENOUS POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS



SD83 Indigenous and other students are learning more about the educational options available to them in BC once they graduate from Grade 12. A group of Indigenous recruiters from eight post-secondary institutions (PSI) from BC and Alberta travelled to the District's high schools to talk about the academic, trades, and technical programs they host. Recruiters from Okanagan College, University of BC's Medical School, Thompson Rivers University (TRU), University of Northern BC, University of Alberta, Native Education College, University of Victoria, and the RCMP met with Salmon Arm students at Salmon Arm Secondary and J.L. Jackson.



TRU Indigenous Recruiter Sammie Hanson coordinates the event with other PSI recruiters. Now in its third year, 'Strengthening Connections' has expanded from four PSI's in its first year to as many as 14 this year touring the Okanagan, Shuswap, Caribou/Chilcotin, Kootenays, and Vancouver Island. Hanson says these events are working as TRU has seen a 14 percent increase in Indigenous students from the Shuswap enrolled at their campus compared to last year. Hanson credits that increase in part to Indigenous recruiters making specific attachments with Indigenous youth. "I think many institutions realize they have supports to offer Indigenous students and those students and communities are

responding." Hanson says there has also been growth in other Indigenous students attending other schools. She says at least 12 percent of TRU's student body have self-declared themselves as Indigenous.

Last month, many other BC PSI recruiters visited the District's high schools in a single event open to all students. Hanson said the deliberate act of reconciliation that SD83 is doing with these institutions in having this specific event for Indigenous youth is critical.

"There are a lot of barriers in Indigenous communities. Going from any community to a bigger city is hard for anyone let alone the challenges Indigenous youth generally face," said Hanson. "So, facilitating more of their needs in more of a one-on-one approach will make them more comfortable considering a higher education option."

SOAKING IN CAREERS AT SPARKLING HILL

It may not have been spa-tacular, but SD83 students got wound up about careers in a destination resort famous for people checking in to wind down.

Nearly 30 Grade 10-12 students from all District secondary schools visited Sparkling Hills Wellness Resort located south of Vernon for a full-day field trip. This was a trades-focused trip. SD83 Careers wanted to demonstrate to students that working in the trades does not equate every time with working in dirt, mud, and facing other elements. Students had a choice of spending part of the afternoon either shadowing the culinary arts, electrical, or plumbing/piping trades.

Some students had a chance to ask Sparkling Hill's two Executive Chefs questions about their work, the challenges they face, and the journey they have taken on their way to becoming red seal and executive chefs. Students also had a chance to do some hands-on activities like making some Kaiserschmarren, an Austrian pancake dessert. They also had their chance at scraping a fish carcass for excess protein which will be used in other food by the restaurant later. Plumbing and electrical students learned more about the behind-the-scenes maintenance of the spa, its geothermal heating system and the intricate piping system needed to operate the three pools and various spa amenities.

Students also had a chance to learn more about the resort itself. General Manager Bozidar Gujic says Sparkling Hill employs over 300 staff year-round with the vast majority of them being full-time. Over one-quarter of the staff stay in their staff accommodation, and they are planning on expanding their living quarters to allow for more staff to stay. The nearly quarter-million square foot complex is located on 172 acres, making it one of North America's largest spas. There are over 3.5 million Swarovski crystals throughout and on the building, all of them coming from central Europe. Gulic shared that anybody 16 years of age and over can apply and be considered for work at the facility.

Students also learned about a dual credit opportunity with SD83 to start their journey as a professional cook. The District, in partnership with Vancouver Community College, is offering a Level One course at Salmon Arm Secondary starting next February. Students interested in taking part can ask for an application form at their school's career centre.



Secondary Grade 12 students Tika Stephanishyn (left) and Danielle Monteith (right) scraping excess protein from a steelhead fish which will be used in the daily risotto (cheesy rice dish) served at one of Sparkling Hill's restaurants.



Grade 12 PVSS student Francine Josue is separating the egg white from the yolk while making Kaiserschmarren, a fluffy pancake dessert with apple sauce.



Sparkling Hill General Manager Bozidar Gujic talks to the nearly 30 SD83 student in attendance about its vision statement for the wellness resort.

STAY CONNECTED WITH CAREER NEWS

Exciting things are happening in our District, and we want you to be part of it! From upcoming events to inspiring success stories, our Career Programs news page is your go-to-source for the latest updates. Visit the [SD83 Career Programs News](https://career.sd83.bc.ca/news) page (career.sd83.bc.ca/news) for more information.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

We will strengthen existing and develop new strategic partnerships in gap areas.

STUDENTS HONOUR LEGION MEMBERS IN SONG



On November 13, 2025, Bastion School had the privilege of welcoming two gentlemen from the Legion as they returned to collect the poppy donations from the school. Each year, they kindly drop off the poppy boxes and return later to pick them up. This is a tradition deeply valued by the school.

As the Legion members approached the front doors, a group of students noticed them and, completely spontaneously, began singing "O Canada." The gentlemen stopped in their tracks, saluted the girls, and listened with visible emotion. When the bell rang, the students headed off to class, but the impact of that moment lingered.

When the Legion members entered the school, they shared with Principal Gobbett, that in all their years of service, they had never experienced anything like this. They were deeply moved and spoke about how meaningful this gesture was to them.

Moments like these remind us why we celebrate community, kindness, and respect. This was a simple act, but it left a lasting impression on everyone involved.

HONOURING REMEMBRANCE DAY ACROSS THE DISTRICT

Students and staff across SD83 honoured Remembrance Day through a variety of assemblies and activities in the schools and communities. Here are just a few of the events that took place.



At **Armstrong Elementary School**, the assembly featured special guests, including members of the Colour Guard, Mr. Shawn Coady from the Armstrong Legion, and Elder Gloria Morgan of the Splat sin First Nations Community. Leah Jacques' class shared a reading of *In Flanders Fields*.



Carlin Elementary Middle School hosted a moving and respectful assembly organized by Ms. DeGroot and the Leadership students.

In Sicamous, **Eagle River Secondary** students and staff gathered at the local cenotaph alongside members of Royal Canadian Legion #99. The ceremony was a collaborative effort led by Ms. Higginson's Band students, Ms. Mellin's Leadership students, and the Legion.



A.L. Fortune Secondary partnered with the Enderby Legion to co-host a Remembrance Day assembly, fostering a sense of community and shared remembrance.

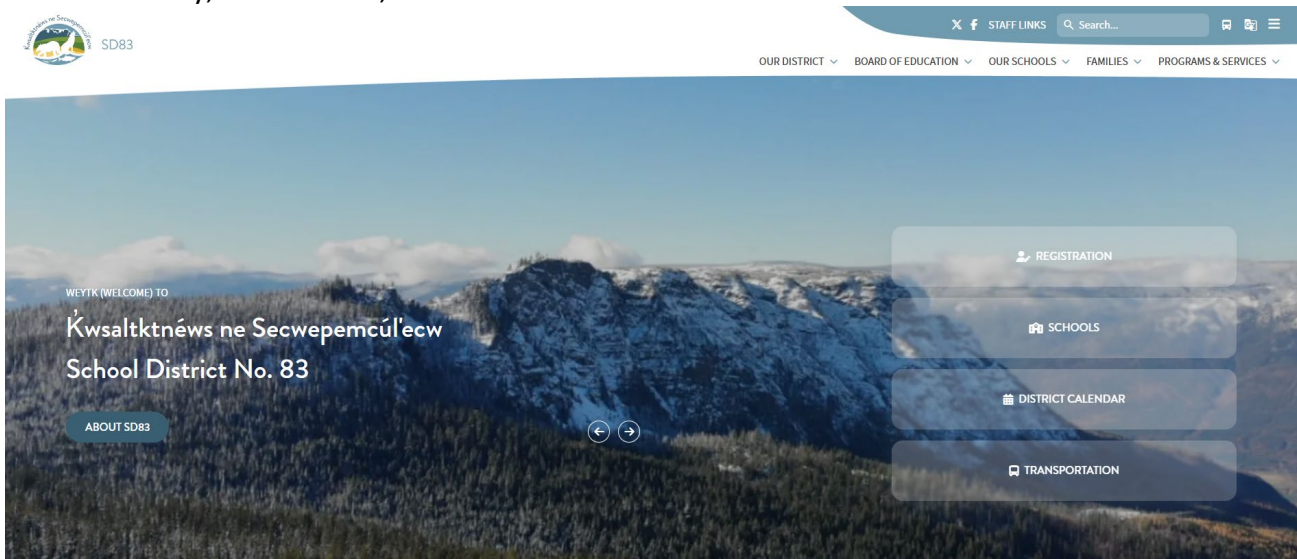
Across the District, these assemblies and ceremonies offered moments of reflection, reminding students and staff of the importance of honouring those who served. Through these shared experiences, SD83 continues to foster respect, remembrance, and a sense of community.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We will develop and enhance procedures and practices that will assist in meeting the Strategic Priorities.

WEBSITE UPDATE

In alignment with our Strategic Plan's commitment to enhancing communication and engagement, the District has prioritized improving digital accessibility and user experience. During our annual [Enhancing Student Learning Report](#) meeting with the Ministry of Education and Child Care, feedback was received indicating that our current website is not user-friendly. In response, the District has moved forward with a refresh of both school and district websites to better serve our students, families, and community stakeholders. The new sites went live on Monday, December 1, 2025.



SALMON ARM URBAN AND RURAL RECONFIGURATION

The District is continuing its multi-year reconfiguration planning and work in the Salmon Arm area, with a phased approach to shift schools to a K–7 elementary and 8–12 secondary configuration by 2027–28. This plan ensures a smooth transition for students, families, and staff while addressing catchment adjustments and grade configurations.

What's Changing?

Elementary Schools

- Currently K–5, Bastion, Hillcrest, North Canoe, Salmon Arm West, South Broadview, and Sorrento will expand to **K–6 in 2026–27** and **K–7 by 2027–28**.
- Currently K–8, Carlin, North Shuswap, Ranchero, Silver Creek, and South Canoe will transition to **K–7 by 2027–28**.
- Catchment adjustments will occur in 2027 to balance enrollment and accommodate the new grade structure.
- French Immersion programs will move to Shuswap Middle School during this transition, creating a single-track French Immersion K–7 school in 2027–28.

Secondary Schools

2025–26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> J.L. Jackson (JLJ): Grades 9–11 Salmon Arm Secondary (SAS): Grades 10–12 All Grade 9 students attend JLJ; all Grade 12 students attend SAS 	2026–27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both JLJ and SAS become Grade 9–12 schools. 	2027–28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both schools move to Grade 8–12 configuration.
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Catchment Highlights

- New secondary catchments are already in effect for Grades 10 and 11 as of fall 2025.
- Starting in fall 2026, students will attend their designated secondary school based on updated catchment boundaries.
- Elementary catchment changes will take effect in fall 2027.

Next Steps

- Regular meetings with secondary administrators continue to address resources, infrastructure needs, human resources planning, catchment and enrolment considerations, and preparations for 2026–27 course selection.
- A parent meeting was held at Bastion Elementary to discuss space challenges and human resource consideration. One option being considered is relocating Grade 5 French Immersion students to Shuswap Middle School earlier than originally planned. Further discussion on this matter will continue.
- Discussion with affected elementary school principals and vice principals will begin, soon, to address topics such as resources, furniture and equipment, facility spaces, and human resource considerations.
- Baragar Dynamics is developing additional [SchoolLocator](#) options to help families identify their catchment area when the new boundaries take effect. This will become available mid-January 2026.

Learn more and view maps:

- [Salmon Arm Feeder School Reconfiguration Information](#)
- [Reconfiguration Transition Plan](#)
- [New Catchment Maps](#)

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The Board of Education will work to represent the interests of all students by actively advocating for student learning and well-being through Strategic Planning Policy and responsible Stewardship.

SD83 BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

At its annual organizational meeting on Tuesday, November 4, 2025, the Board of Education re-elected Corryn Grayston as Chair of the Board. The board also elected Amanda Krebs as Vice Chair.

The Board extends its appreciation to outgoing Vice Chair Tennile Lachmuth for her leadership and service during the 2024-25 school year.



Chair Grayston (right) shared, *"I feel that it is a privilege to continue as Chair for the 2025–26 school year. As a Board, we remain committed to effective governance that reflects the voices of our communities and supports student success. I am proud to serve on a board that is grounded in the values of Belonging, Respect, Reconciliation, Empathy, Equity, and Perseverance."*

Vice Chair Krebs (left) added, *"I'm proud to serve on a Board which values working together with Rightsholders, stakeholders, and partner groups to create learning environments where students are able to thrive."*

Additional elections held resulted in the following representation:

British Columbia School Trustees Association Provincial Councillor - Chair Grayston

British Columbia School Trustees Association Provincial Councillor (alternate) - Trustee Lachmuth

British Columbia Public School Employers' Association - Chair Grayston

British Columbia Public School Employers' Association (alternate) - Trustee VanBuskirk

FROM THE BOARD

The [*From The Board Report*](#) is available in the News section on our website (www.sd83.bc.ca). In this Report you will find highlights from the most recent Regular Board meeting held on Tuesday, November 18, 2025.

