



# Enhancing Student Learning Report September 2024

In Review of Year 3 of Dim luu-ts'ipkw hli gawisit 2021–2025



Approved by Board of Education - September 24, 2024

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## Section A: Reflecting Back - 2023-24 Student Learning Outcomes

### Introduction: District Context

Nisga'a Nation, a proud, sovereign treaty nation, firmly believes in the power of education as a holistic journey, engaging body, heart, mind, and spirit. After a century of persistent efforts, a strong desire to preserve culture and identity, and resilience driven by the Nisga'a people's will, an education system was created to reflect Nisga'a culture, beliefs and values. In 1974, the establishment of the Nisga'a School District was a pivotal moment in the Nisga'a people's journey towards educational self-governance. Each of the four Nisga'a Villages – Gingolx, Laxgalts'ap, Gitwinksihlkw, and Gitlaxt'aamiḱs house a K – 7 school, with one being a K – 12. Each serving a predominantly indigenous student population, with 99.8% of the 402 students (with 33 designations among them) identifying as indigenous. This unique demographic allows the district to tailor its educational programs and cultural initiatives to improved meet the needs and heritage of its students.

Here, we strive to create educational experiences that are distinctly Nisga'a, focusing on the development of the whole child and grounding students in their personal and cultural identity, fostering a supportive and enriching environment that not only equips students with essential academic skills but also nurtures their emotional and cultural well-being, which aligns with one of the goals found in the strategic plan.



The second goal is to ensure that learning is responsive to the needs of each learner, which includes supporting inclusive learning to ensure children have the essential learning skills that are necessary to provide them with a range of opportunities for their future and for a journey of lifelong learning.

Our story is a tribute to our past and a beacon to the future, challenging us to continually improve for our learners. We believe in the reciprocity of teaching and learning, in that; teaching and learning are symmetrical, reciprocal endeavours that are closely tied to language, culture, and place. A clear, strong, collective vision, created by Nisga'a leaders, guides our learning journey. We recognize that each one of us is responsible for the education of Nisga'a students – family, child, teacher, district staff, local governments. Families are a child's first and most important teachers, and partnership between home and school is important for students to realize their educational goals and is vital in realizing a child's educational aspirations. Together, we move forward in unity.





While there are endless possibilities for rich learning connected to place and Nisga'a culture, our district has struggled with recruitment and retention of staff. We have faced critical shortages of qualified teaching and support staff for many years, and this impacts student and family engagement and student achievement. This is a reality that we confront daily.

In addition to significant staff turnover, our district has faced inconsistency in school and district administration, a lack of adequate programming and explicit instruction, and ongoing intergenerational trauma from the genocide and harms of colonization, including the abuses inflicted at residential and day school, and the entrenched colonial practices that persist in our local, provincial, and global understanding of what a school system ought to be.

We recognize the significant impact that educators have on students' well-being, learning, academic success, and positive school engagement. In addition, having healthy connections with adults is critical to our children's wellness. When our adults are engaged, caring, and invested learners along with our students, we see more joyful learning experiences and learning environments. We are focused on enhancing our staff's collective skills and efficacy, while also seeking methods to attract new team members and retain their commitment to our district. Nisga'a School District has the potential to maintain and provide new exemplary, unique, and sought-after learning experiences for all children.

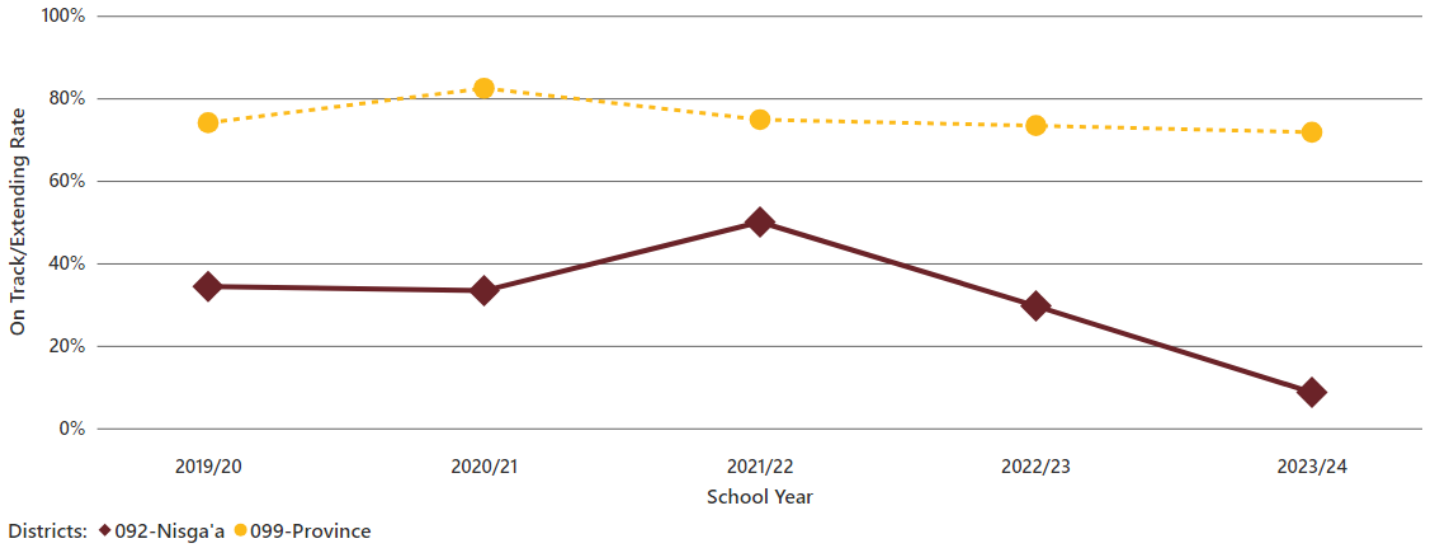
**Dim daxgat nuum.**

# Intellectual Development

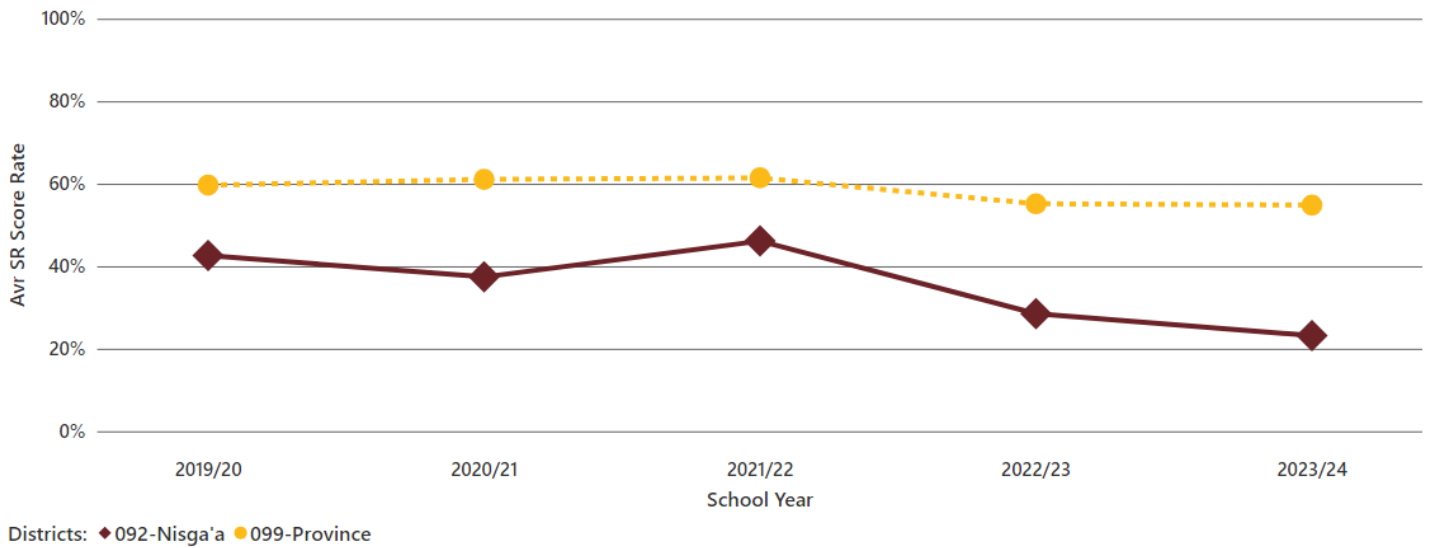
## Educational Outcome 1: Literacy

Measure 1.1: Grade 4 & Grade 7 Literacy Expectations

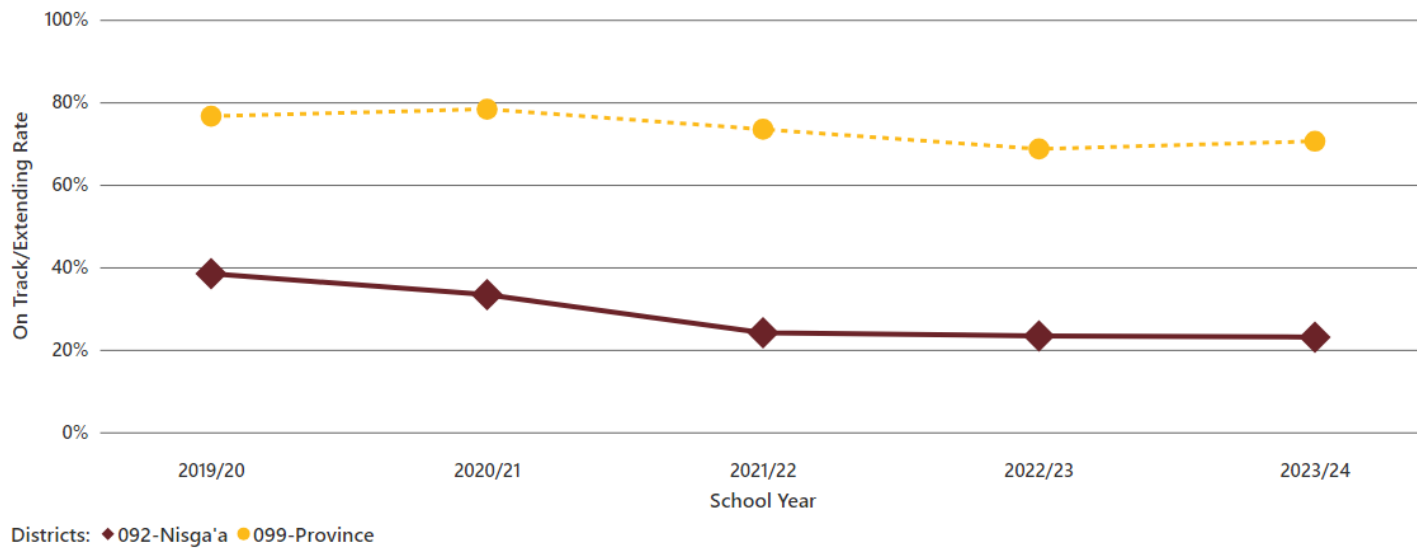
### All Grade 04 Students - Literacy



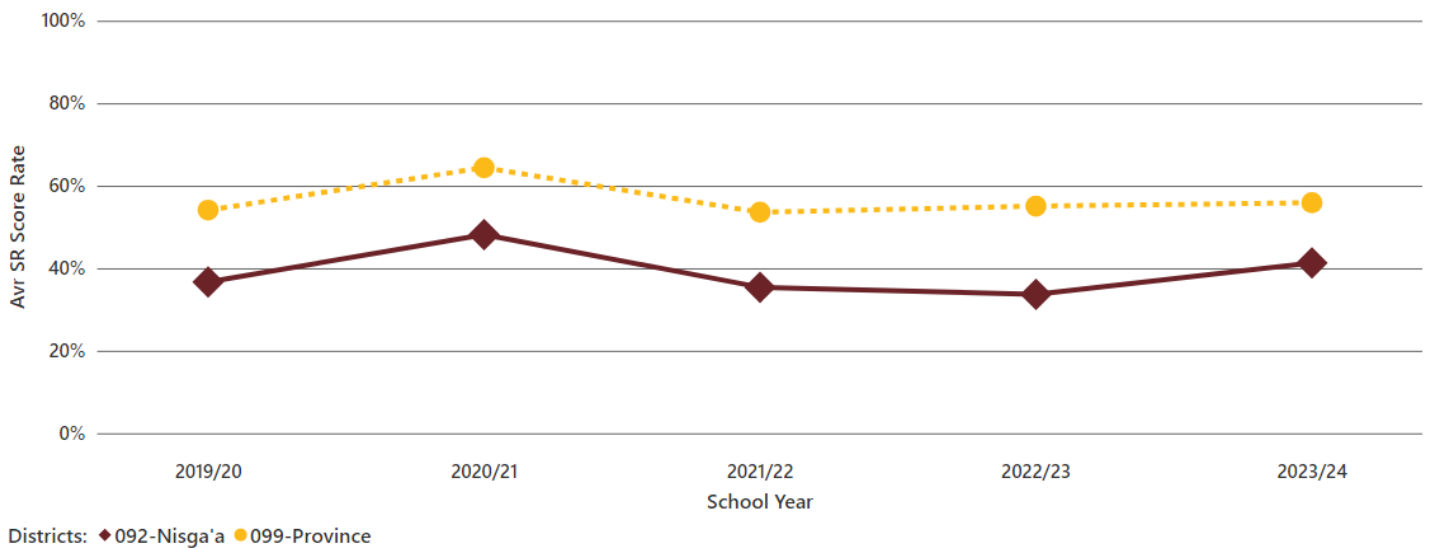
### All Grade 04 Students – Literacy (Selected Response)



## All Grade 07 Students - Literacy



## All Grade 07 Students - Literacy (Selected Response)



**FSA 2020/21:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the FSA 2020/21 was administered in February 2021 instead of October 2020. It is not advisable to directly compare the results of this year's administration to other years.

**FSA 2021/22:** Participation rates for the FSA 2021/22 FSA continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially effecting results

## Analysis and Interpretation

### Outcome 1: Literacy

The high percentage of learners at emerging proficiency levels in grade four and seven is concerning, the results have either decreased or plateaued after an expected dip in proficiency post-2021, likely due to pandemic-related disruptions. The significant increase in 2023-24 of 90.9% of grade four learners at emerging proficiency is particularly concerning. For grade seven learners, progress has plateaued, with around 75% of learners being at emerging and approximately 25% being on-track in literacy and reading. The data reveals that there are no grade four or seven learners identified as having extended proficiency in literacy & reading. There is no data available to analyze for writing proficiency at grade four and seven for 2022-2023.



It is important to highlight some of the barriers and challenges that both prevent up-take in testing as well as student performance on testing. Areas that cause a significant impact are things such as attendance gaps, engagement issues, and staff turnover and are exacerbated by systemic factors like intergenerational trauma, residential school legacy, and a school system still rooted in transmissive pedagogy. Many standardized tests and instruments are still culturally biased. Norm-referenced testing of children who are culturally distinct from the euro-western learners for whom these tests are created for can call into question the relevancy of the results, which is why qualitative and locally developed testing that is culturally accessible for learners, should



take priority over standardized tests<sup>1</sup>. All these factors compound the complexities learners face in this district.

Despite what the FSA testing data shows, when looking at the progress of a school who is using Joyful Literacy framework, and then look at specific classrooms where gains are being made, we should be learning from the literacy gains that the learners are showing. Research supports the effectiveness of consistent scanning, progress tracking, and skill-building in literacy instruction<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, culturally responsive teaching, which respects students' personal and cultural identities, has been shown to improve academic achievement<sup>3</sup>. By emulating the approaches of successful teachers and support staff, other schools can potentially replicate the gains made in language learning.

As highlighted in last year's report, we have noticed a correlation between those learners who attend regularly and the acquisition of reading skills. Addressing engagement and ensuring that the design of learning is relevant to the learners, and they are tracking and excited about their success and growth, it is possible that learners grow their desire to be at school, growing and learning to overcome their challenges as we build on their successes.

The subset data related to Indigenous learners, make up 99% of the learners in our results and it isn't valuable to disaggregate the data as they make up essentially all learners in the district. It's important to note that there are either a statistically insignificant number of prioritized learners which include children and youth in care, and students with disabilities or diverse abilities, therefore analyzing the small sample size will not produce a trend that is representative of a sample size that produces relevant analysis. Consequently, identifying the inequities of learning outcomes for these subgroups due to lower numbers of expected writers or low numbers of those targeted learners. This limitation has been considered when interpreting the unmasked data sets.

To improve how we support these underrepresented groups, it's essential to encourage their participation in assessments and explore alternative methods to collect and analyze data, ensuring their unique challenges and needs are addressed in the educational context.

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<sup>1</sup> Laing, S. P., & Kamhi, A. (2003). Alternative Assessment of Language and Literacy in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 34(1), 44-55.

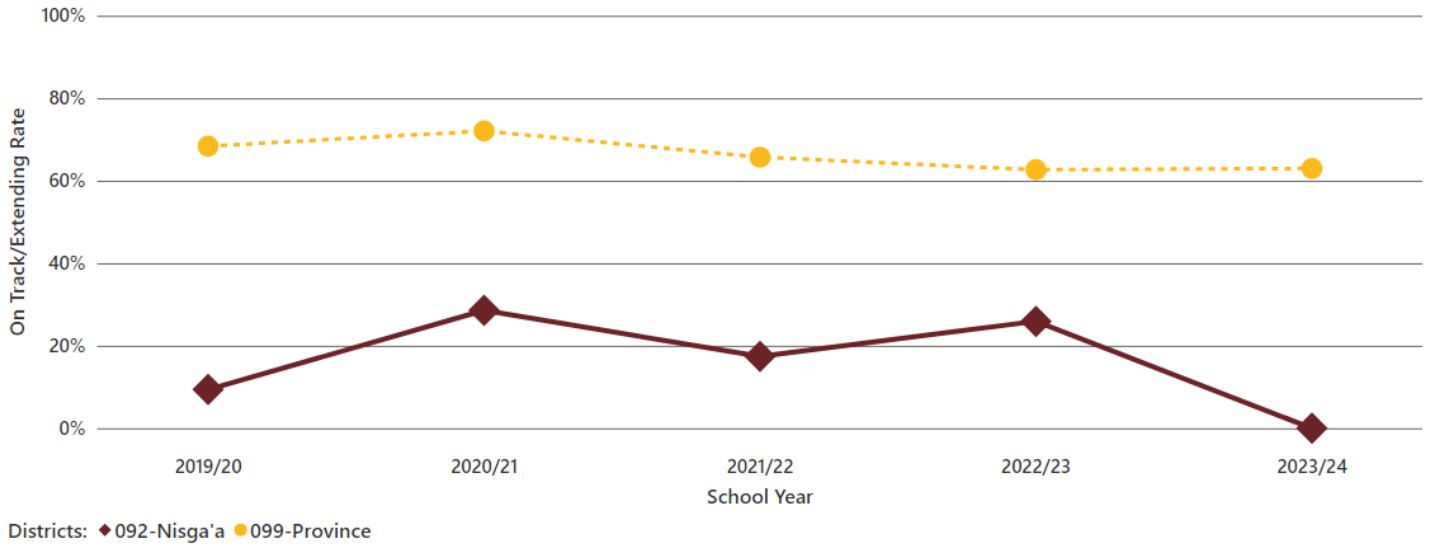
<sup>2</sup> Taylor, B. M., Pearson, P. D., Clark, V. L., & Walpole, S. (2005). Reading growth: Measurement, learning, and teaching to scale in Missouri. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97(3), 574–586. (2) Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.

<sup>3</sup> Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165. (2) Bishop, R. S. (2014). *Freeing ourselves to learn: An indigenous perspective on cognitive liberty*. Syracuse University Press.

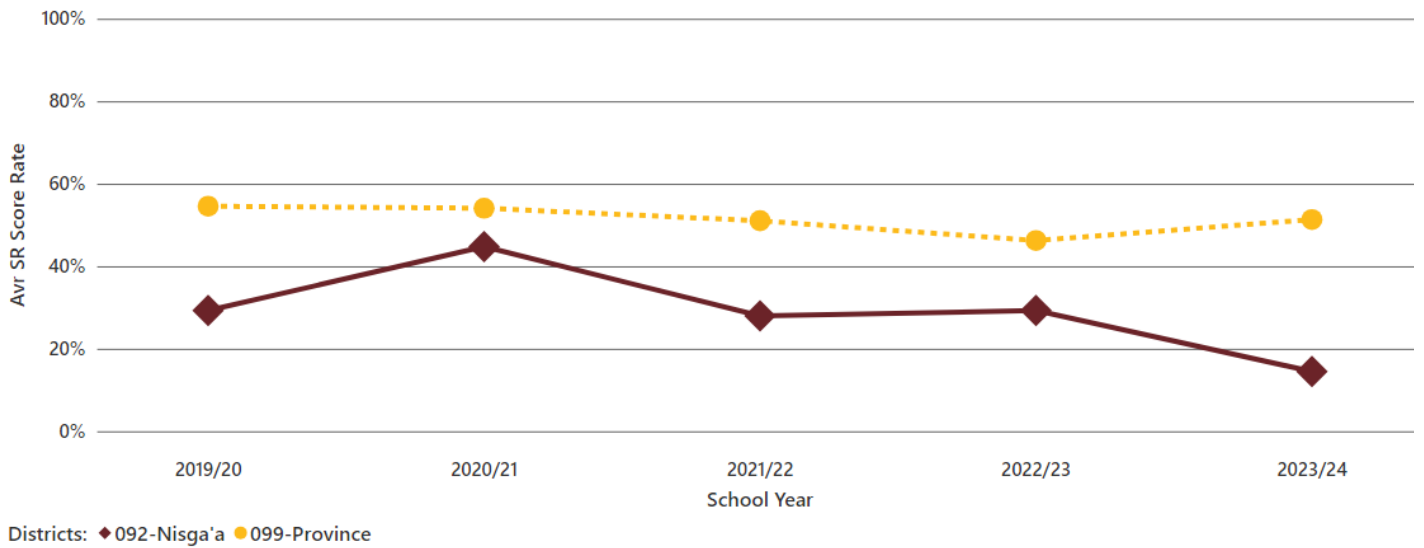
## Educational Outcome 2: Numeracy

Measure 2.1: Grade 4 & Grade 7 Numeracy Expectations

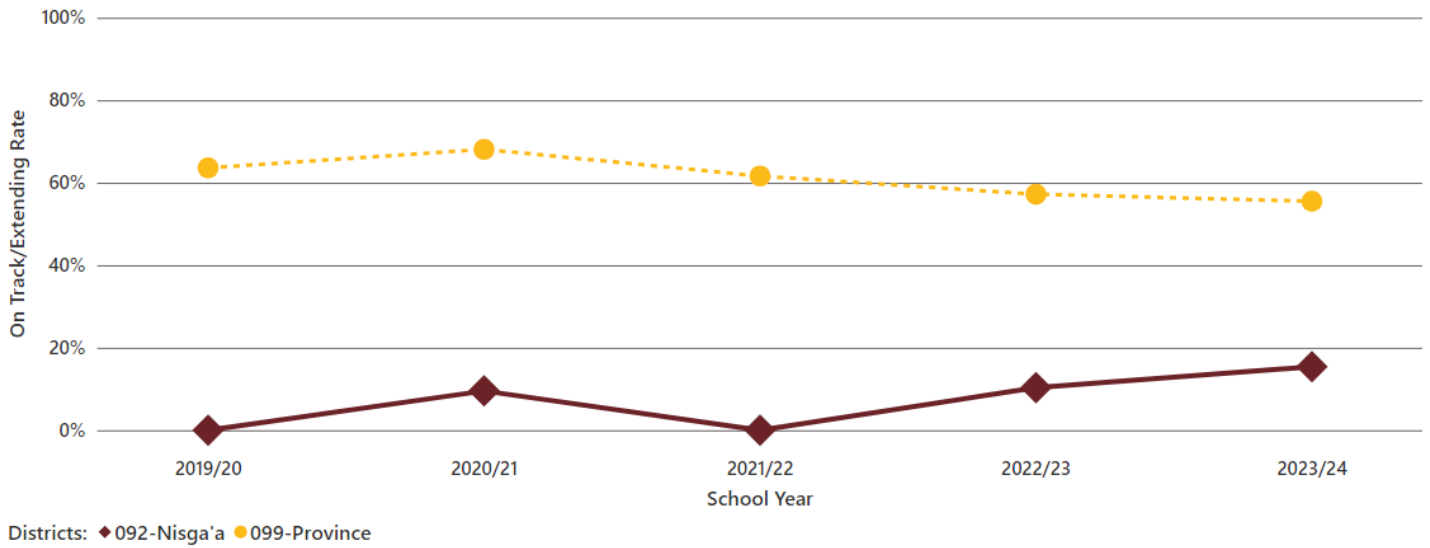
### All Grade 04 Students – Numeracy



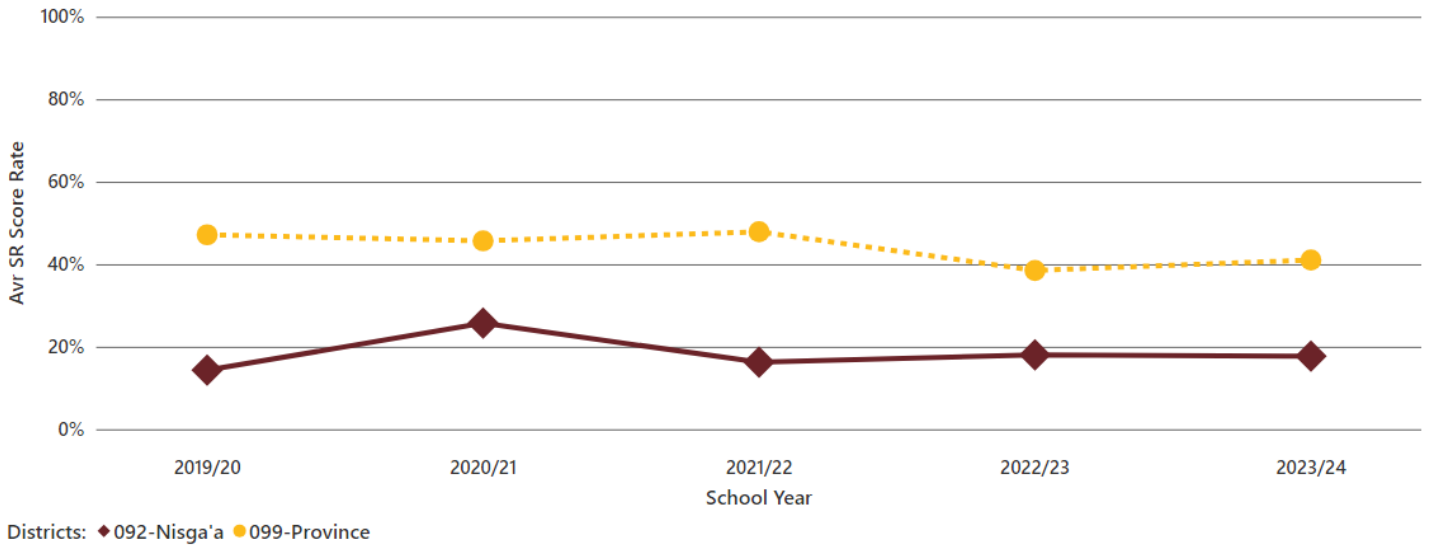
### All Grade 04 Students – Numeracy (Selected Response)



All Grade 07 Students – Numeracy



All Grade 07 Students – Numeracy (Selected Response)



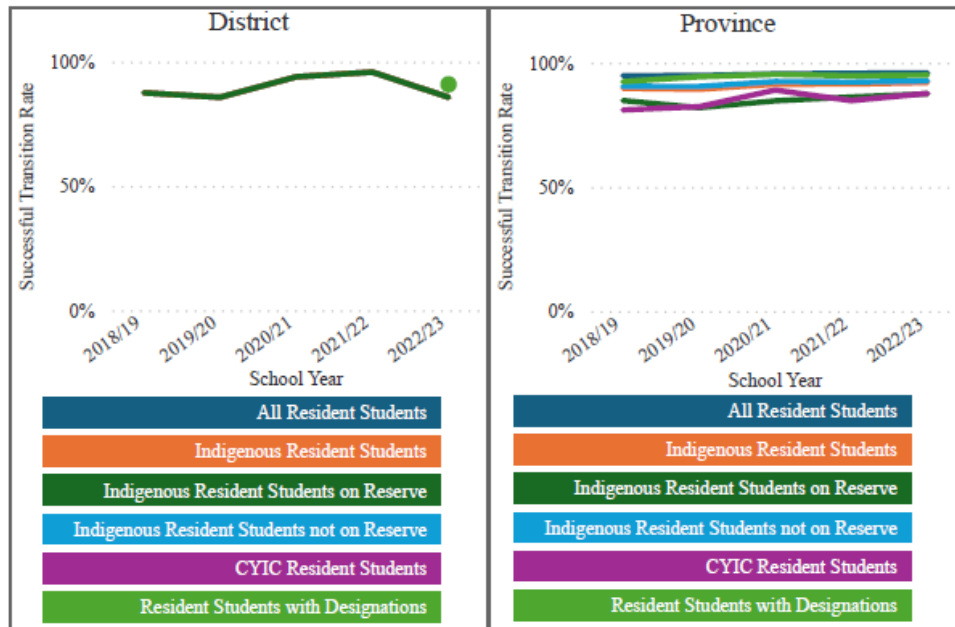
**FSA 2020/21:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the FSA 2020/21 was administered in February 2021 instead of October 2020. It is not advisable to directly compare the results of this year's administration to other years.

**FSA 2021/22:** Participation rates for the FSA 2021/22 FSA continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially effecting results

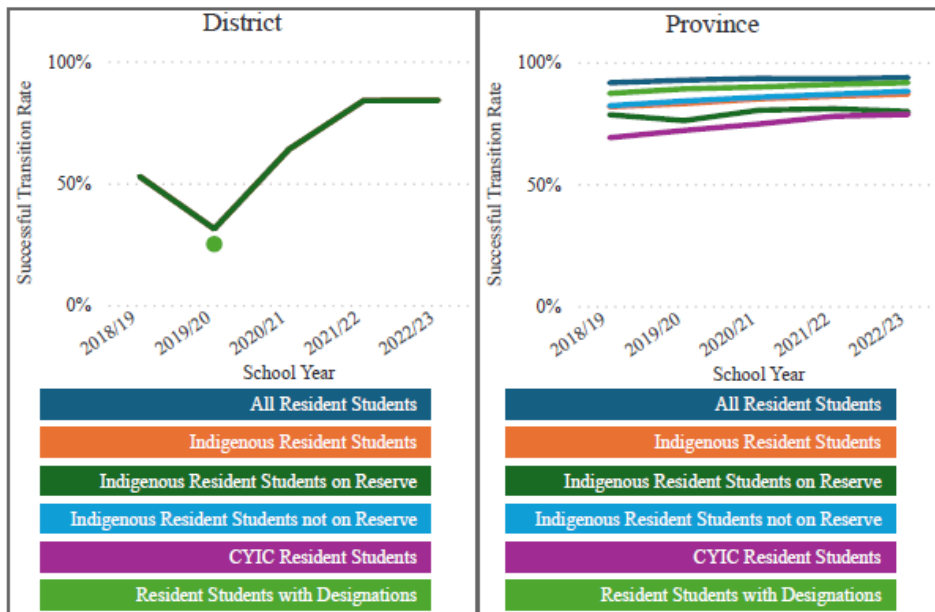
Measure 2.3: Grade-to-Grade Transitions

The Grade-to-Grade Transition (G2G) presents percentage of students who enter a grade for the first time from a lower grade and make the transition to a higher grade in the next school year.

**Grade 10 to 11 Transition Rate**



**Grade 11 to 12 Transition Rate**



## Analysis and Interpretation

### Outcome 2: Numeracy

The numeracy data and evidence tell a story of the district's historical struggle in supporting students' achievement in mathematics, we are not seeing large gains in learners who are at on-track or extending in their proficiency. While there has been an upward trend at the Grades 4 and 7 level, we see a consistency in the results across the province, especially in the lack of progress that is shared by on-reserve students across the province. In response to the consistently low performance, the district is taking steps to enhance the confidence and capacity of math educators, recognizing that traditional teaching methods are no longer sufficient.

The enhanced approach to numeracy learning will be explored in the coming year, situating number sense in critical thinking and problem solving, braided with land-based and place-based learning. Making sense of the world through mathematical thinking that is intertwined with Nisga'a memory, history and story, and a relationship to Land/Place may be an approach that will result in curious learners who engage in numerical thinking and problem solving when it relates to who they are as Nisga'a learners. By moving away, the traditional methods of math instruction to culturally responsive pedagogical approaches and culturally relevant resources, the district can significantly improve students' mathematics achievement and build a strong foundation for future success.



Our grade 10 students' progress in fulfilling their graduation requirements has been consistently lagging, resulting in delayed high school completion. This trend predates the COVID-19 pandemic, which further impacted student attendance and engagement, leading to increased absences compared to the provincial average.

The consistent progression of students from grade to grade until grade twelve, coupled with lower-than-average graduation rates, can be traced back to the fact that many grade 10 students fail to meet their graduation requirements in their designated year. Research indicates that factors such as attendance, engagement, and attitudes towards reading and math play a significant role in students' academic success.

Similarly to the analysis of literacy data and examining the challenges in the lack of progress in numeracy, the significance of the challenges that come with high staff turnover, inconsistent school and district administration, inadequate programming, and explicit instruction, further contribute to these difficulties. The ongoing intergenerational trauma from the genocide and harms of colonization, including residential and day school abuses and entrenched colonial practices within the schooling system, also impact students' academic performance.

In response, the district is considering flexible approaches to meeting graduation requirements, such as Board Authorized Courses, independent study, dual credit through Coast Mountain College, work experience, and partnering with North Island Distance Education to provide diverse learning opportunities and experiences for students.

*Like the literacy data, a subgroup analysis of disaggregated data for Children and Youth in Care (CYIC) and Students with Disabilities or Diverse Abilities was not conducted, as there are no data sets available, or the number of learners of that population of learners is statistically insignificant due to low numbers of participants.*



## Intellectual Development Summary

Based on the literacy and numeracy data and evidence, a few stories emerge about the district's approaches to supporting teaching and learning:

**Ongoing Pandemic Impacts:** The decrease in proficiency levels post-2021 suggests that the shift to remote learning during the pandemic has negatively affected foundational literacy and numeracy acquisition for all grade levels of learners.

**Cultural Responsiveness:** The data highlights the need for a culturally responsive pedagogical approach that respects the personal and cultural identities of Indigenous learners, as this has been shown to improve academic achievement <sup>4</sup>.

**Addressing Attendance and Engagement:** The challenges of learner gaps in attendance and engagement require targeted strategies to ensure that Indigenous learners are consistently participating in literacy instruction and tracking their progress.

**Systemic Factors:** The intergenerational trauma, legacy of residential schools, genocide, and colonization, combined with a transmissive pedagogical approach, indicate the need for systemic changes to create a more supportive learning environment for Indigenous learners.

**Inclusive Data Analysis:** The limited sample size of other prioritized learners emphasizes the importance of encouraging their participation in assessments and developing inclusive data analysis methods to address their unique challenges and needs.

### Overall Trends and Learnings – Literacy:

- A high percentage of learners in grades four and seven are at emerging proficiency levels, which is a concern.
- There's been a decrease or plateau in literacy proficiency since 2021, likely due to pandemic disruptions.
- The significant increase in grade four learners at emerging proficiency in 2023-24 is notable.
- Grade seven learners' progress has plateaued, with no learners showing extended proficiency.
- There's no data available for writing proficiency in grades four and seven for 2022-2023.
- The data for Indigenous learners, who make up almost all learners in the district, doesn't show significant variation.
- The small sample size of prioritized learners doesn't allow for representative analysis or identification of inequities.

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<sup>4</sup> Gay, G. (2010). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice. Teachers College Press.

### **New & Existing Areas for Growth - Literacy:**

1. Implement strategies to improve literacy skills, especially at emerging proficiency levels.
2. Address the impact of pandemic-related disruptions on learning.
3. Monitor and analyze writing proficiency data when available.
4. Develop specific strategies for Indigenous learners, as they make up much of the student population
5. Explore ways to increase representation and data collection for prioritized learners.
6. Consider interventions to support learners at emerging proficiency levels and prevent plateaus in progress.
7. Advocate for resources and policies that address the needs of all learners, particularly those who have been historically underserved.

### **Overall Trends and Learnings – Numeracy:**

- Shift from Procedures to Concepts: The curriculum now prioritizes critical and creative thinking, emphasizing mathematical concepts over rote procedures.
- Building Number Sense: The importance of number sense in students' mathematical development is highlighted, understanding that an over-reliance on math fact memorization being counterproductive<sup>5</sup>
- Number sense development should be supported by culturally responsive Land/Place based learning which situates the learner in making sense of the world, through a sacred responsibility to their ancestral Lands.
- Daily Number Sense Routines: To foster number sense, the district is working towards implementing thoughtful, daily number sense routines.

### **New & Existing Areas for Growth - Numeracy:**

1. Encourage a conceptual understanding of mathematics, moving away from a procedural focus.
2. Develop number sense through engaging, daily activities.
3. Reduce the emphasis on memorization and test scores, instead promoting a love for learning and exploration in mathematics through experiential learning in land/place.
4. By exploring culturally responsive methods of numeracy learning that is rooted in land/place and experiential learning designs, the district can significantly improve students' achievement and build a strong foundation for future success.

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<sup>5</sup> Boaler, J. (2009). What's Math Got To Do With It?: How Teachers and Parents Can Transform Mathematics Learning and Inspire Success. Penguin.

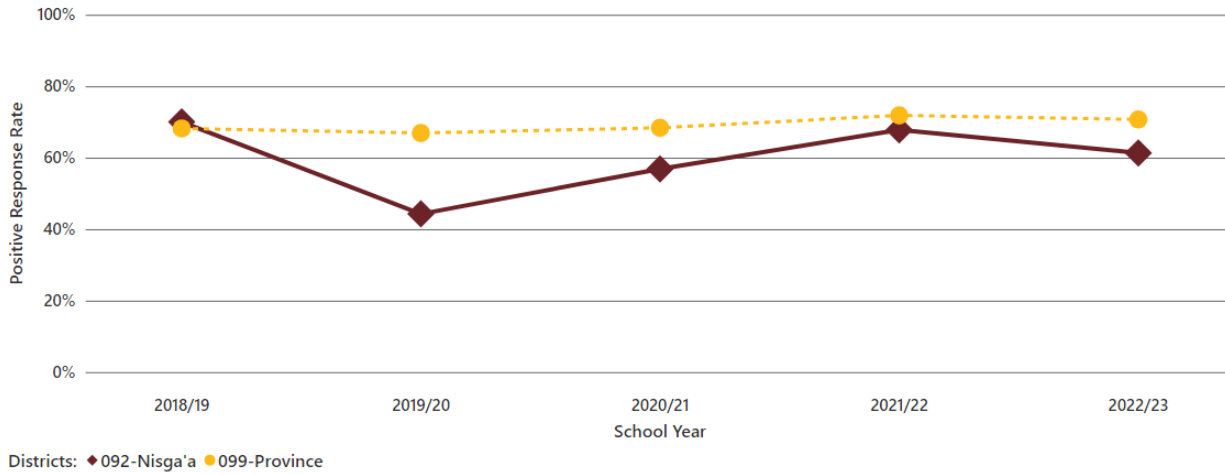


# Human and Social Development

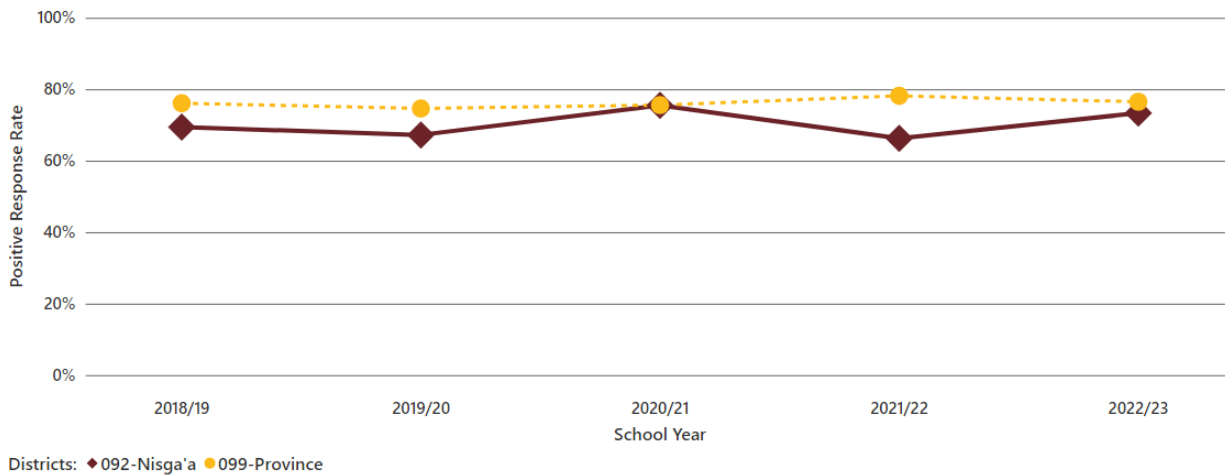
## Educational Outcome 3: Feel Welcome, Safe, and Connected

Measure 3.1: Students Feel Welcome and Safe, and Have a Sense of Belonging at School

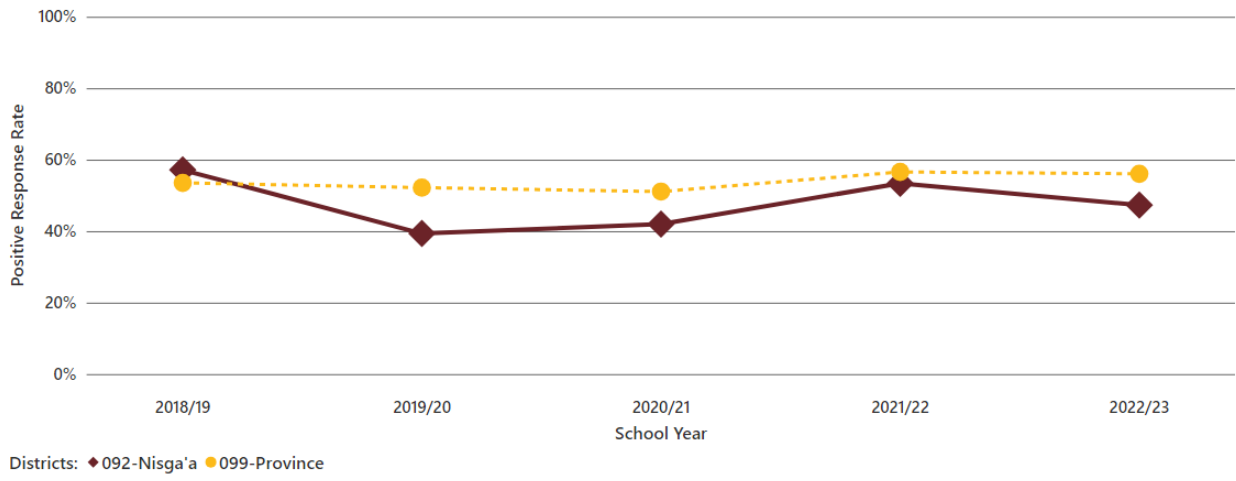
### All Grade 4, 7, 10 Students – Feel Welcome



### All Grade 4, 7, 10 Students – Feel Safe

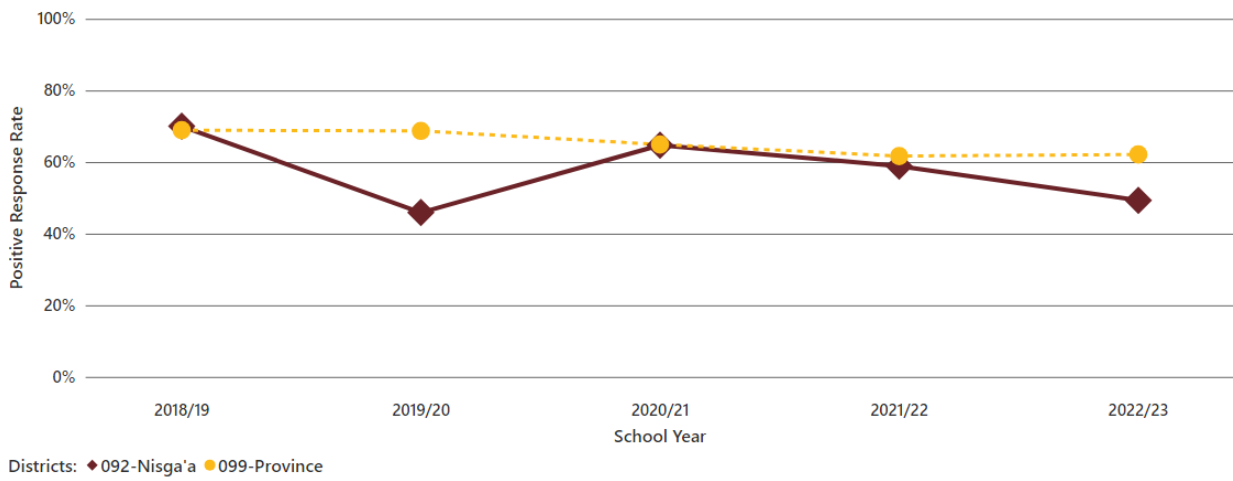


### All Grade 4, 7, 10 Students – Sense of Belonging



### Measure 3.2: Students Feel that Adults Care About Them at School

#### All Grade 4, 7, 10 Students – Feel That 2 or More Adults Care



## Analysis and Interpretation

### Outcome 3: Students Feel Welcome, Safe, and Connected

In Nisga'a school district, 61% of all learners feel welcome, compared to 71% province wide. 73% feel safe, versus 76% province wide. 47% feel a sense of belonging, versus 56% province wide. 49% feel adults care, versus 62% province wide. There is a persistent gap, except for learners feeling safe, which is close to the provincial percentage. Some of the year results follow the trend of the provincial progress. Learners feeling safe has increased since last year, feeling welcome has dropped, feeling a sense of belonging has dropped and feeling that adults care has dropped each year since 2020.

The data indicates a persistent gap in students feeling welcome, having a sense of belonging, and feeling that adults care, compared to the provincial averages. This highlights the need for the district to prioritize initiatives that enhance students' feelings of welcome, safety, connection, and support.

The decrease in feelings of welcome, belonging, and perceived adult care since 2020, coinciding with the pandemic, suggests a potential impact of remote learning and reduced in-person interaction. It's crucial to address these concerns to ensure students feel connected and supported in their learning environment.

The stories of human and social development data and evidence may reveal approaches to equity that require improvement. The gaps in feelings of welcome, belonging, and care suggest a need for more inclusive and equitable practices, focusing on building relationships and fostering a sense of community for all learners.

To address these challenges, the district should consider strategies that promote connection, such as mentorship programs, social-emotional learning initiatives, and professional development for staff on creating inclusive, supportive environments. Regularly monitoring and evaluating the impact of these initiatives will help ensure their effectiveness in enhancing students' feelings of welcome, safety, connection, and support.



## Relevant Additional/Local Data and Evidence

### EDI (Early Years Developmental Instrument)

Participation in the Early Years Development Instrument (EDI) gives another insight into what is going on for learners in kindergarten through the lens of the teacher. Two of our four schools' data is masked and therefore is not shared in this public report to ensure confidentiality and privacy for those schools whose learners can be identified by the small number of participants. At the district, we have looked at the data to understand what the top vulnerabilities that are presenting in our young learners. Two areas that emerge are vulnerabilities in language & cognitive skills and communication skills and general knowledge. Analyzing additional datasets such as the EDI allows for the measurement in trends and patterns in children's development at the population-level, not for individual screening or diagnosis, and can help with:

**Equity and Informed Decision-Making:** Participating in the Early Development Instrument (EDI) data collection allows the district to identify and address disparities in children's developmental vulnerability across different geographic areas. This information is crucial for making informed decisions about resource allocation and policy development, ensuring a more equitable start for all children.

**Long-term Impact:** By tracking children's physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development at kindergarten for over two decades, the district can identify long-term trends and patterns, enabling targeted interventions and support systems that can significantly impact their future academic success and overall well-being.

**Holistic Understanding of Child Development:** The EDI data collection provides a comprehensive understanding of the various factors influencing child development, from inherited biological and family factors to larger social, economic, and policy contexts. This holistic perspective is essential for creating effective strategies that address the unique needs of each child and community.

**Collective Responsibility:** Investing in early childhood development is a collective responsibility, as it significantly impacts Nisga'a communities and nation. By participating in the EDI data collection, the district demonstrates its commitment to providing the best possible start for all children, contributing to a more equitable, thriving communities throughout the Nisga'a valley in the long term.

**Research-based Insights:** HELP's decades of research reinforce the value of investing in early childhood development. Participating in the EDI data collection offers the district access to valuable, research-based insights that can guide decision-making and improve outcomes for all children.

## Human and Social Development Summary

### Overall Trends and Learnings – Human & Social Development:

- The analysis reveals a persistent gap in students feeling welcome, having a sense of belonging, and feeling that adults care, compared to the provincial averages.
- An increase in students feeling safe from the previous year is encouraging.
- The area that needs most attention is student perception of having 2 or more adults care for them has been decreasing since 2020. This may indicate the impacts of remote learning and reduced in-person interaction due to the pandemic, where students and adults are still rebuilding a sense of connection and belonging and ways of being together. Addressing these concerns is crucial to ensure students feel connected and supported.

### New & Existing Areas for Growth:

1. Address disparities in feelings of welcome, belonging, and care, particularly for learners in the Nisga'a school district.
2. Enhance students' experiences of safety, connection, and support in their learning environment.
3. Prioritize and nourish relationships with children and youth to foster a sense of community and cultural identity.
4. Ensure learners feel well cared for (not just how adults think they should provide care, but truly receiving feedback on whether learners are receiving that as care).
5. Evaluate and adjust current strategies based on student voice and feedback.
6. Implement new initiatives to address the area of growth and improvement in students' feeling welcome, sense of belonging, and care.

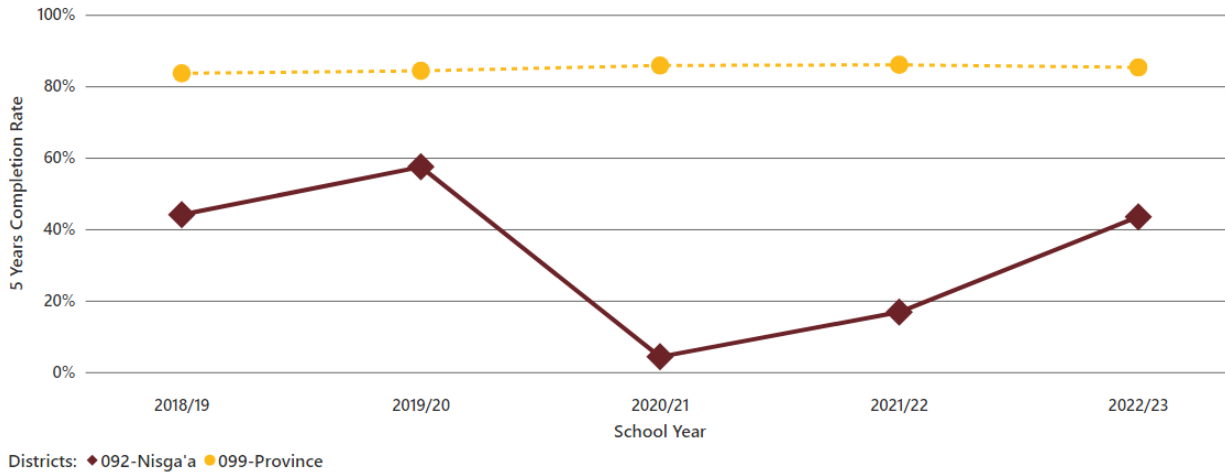


# Career Development

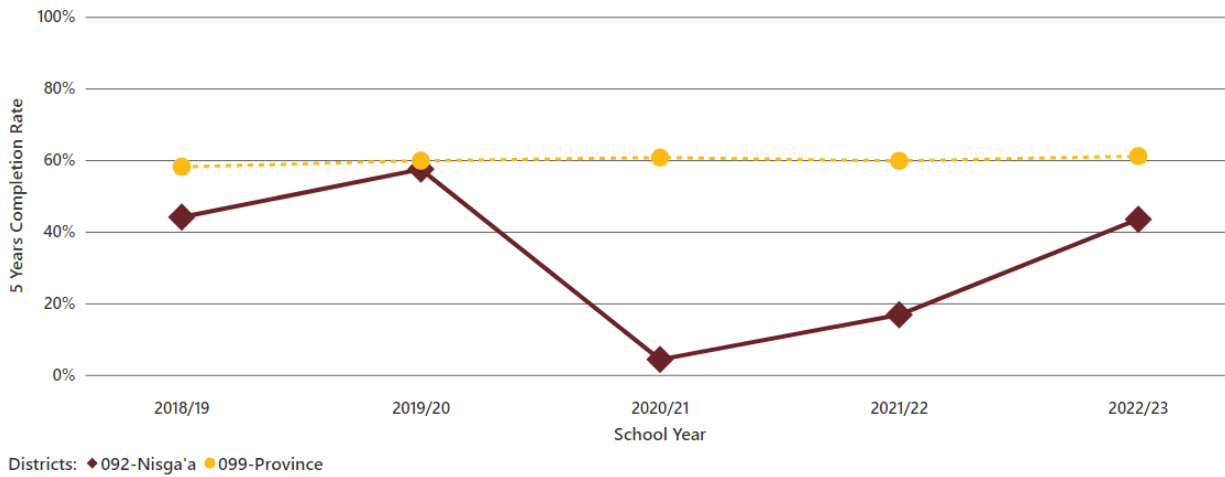
## Educational Outcome 4: Graduation

Measure 4.1: Achieved Dogwood within 5 years

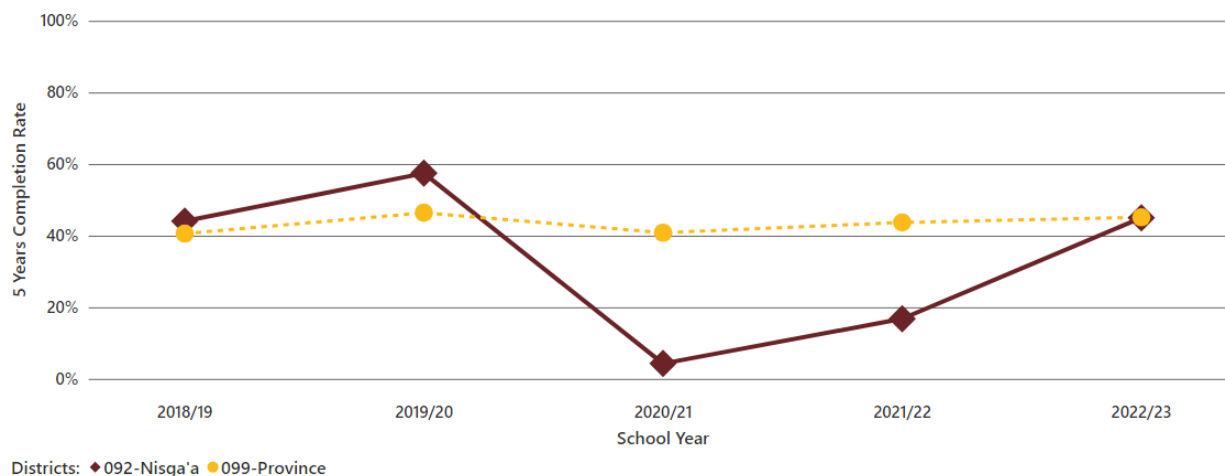
### ALL RESIDENT STUDENTS



### ALL INDIGENOUS STUDENTS



## INDIGENOUS STUDENTS ON RESERVE



### Analysis and Interpretation

#### Outcome 4: Graduation

The percentage of all resident students who graduated last year has been on the increase since 2020, where only 4% graduated. In 2022-23, 43% of learners graduated. In 2019-20 57% of learners graduated which dropped to 4% after the pandemic. There is a gap between the five-year completion rate at the provincial level for all students which is at 85%. Looking at graduation rates across the province related to Indigenous learners, it is encouraging to see that Nisga'a students are at par with Indigenous learners on reserve. We aspire to ongoing improvement in school completion through inspiring collective responsibility and systemic transformation by ensuring learners are receiving a quality education that is rooted in positive personal and cultural identity, along with learner agency, high-expectations and pedagogical expertise. When we use cycles of continuous improvement to orient and re-orient our efforts and ensure that resources, time and energy is focused on the interventions, programs, services, culturally responsive approaches that have impact on learner success, we will continue to increase the graduation rates to meet the target of being at par with all resident students in the province.

Graduation rates for learner's who have designations related to disability and diverse learning needs show a significant lower success rate in graduation. It has increased from the year previous, but it is important for the district to address this gap, to ensure that all efforts for support are having the intended impact.

These trends highlight the need for the district to continue its efforts in improving graduation rates, particularly for learners with disabilities and diverse learning needs. It also underscores the importance of focusing on systemic transformation, pedagogical expertise, and culturally responsive approaches. The promising Indigenous graduation rates suggest that targeted efforts can lead to positive outcomes. The district should maintain its commitment to quality education and continuous improvement.

## Career Development Summary

### Overall Trends and Learnings – Graduation:

- Graduation rates for resident students have been increasing since 2020, with 43% in 2022-23.
- There's a gap between the five-year completion rate at the provincial level (85%) and the district's rate.
- Nisga'a students are at par with Indigenous learners on reserve in terms of graduation rates.
- Learners with disabilities and diverse learning needs have lower graduation rates, but this is improving. (Data set – Masked and not shown in this report).
- The district should focus on systemic transformation, pedagogical expertise, and culturally responsive approaches to further improve graduation rates, especially for learners with disabilities and diverse learning needs.

### New and Existing Areas for Growth – Graduation:

1. Continue to enhance pedagogical expertise to improve teaching methods and learning outcomes.
2. Implement systemic transformation to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.
3. Increase focus on culturally responsive approaches to better cater to the needs of all learners.
4. Develop and implement targeted interventions and programs for learners with disabilities and diverse learning needs.
5. Use data from continuous improvement cycles to guide decision-making and resource allocation.
6. Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous communities to support the success of Indigenous learners.
7. Advocate for policies that promote equity and inclusion in education.
8. Encourage learner agency to empower students to take ownership of their learning.

The district is committed to systemic transformation and high expectations, aiming to inspire collective responsibility and learner agency.





## Section B: Moving Forward

### Planning and Adjusting for Continuous Improvement

#### Current Strategic Plan Priorities

Nisga'a Vision for Education - [Download - SD 92 Strategic Plan \(nisgaab.ca\)](https://www.nisgaab.ca/download/SD92StrategicPlan)

**Hlaxwhl hli ganwilaak'ilshl Nisga'a, gan wilhl daxgat wil dip hooxhl Sayt-K'ilim-Goot, Yuuhlimk'askw, Ayuukhl Nisga'a ganhl Hawahlkws; nihl haniihitkwhl Nisga'a tgun ahl ts'im-ganwilaak'ls, ganwilxo'oskw ganhl kwhlixoosa'anskw sit'aatkwsit wil sgathl hlgutk'ihlkw.**

Nisga'a Education is a way to learn and live the principles of life which entails Sayt-K'ilim Goot, Nisga'a Ayuuk and the Yuuhlimk'askw system. Living Sayt-K'ilim-Goot creates a secure foundation that respects a balance between Nisga'a language and wisdom rooted in the land, and the languages and wisdom of other peoples. Education is a way to learn and live Nisga'a Ayuuk. The Yuuhlimk'askw system guides how to live. Nisga'a Education begins at birth.

Motion to accept: Verna Williams (Ts'aagabin) Seconded by: Alice Azak (K'iigapks) Question: Herb Morven (K'eexkw) Adopted at Fluent Speakers meeting – June 23, 2010

#### LIP WILA LOOM

Well-being and identity are the roots that nurture each person's ability to take care of themselves, each other, and this place. Our aim is to nourish the body, heart, spirit, and mind of each member of our school district community – children and adults – preparing them to be confident, capable leaders and learners who thrive as individuals and who contribute to the well-being of the Nisga'a Nation as a whole.

*Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).*



## GANWILAAK'ILS

We support each student in developing their unique gifts on their educational journey. The BC curriculum focuses on students' ability to KNOW, DO, and UNDERSTAND; additionally, we want students to BE and BECOME who they hope to be. We want students to develop and have confidence in their strengths and gifts and understand the responsibility of sharing those gifts with others for the benefit of the community.

*Learning involves patience and time.*

With recent shifts in district leadership, we're developing, in collaboration with the district team, an improved and data-driven system for year-round cycles of improvement. This analysis will highlight effective programs and services, identifying those requiring additional resources. It will also reveal gaps, challenges, and areas for improvement, enabling us to prioritize interventions and shared responsibilities.

The Nisga'a school district's size necessitates a distributed leadership model, promoting shared responsibilities across departments. This year, we've increased our intentional approach in creating the Enhancing Student Learning Report from a district and board-focused task to one that includes school administration. This shift encourages discussions on initiatives, successes, challenges, and strategic plan goals, inviting school leadership to align their school improvement plans accordingly.



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

The Nisga'a School District's approach to land-based learning is deeply rooted in Indigenous values and practices. This educational process emphasizes respect, reciprocity, and responsibility as core principles. By integrating these values, the program aims to foster a strong sense of identity and connection to the land among students.

Land-based learning in this context is not just about outdoor education; it's about understanding the land as a living relative and a source of knowledge. This approach helps students develop a reciprocal relationship with the environment, recognizing their responsibilities to care for and respect it. With the guidance of the elder-in-residence and other community members and organizations, we celebrate an increase of evidence of practice and lessons centered around land-based learning on Nisga'a lands.

We are actively working on recruitment and retention strategies to attract and keep talented educators. To entice new teachers, we are collaborating with the University of British Columbia (UBC) to bring in visiting teachers and educators. These visits provide valuable insights and fresh perspectives, enhancing the educational experience for both students and staff. Currently we have been successful in hiring Community Field Experience (CFE) practicum teacher candidates from UBC for several teaching positions.

The Nisga'a School District has seen a notable increase in graduation rates since 2021, closing the gap and bringing them closer to the rates of other Indigenous students on reserves. This positive trend highlights the district's commitment to improving educational outcomes and supporting student success.

The implementation of the Joyful Literacy Framework is continuing to show progress, leading to increased focus in learning spaces, particularly in primary grades. We are utilizing the Joyful Literacy Framework by incorporating circle charts as a part of their regular assessment and informing practice tool, that represent 25 sets of essential literacy skills to track student progress daily. Providing Joyful Literacy coaching throughout the year has empowered teachers, enhanced their instructional practices, and positively impacted student outcomes.

The Nisga'a School District is actively working on several initiatives to build capacity and enhance professional learning among educators. Some key areas of focus are:

**Land-Based Learning:** This approach integrates cultural practices and language learning, fostering a deep connection to the land and community values.

**Ethnomathematics:** This teaching philosophy combines mathematics with cultural knowledge, making math more relevant and engaging for students by linking it to their lived experiences.

**Compassionate Systems:** The district is engaging in professional learning around compassionate systems, which involves understanding and caring for oneself, others, and the larger systems of society and ecology. This year we celebrate another completion of the Master Practitioner Program. These programs aim to develop leaders who can support and enable compassionate systems change through various tools and practices. By focusing on these areas, the Nisga'a School District is creating a holistic educational environment that respects and incorporates Indigenous knowledge and practices.

## Existing and/or Emerging Areas for Growth

Emerging areas for growth expanding student engagement and learner agency, attendance strategy and focusing on literacy and math interventions and increasing learner outcomes. Additional resources in areas like mental health support, innovative learning programs, and culturally responsive teaching pedagogy are also being supported.

Developing a plan and process for monitoring the ongoing effectiveness of literacy and numeracy interventions and enhanced programs and approaches will need to be refined in the coming year. This will include the implementation of a data dashboard (EdPlan Insight) which will provide on-demand data to track student progress that can be reviewed on the fly throughout the school year to be responsive to individual, classroom and school need.

- We will create a strategy around increasing staff recruitment and retention.
- Strengthening the integration of technology in learning.
- Deepen and nourish relationships with parents and caregivers as partners in learning, will also be prioritized.
- Continue its focus on implementing targeted interventions in literacy and numeracy.
- Nourishing partnerships with community organizations with the possibility of developing and collaborating on new partner programs and services that serve learners across the Nisga'a valley.



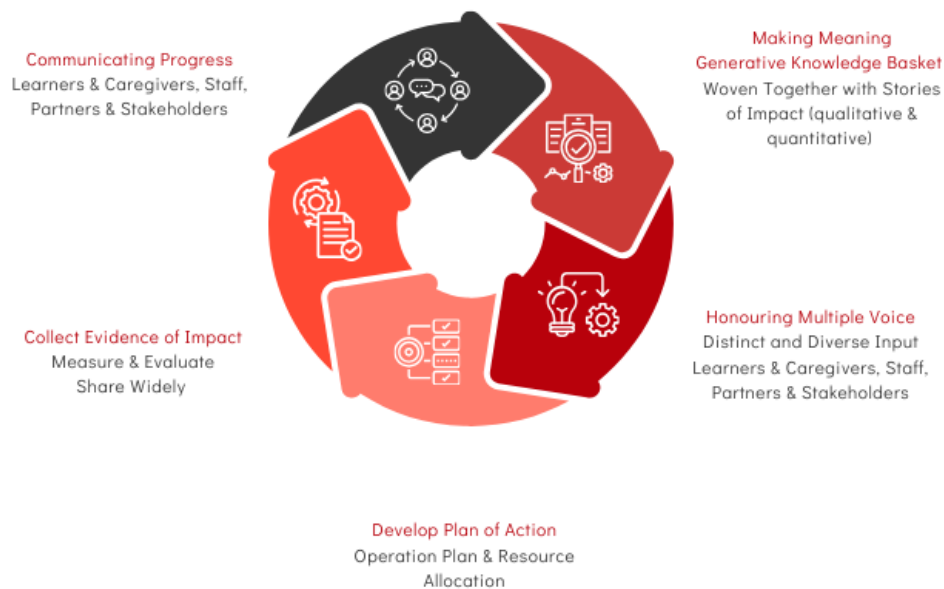
## Ongoing Strategic Engagement (Qualitative Data)

The following graphic represents a transformative approach that integrates indigenous knowledge and practices into the continuous improvement processes within educational systems. This cycle emphasizes collaboration among educators, students, families, and community members, valuing the wisdom and traditions of indigenous cultures. It involves several key stages: co-creating goals that reflect the goals and priorities as outlined in the strategic plan and the cultural values that influence ways of being and doing together; collecting and analyzing data through methods that respect indigenous ways of knowing; and engaging in reflective practices that honor community input and foster mutual learning. By embedding these principles, the cycle not only aims to enhance educational outcomes but also to cultivate a sense of belonging and respect for cultural diversity within the school district. This inclusive approach ensures that the voices and experiences of Nisga'a communities are integral to shaping the educational landscape.



Nisga'a School District

### Continuous Improvement - A Collective Canoe Journey for Collective Responsibility and Sustained Action



The Nisga'a School District strives to create greater collaborative networks and partnerships with various partners to enhance partnerships, shared learning opportunities that results in improving systems, processes, structures, programs and services for Nisga'a School District students.

**Language and Culture Directorate:** This department focuses on preserving and promoting the Nisga'a language and culture, ensuring that these vital aspects are integrated into the educational curriculum.

**Nisga'a Lisims Government (NLG):** NLG works closely with the Nisga'a School District to support educational programs and initiatives that align with the community's cultural values and governance structures.

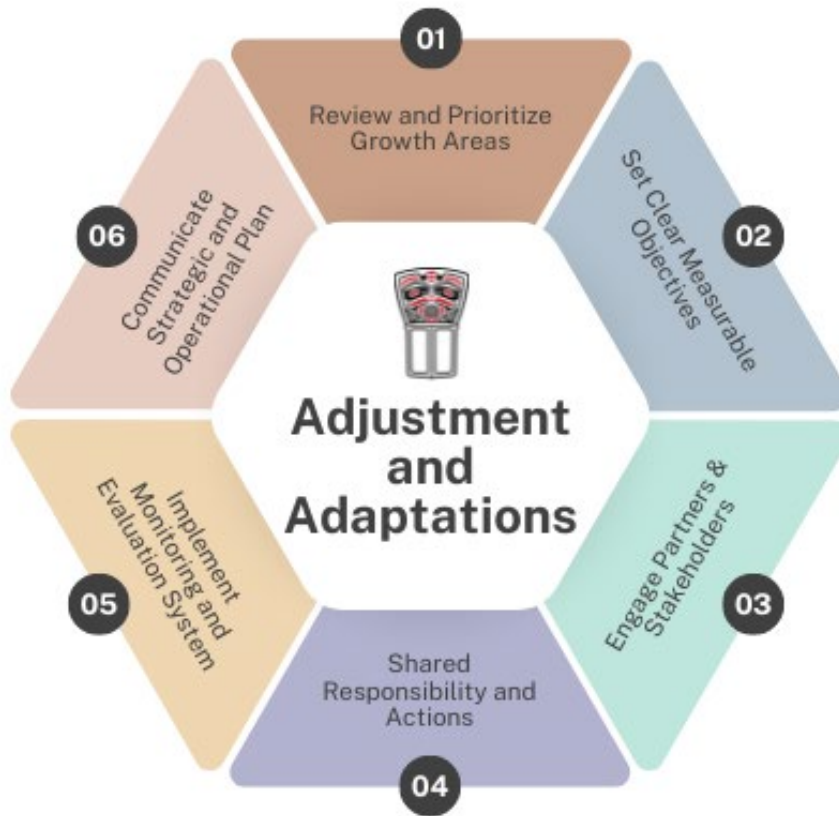
**Nisga'a Child and Family Services:** This organization provides support to families and children, ensuring that their needs are met in a culturally sensitive manner.

**Nisga'a Valley Health Authority (NVHA):** The NVHA collaborates with the Nisga'a School District to promote health and wellness among students, integrating traditional practices with modern healthcare.

**Nisga'a Village Governments:** These local Nisga'a governments play a crucial role in supporting educational initiatives and ensuring that they reflect the needs and values of the community.



## Adjustment and Adaptations: Next Steps



### 1. Review and Prioritize Growth Areas

- In our upcoming school year, we will be making a more intentional use of data to pinpoint the most urgent areas for development, such as academic disparities, student engagement, or specific programs (e.g., literacy, numeracy).
- The evidence will reveal what we need to prioritize based on immediate impact, resource availability, and alignment with district and school goals.

### 2. Set Clear, Measurable Objectives

- Increase literacy rates by 8% by the end of the school year.
- Improve teacher and staff professional learning offerings by offering ongoing learning circles throughout

the school year. Solicit feedback from participants to track implementation of new strategies in classroom which connect to learner growth.

### **3. Engage Partners & Stakeholders**

- Bring together partners & stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community stakeholders, to gather feedback and support for the identified priorities.
- Focus on building, maintaining and nourishing relationships with Indigenous communities, caregivers and partner organizations to drive collective responsibility, and ensure plans and efforts are sustainable.

### **4. Shared Responsibility and Actions**

- Deploying targeted literacy interventions (October consultant working with each school for one week to scan and suggest improvements for literacy learning.
- Increased student counseling services including the hiring of a 50% district counselor.
- Upgrading learning technology (Sept-Dec).
- Building partnerships with local industries for career-focused learning programs, including Applied Skills and Technology, the hiring of a teacher at Nisga'a Elementary and Secondary School has seen the woodshop that hasn't been open in 10 years, now with a revitalized experiential program for learners.

### **5. Implement Monitoring and Evaluation Systems**

- Developing and designing a system to track progress toward the goals, using metrics and regular evaluations to ensure effectiveness. This is done monthly at district leadership meetings and will be reported monthly in the Superintendent's report to the board.

### **6. Communicate the Strategic & Operational Plan**

- Share the district's vision and the strategic plan with the widely, with learners and staff, across the district (administrators, district staff, trustees), with political bodies, partner agencies and organizations, Use clear, transparent communication channels (e.g., community circles, newsletters, social media, partner table updates).
- Deeper collaboration between students, parents, and staff, co-constructing goals and inspiring collective responsibility in new and ongoing learning initiatives and programs.



## Prepare for Adjustments



### *1. Alignment of Plans for Inclusion of Rightsholders and Equity*

- Engagement with Indigenous Communities: Moving forward, we see a benefit by maintaining and enhancing ongoing communication with the soon to be established Indigenous Education Council, as well as its four village communities. A communication strategy is being developed to share progress, gather feedback, and ensure that stakeholders, partners, and caregivers feel acknowledged and heard. This will help ensure that the education of learners in the Nisga'a School District, along with the enhanced programs and services that are funded through targeted funds, meet their needs.
- Integration of Equity into District Priorities: Nisga'a School District is exploring the purchase, integration and training for a data dashboard that provides real-time access to data, so that evidence is used to track progress in student outcomes and adjusts strategies to address gaps all learners including those with prioritized needs.

### *2. Yearly Operations Plan Review and Revision*

- Annual Reflection Process: In collaboration with multiple district leaders, we will create operational planning

cycles, subject to board review and approval, driving the budgeting of programs and services for continuous improvement.

- **Continuous Improvement Cycle:** We will be implementing a process for regular reflection and refinement, ensuring alignment between district-wide priorities and individual school strategies. Progress of enhanced programs, services, and new initiatives will be shared at district, board, and Indigenous Education Council meetings, as well as through social media, community gatherings, and school newsletters.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** A monitoring system tracks progress on key goals, reporting on the district leadership's work plan in bi-monthly meetings. Regular check-ins and awareness of individual and collective actions ensure improved outcomes for Indigenous students, students in care, and students with diverse abilities. Progress reports will be shared regularly with the board, school staff, and community stakeholders through our developing communications strategy.

### ***3. Building and Aligning District Operational Plans for Strategic Adjustments***

- **Data-Driven Planning:** We will gather and analyze data from school assessments, community input, and student performance to identify specific needs at both district and school levels, focusing on historically underserved learners.
- **Collaborative Decision-Making:** We will engage school leaders, community stakeholders, and district staff in decision-making processes. The superintendent will incorporate these insights into actionable strategies in a yearly operational plan, aligning district-wide goals with school-specific challenges and opportunities.
- **Clear Communication Channels:** We will maintain open communication between district leadership and schools, ensuring alignment on strategic priorities. Regular feedback loops will address emerging challenges and enable necessary adjustments.

### ***4. Adapting District Operational Plans to Support Implementation of New Strategies***

- **Incorporating New Initiatives:** Operational plans will integrate changes like culturally responsive teaching practices, land-based learning, and enhanced professional development for staff.
- **Targeted Resource Allocation:** We will align resources, such as staffing, professional development, and teaching materials, with new strategies. This may involve reallocating funds to areas requiring growth, like literacy, numeracy, and student well-being.
- **Ongoing Monitoring and Assessment:** We will implement continuous tracking mechanisms for progress toward our goals, enabling mid-year adjustments. This includes setting clear performance targets and scheduling regular check-ins with school leadership to evaluate the impact of implemented strategies.

### ***5. Re-aligning School Plans to Reflect Adaptations and Adjustments***

- **Integration of Strategic Priorities:** We will be fine-tuning school improvement plans to ensure alignment with district-wide strategic priorities. Each school will outline how it intends to implement these priorities in its local

context, including specific actions and timelines.

- **School Leadership Engagement:** Ensure that school leaders provide input and reach consensus around the district’s strategic adjustment plan and provide them with the resources and support needed to implement these plans. This will include professional learning around new strategies, such as culturally responsive teaching or intervention programs for students with learning gaps (such as a “later-to-literacy” approach).
- **Strategic Coherence:** The district will ensure that all school plans are aligned with district-wide strategic goals. This will be achieved through regular meetings between school leadership and district staff to discuss how school-level initiatives align with broader district strategies.
- **Ongoing Review Process:** We are co-constructing a review process and evaluate the impact of school planning and actions that align the strategic plan. Schools will be required to demonstrate how their specific actions contribute to overarching goals, such as improving literacy, numeracy, and Indigenous student outcomes. Based on these reviews, schools will refine their strategies and adjust their goals as needed to align with district priorities.
- **Cross-School Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration between schools to share best practices and successful strategies. This will ensure that high-impact programs are replicated district-wide, creating consistent improvement across all schools. We will be sharing these in an appreciative inquiry, during regular school administrator meetings.

#### ***6. Re-allocation of Resources for Strategic Adaptations***

- **Priority-Based Funding:** The district will allocate funding based on identified areas of need, such as literacy, numeracy, and professional development. Schools demonstrating high needs or significant gaps in achievement will receive additional funding and resources to implement targeted interventions.
- **Focus on Equity:** Resources will be focused on schools or programs that serve Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and other prioritized groups. For instance, funding may be allocated for mentorship programs, land-based learning, or staff dedicated to supporting diverse learners.
- **Partnerships and External Support:** The district will seek partnerships with external organizations to enhance capacity and partnership possibilities. This may include securing additional funding (grants) or shared resources for programs like land-based learning or mentorship for Indigenous students. Where possible, the district will pursue external grants and partnerships that align with strategic priorities, helping to augment district resources and ensure sustainable improvements in student outcomes when shared resources and efforts align with external partners priorities and goals.

## Conclusion

The Nisga'a School District has made progress and continues its efforts to achieve the goals identified in the strategic plan. In conclusion a short overview of the year's achievements, progress, challenges and next steps remind us to build on our successes while keeping an eye on improving outcomes for all learners.

### Achievements:

- **Graduation Rates:** Graduation rates have been increasing since 2020-2021, with graduation rates at par with Indigenous learners on reserve. This improvement reflects the district's commitment to supporting student success through culturally responsive education and holistic approaches.
- **Literacy Growth:** The continued implementation of the Joyful Literacy Framework has shown positive impacts on student outcomes, particularly in primary grades in schools that are consistently providing targeted instruction, using ongoing scanning of skill mastery for each learner.
- **Land-Based and Culturally Responsive Learning:** The district's land-based learning programs emphasize respect, reciprocity, and connection to Nisga'a lands and culture while deepening students' cultural identity and engagement with lifelong learning. We are enhancing this program, with the efforts from our Indigenous Enhancement team and Inclusive Education team.

### Progress:

- **Staff Recruitment and Retention:** This year a priority has been to attract and retain qualified teaching staff. We have ensured that the UBC Community Field Experience cohort of teacher candidate's three-week experience placements could potentially lead to attracting applicants for teaching positions. Over the past two years we have been successful in hiring four of those teachers.
- **Staff Development & Support:** There has been an emphasis on providing support and ongoing learning for all staff. Investing in their ongoing learning to meet the needs of learners is a high priority. How we provide those opportunities in partnership with the local unions is something we will look to enhance in the coming year.

### Challenges:

- **Literacy and Numeracy:** Both literacy and numeracy outcomes show a need for improvement, with high numbers of students still at emerging proficiency levels. Systemic issues such as attendance gaps, engagement challenges, and the lasting impacts of intergenerational trauma continue to affect student performance.
- **Student Engagement and Well-being:** A gap persists in students feeling welcome, safe, and connected. These gaps are most noticeable in students' sense of belonging and the perception that adults care about them.
- **Staffing and Retention:** The district will continue to face challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff, if recruitment and retention initiatives and resources dedicated to attracting and keeping a consistent staffing, will continue to impact the quality and consistency of learning programs.

## Next Steps:

- **Addressing Gaps in Literacy and Numeracy:** Continue developing and refining literacy and numeracy interventions, focusing on culturally responsive approaches to ensure students' academic improvement.
- **Culturally Responsive Teaching & Learning:** In the coming school year we have hired a District Helping Teacher in Nisga'a Language & Culture, to support teachers and learners to grow deeper capacities for delivering culturally respectful approaches that are rooted in Nisga'a language and culture.
- **Culturally Responsive Numeracy Interventions:** The district is shifting toward integrating culturally responsive methods in numeracy by connecting mathematical concepts with Nisga'a history and culture, making learning more relevant and engaging for students.
- **Attendance and Engagement:** Attendance rates are being closely monitored, with ongoing strategies in place to improve student engagement and regular attendance.
- **Supporting Student Well-being:** Efforts to strengthen connections between students and school staff will be expanded. Initiatives like mentorship programs and professional development for staff will focus on creating inclusive environments that foster a sense of connection and belonging for all.
- **Monitoring and Adapting Strategies:** A commitment to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of implemented strategies and adjust them as needed. The district plans to refine its processes for continuous improvement by utilizing data to drive decision-making. This includes co-constructing systems that will ensure targeted interventions in areas like literacy, numeracy, and student engagement.
- **Communication Strategy & Community Engagement:** Enhance collaboration with the four villages in the Nass Valley, to engage with the community, families and caregivers, to ensure education aligns with cultural values and meets the diverse and distinct needs of the learners.

