



Alberni District Secondary School Growth Plan 2023/2024



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Territorial Acknowledgment

Alberni District Secondary School is situated on the ha-houlthees of the c̓išaaʔaṭṭ and hupačasath First Nations and acknowledge that we work alongside all Nuu-chah-nulth nations as well as the Métis Nation of British Columbia to serve the children and youth of the Alberni-Clayoquot region.

We strive to increase awareness, understanding and integration of Nuu-chah-nulth culture, history and language in our school. It is part of our ongoing commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.



Our School Story

Located in central Port Alberni, Alberni District Secondary School (ADSS) serves secondary aged students in Port Alberni and neighbouring regions of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. Built as a replacement school (2013) the new ADSS on Roger Street is a spacious, open, light-infused school situated adjacent to North Island College, Alberni Valley Multiplex, Bob Dailey Stadium, Echo Centre Library, Museum and Recreation Centre, and numerous outdoor recreation facilities.

ADSS's two gymnasiums, all-weather playing field and modern 500-seat performing arts theatre provide homes to our vibrant Arts and Athletics programs while also serving as venues for various community organizations.

Over the past sixteen years, ADSS has transformed itself from a Grade 10-12 senior secondary school to its current Grade 8-12 configuration. This dual track secondary school offers comprehensive academic, arts, athletics and trades programs, including a wide range of dual-credit and advanced-entry post-secondary courses.

What are the important demographics of our school and community?

As the sole secondary school in the city of Port Alberni, the makeup of our school is very much reflective of the community we live in.

- We are home to 1250 students and 107 staff members.
- 32% of our students identify as indigenous.
- 18.6% of our students have a BC Ministry of Education 1701 Designation.
- We host a growing number of international students at our school. These students come to us from many areas of the globe and help diversify our classrooms while providing opportunities for our students to interact with students from many different cultures.
- While our school is centrally located, a significant number of students must travel significant distances to get to and from school each day. Over 30% of students come to school via school bus.
- As an industrial community that is in transition, the socio-economic circumstances of our student body are diverse. A significant number of our students and their families regularly deal with financial hardship.

Our School Goals

1. To increase the sense of connectedness and belonging in our school and to build a greater sense of community.

This goal is linked to multiple facets of the SD70 Strategic Plan, but is most closely tied to **Safe, Welcoming and Modern Learning Environments**. This goal is the core of many of our strategic initiatives and can rightly be considered our primary school goal. This goal comes from a belief that if students are to be successful academically, they must first have a school environment where they feel they belong and that they are a valued part of the school community.

2. To improve both the success rates and the level of success for Grade 8 and 9 students in Literacy and Numeracy

This school goal links directly to SD70 Strategic Plan emphasis on **Student Achievement** which specifically aims to maintain literacy and numeracy as top priorities. While the theme of achievement is familiar to school goals in most schools, our particular focus on Grade 8 and 9 is born out of a belief that efforts to increase success in early high school years will establish a strong basis for achievement at the senior level and increase levels of student retention.

3. To increase the number of graduating students who exit our school feeling prepared to enter the next stage of their life.

While not associated with a single specific element of the SD70 Strategic Plan, this goal is an extension of the **Student Achievement** goal to “Focus on transitions into school, from elementary to secondary and to graduation with dignity, purpose, and options.” We believe the transition out of the K-12 system is as important as the transition into the system. Our intent is to ensure that whatever the next step after high school is for students, it is one that they are well prepared to make.

Data/Evidence

Data is gathered from a number of resources. We rely specifically on our own school-based data, BC Ministry of Education Student Learning Surveys, school based surveys, the Middle Years Development Instrument(MDI), the Youth Development Instrument(YDI) and McCreary Foundation surveys. This formal data is also compared to anecdotal or street level data, such as the numbers of referrals to counselling and youth support services, attendance rates and withdrawal rates.

As relates to our school goals:

School Belonging and Connectedness: After several years of progress toward this goal, the 2019/20 school year saw a drop-off in a number of key indicators. Through the pandemic, we could clearly anticipate this downturn as students were forced to isolate and school activities and pro-social activities were curtailed. As we examine the 2022/23 data, the impact of the full return to normal activities in the school is evident with most indicators showing a return to levels that match or exceed provincial averages. Of note, the pandemic has left a clear mark in terms of student reported mental health challenges. This matches our anecdotal observations in the school. As we look at strategies moving forward through the 2023/24 school year, mental health supports will figure prominently.

[YDI – Mental Health – Grade 11](#)

[Belonging and Connection – Grades 10 & 12](#)

Success rates and the level of success for Grade 8 and 9 students in Literacy and Numeracy: Similar to the data for our school belonging indicators, academic success saw a significant drop during the pandemic and we have yet to recover from it. This result was expected as attendance and engagement were clear challenges for a high percentage of students and their families. As we move forward in the 2023/24 school year, our academic focus at the junior level is on skill recovery and engagement. We will look to employ a variety of strategies to bridge the academic gaps that have resulted from lack of participation over multiple years.

[Achievement Grade 8-9](#)

Increase the number of graduating students who exit our school feeling prepared to enter the next stage of their life: This is a new goal for our school. This year we will be establishing baseline data using primarily school-based data. These will include a mid-year survey of Grade 12 students, enrollment totals for Dual-Credit post-secondary programs, enrollment totals for senior academic electives which are common prerequisites for post-secondary schools and data collected from the Grade 12 Provincial Student Learning Survey.

Our School Celebration Story

We chose to adopt our goal of connectedness and belonging during the 2015/16 school year. Over the course of two years we began a number of initiatives designed to build connections to our school. Previous data gathered from Satisfaction Surveys at the grade 10 and 12 levels showed a clear pattern of students having increased sense of connection to our school as they moved from Grade 10 to 12. Responses to questions such as 'I feel I belong at school' and 'I would like to attend a different school' showed positive differences of over 20% between those grade levels.

At that time, we were a grades 9-12 school. Our belief was that it was taking time to build a sense of belonging. Our focus became one of fostering connections to our school at an earlier age. This is where we began to focus in on the importance of transition to secondary school. Many of the initiatives that we embarked upon became tied to transition and building a sense of anticipation towards joining our school. To that effect, we reached out to elementary schools and began to establish a number of early connections to students that were in their final year of elementary school. These included visits to elementary classrooms and visits to our school. Over time, this has become a goal of at least 8 visits each year. These visits focus on providing information, answering questions, allaying fears and highlighting the many opportunities that await them at high school.

At the same time, we embarked on a mission of branding our school in a positive light. A new school logo and motto, 'We Are All One', began to adorn our school and was featured prominently in communications. Clothing featuring these physical reminders of belonging were made available and many Elementary School PACs began to purchase t-shirts for their 'graduating' students.

Multiple other initiatives such as increasing clubs and extra-curricular activities and increasing family engagement and were also put in place at this time and in the years that followed.

While the anecdotal evidence that these initiatives were having an impact was evident almost immediately, it is the hard data that clarified that we were on the right track. Two years into this process we began surveying Grade 8 students at the half-way point of their school year. The surveys were short and focused on belonging and wellbeing. Student responses in the first year of the survey showed positive scores of 93% and 97% on the questions 'I feel I belong at ADSS' and 'I feel welcome at ADSS'. More encouraging was our graduation related data as we followed this initial group of grade 8's through their years at ADSS. Our results in the 3 primary school completion data sets have been gradually increasing over the past decade, however there was a noticeable spike in these results that began with this cohort of students. Our overall 6-year graduation rate jumped from 75% to 83%, that same measure for indigenous students went from 58% to 71%. Finally our graduation rate for students with a 1701 Special Education designation went from 45% to 77%. These results held firm in the two following years so we know that the results were not an isolated improvement.

While there has been notable improvement through our engagement with this goal, the recent experience of the pandemic has seen a decrease in the reported sense of connection to the school and staff. Our belief in this goal has not wavered and our focus now is on expanding our efforts to rebuild connections to students and regain the progress lost during and after the pandemic.