



Alberni District Secondary School Growth Plan 2024/2025



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Vice Principals: Stephanie Prizeman, Heidi Homan and Carl Poole

Territorial Acknowledgment

Alberni District Secondary School is situated on the ha-houlthee of the c̓šaaʔaṭh and hupačasath Nations and acknowledges that we work alongside these Nuu-chah-nulth nations as well as the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, Uchucklesaht, Toquaht, Ahousaht, and Hesquiaht First Nations, the Métis Nation of British Columbia and the Alberni-Clayoquot Métis Society to serve the children and youth of the Alberni-Clayoquot region.

Our school, along with our School District, strives to increase awareness, understanding and integration of Nuu-chah-nulth and Métis culture, history, and language in all SD70 schools as 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 neighboring regions of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. Built as a replacement school (2013), the latest iteration of ADSS is located on Roger Street and 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 is well situated to take advantage of the opportunities these facilities offer.

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. Our student population makes good use of these facilities with approximately 20% involved in athletics and a further 25% involved in the performing arts

Over the past sixteen years, ADSS has transformed itself from a Grade 10-12 and then a Grade 9-12 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?

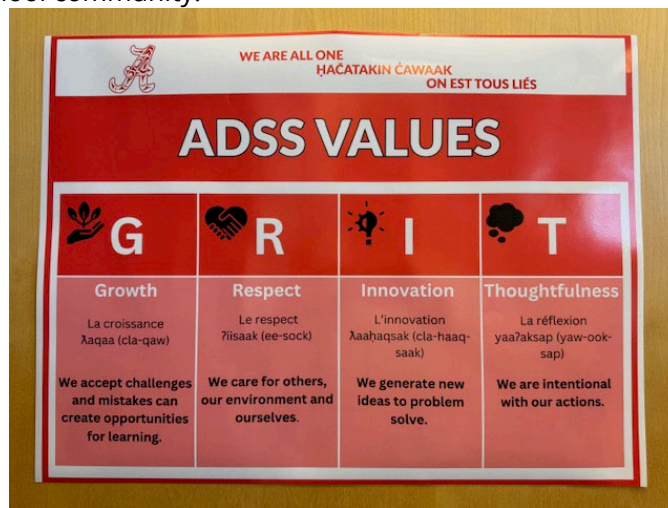
- As the sole secondary school in the city of Port Alberni, the makeup of our school is very much reflective of the community we live in.
- We are home to 1300 students and 107 staff members.
- 34% of our students identify as indigenous.
- Our indigenous students come from a variety of Nations, with approximately 60% identifying as a member of a Nuu-chah-nulth Nation.
- 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. Currently, we have 33 fee paying international students in our school. We have an additional 33 students who have joined us from abroad as new Canadians, further diversifying our student population.
- 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.

GRIT and Our School Goals

Last school year, members of the ADSS Staff came together to come up with a strategy to combat a growing number of concerns including poor attendance, vandalism and a lack of respect related to school property, stagnant academic performance, and a general sense of disengagement and apathy amongst the student population. This was evident in terms of office referrals, our school learning survey, school-based performance, district assessment results, and some data collected directly from the students themselves. For example, in our most recent SLS, our students’ opinions of their own resiliency dropped significantly in 2023-2023 with an average drop of over 12% from the previous year. This seems to echo what staff were feeling at the time.

The school climate was tipping towards the negative and staff wanted a common language and shared understanding of what the issues were. The Staff came together throughout the year to work on this initiative, sharing their progress and soliciting feedback at staff meetings. They also went to the students and worked with them to include student voice in the discussion. In early 2024, they came up with GRIT as an acronym to identify what they wanted to work on and keep a collective focus on the areas they had identified as needing attention. It was decided to make GRIT as visible as possible around the school and school community. Posters were made up to keep it front and center in the building, it was shared with incoming students at Elementary School visits, and then shared with parents at the annual Parent Open House in June 2024.

GRIT stands for **G**rowth, **R**espect, **I**nnovation and **T**houghtfulness. Words were picked with the idea of easily translating into Nuuchahnulth and French to encompass the 3 main languages taught in our building and increase overall cultural representation. The plan is to keep GRIT front and center as we move through the 2024/2025 school year. As a result, the admin team at ADSS chose to weave the concept of GRIT into the School Plan so that it too can remain front and center and benefit from the strong buy-in and ownership that has already been established within our teaching staff and school community.



GRIT and Our School Goals

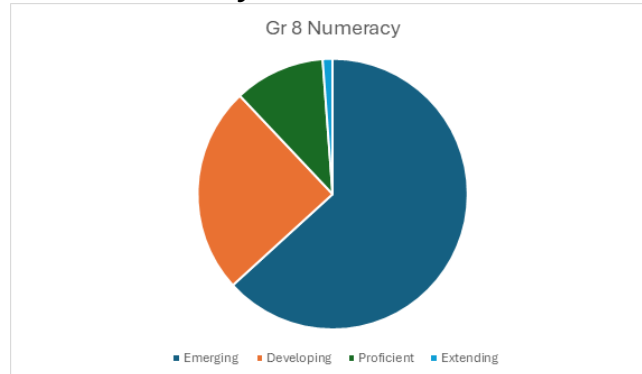
- 1. GROWTH and RESPECT. To continue to grow the cultural representation and understanding of cultural perspectives in our school making it a place where students respect their school, their cultures, and their peers.**

34% of our students identify as Indigenous and we are a dual track school with approximately **10%** of our students in line to graduate as French Immersion students. There is much to celebrate culturally, and our Strategic plan puts an emphasis on strengthening cultural ties and creating welcoming and safe learning environments for all learners. We have a building to be proud of, but in recent years, vandalism has been a huge concern. It has escalated to the point where students avoid certain areas of our school because they are concerned about their own safety and don't want to get implicated in blatant damage to school district property. Last year, over **20% (22.2%)** of office referrals were because of disrespect towards others or damage to the learning environment. Previous years' data is similar – **14%** and **17%**. We would like to spend some time this year collaborating and strategizing how to reduce that.

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

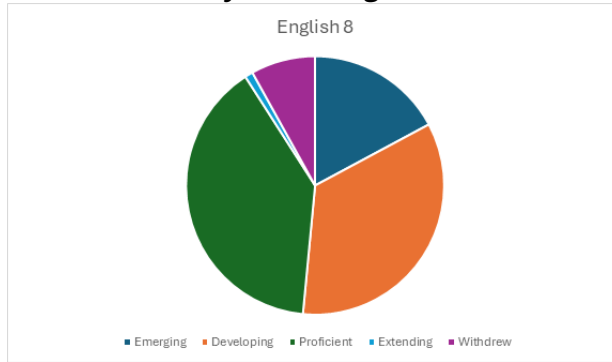
This school goal links directly to SD70 Strategic Plan emphasis on **Student Achievement** which specifically aims to maintain literacy and numeracy as top priorities. While the theme of achievement is familiar to school goals in most schools, our particular focus on Grade 8 and 9 is born out of a belief 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. We have a Humanities approach in the Grade 8/9 world, where we are looking to limit the number of transitions and provide a softer landing spot for our newer ADSS students.

Grade 8 Literacy and Numeracy Data
Overall Numeracy Result – District Assessments.



Emerging 64 %
Developing 25%
Proficient 11%
Extending 0%

Grade 8 Literacy Data - English 8 Final Marks

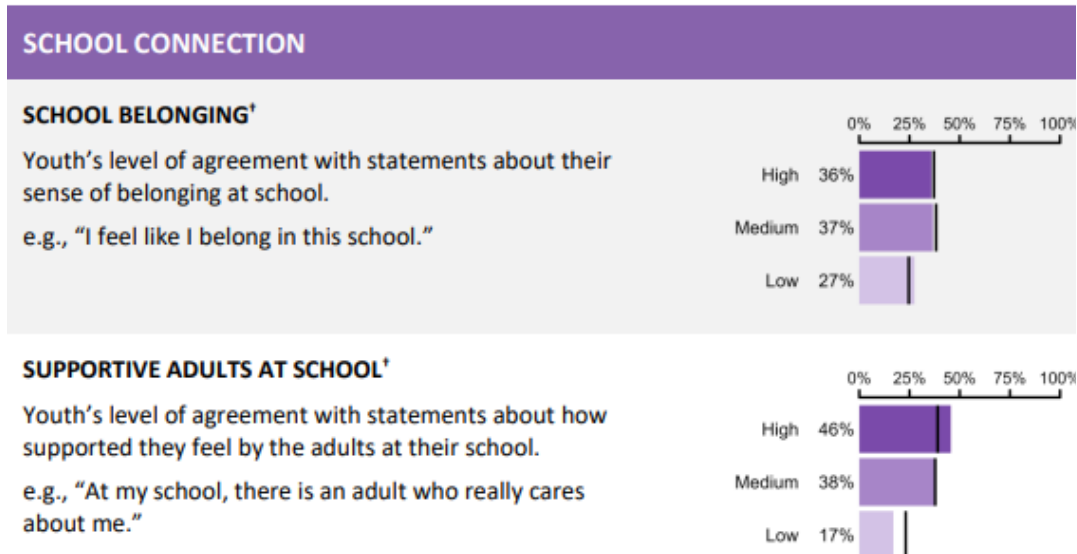


Withdrew 8%
Emerging 17%
Developing 34%
Proficient 39%
Extending 1%

4. THOUGHTFULNESS. 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 has been a part of ADSS for several years but Hattie’s work in *Visible Learning* reminds us that positive interactions between students and the school staff has a profound impact on student performance. A want for a stronger sense of belonging was echoed in collected students’ responses when they were asked to contribute to finding solutions for improving student success

(YDI/Youth Development Instrument - Survey Sample)



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, office referrals, attendance rates and withdrawal rates.

As relates to our school goals:

Cultural Representation and Respect: Our school was originally designed with West Coast and Indigenous cultures in mind. We continue to work on increasing our cultural footprint in the school and make language and other aspects of culture as visible as possible. We have art, signage, and other cultural aspects like drumming/signing groups as part of our expected daily routines throughout our learning environments. We want this to be continue to be at the forefront of our school. Within our student body we have many at-risk learners struggling to connect to our building and engage in their learning, but culture is a piece that some of our students have been able to grab onto and find success with.

School Belonging and Connectedness: After several years of progress toward this goal, the 2019/20 school year saw a drop-off in several 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 recent 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 left a clear mark in terms of student reported mental health challenges. This matches our anecdotal observations in the school. Last year, data from various surveys all suggested that Mental Health supports were becoming increasingly important for student well-being.

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 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.

Our School Celebration Story

ADSS first selected 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 have 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.