



Alberni District Secondary Enhancing Student Learning School Report 2026/2027



Principal: Craig McAulay

Vice Principals: Stephanie Prizeman, and Carl Poole

Territorial Acknowledgment

Pacific Rim School District and Alberni Valley Schools are situated on the ḥaḥuuli of the čišaaʔath and huupačasʔath. The School District also operates schools on the ḥaḥaḥuuli of ʔaʔuukʷiʔath, huuʕiiʔath and yuuluʔiʔath Government and acknowledges that we work alongside all nuučaanuʔ Nations as well as the Métis Nation of British Columbia to serve the children and youth of the Alberni-Clayoquot region. The district strives to increase awareness, understanding and integration of nuučaanuʔ culture, history, and language in all Pacific Rim School District schools. 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 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 twenty 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 1350 students and 125 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 Nuuchah-nulth Nation.
- 16.4% 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 40 fee paying international students in our school. We have several students who have joined us from abroad as new Canadians, further diversifying our student population.
- While our school is centrally located, a 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.
- Mental health concerns within our school community are playing a more significant role, from year to year.



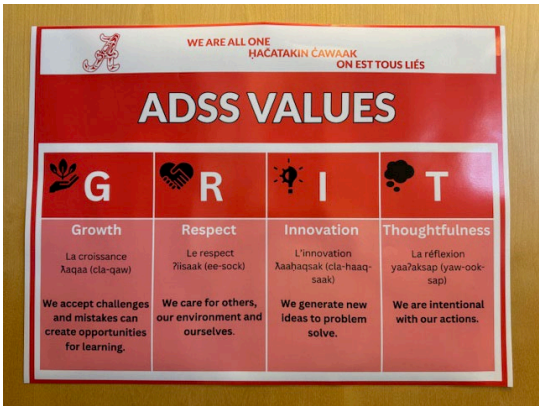
GRIT and Our School Goals

In 2024, 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 the 2023 SLS, our students’ opinions of their own resiliency dropped significantly, 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. 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 our annual Parent Open House that we host in June.

GRIT stands for **G**rowth, **R**espect, **I**nnovation and **T**houghtfulness. Words were picked with the idea of easily translating into Nuuchah-nulth 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 continue through the 2026/2027 school year. As a result, the admin team at ADSS chose to continue to imbue 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.

Heading into the Fall of 2026, we felt that GRIT had begun to lose its momentum, so we came together once again and decided to rebrand/relaunch. We are hopeful that a renewed focus and added extrinsic motivation will increase its usage in our school. We are setting up a GRIT wall/display, every week we draw GRIT prizes, and are looking to use our new Vinyl heat press to add T-shirts and Hoodies with GRIT branding to amplify its presence in our hallways.



School Goals and Strategies

1. **GROWTH - To continue to work towards improving completion rates for all our learners**

Rationale:

34% of our students identify as Indigenous and we are also a dual track school with approximately **10%** of our students in line to graduate as French Immersion students. We also have a small cohort of International Students adding to the diversity of our learners. Completion rates have climbed in SD70, but they are still below the typical range in BC.

Strategies:

- Provide learning opportunities for our parents so they understand grad requirements and the grad program
- Continue to provide more wholesome support for students – Social emotional, mental health, etc.
- Continue to take a firm stance on cell phone use and hallway wandering
- Ongoing communication with our families and advocates
- Differentiate and plan based on learners in class
- Continue to look at alternative ways of demonstrating learning

2. **RESPECT – To consider strategies that reinforce respect for our school, making it a place where students feel safe and can be successful**

Rationale:

We have a building to be proud of, but in recent years, vandalism has been a huge concern. Interestingly enough, this year's cohorts have not struggled to the same extent as the previous 2 years. We are hoping this is not just a honeymoon period, and that positive behavior continues. We continue to be firm on cell phone use in our school, as Jonathin Haidt's book, *The Anxious Generation*, describes the decision to take a hard stance on phone use in schools as transformative in improving many facets of school life, including respect for school property and respect towards one another

Strategies:

- We have adjusted our stance on cell phone use in the school - phones are not accessible to students during class time.
 - This comes from a variety of examples of similar practices in other schools where removing student devices can have a positive impact on mental health and reduce negative behaviors.
- Peer to peer messaging, peer coaching
- Promoting belonging, connection and a sense of ownership
- Open bathrooms – not gender specific
- Continue to provide opportunities for student voice
- With one less admin and no CUPE security, supervision continues to be a challenge

3. **INNOVATION. To improve successful transitions from Grade 9 to Grade 10.**

Rationale:

For the past few years our focus has been on Grades 8 and 9, with the thinking that a successful start to ADSS will carry over into Grade 10 and beyond. We are now wondering if that focus should shift to a closer look at the transition from 8/9 to Grade 10. With Grade 10 being a pivotal year for a number of reasons, what can we do to improve our student success.

Strategies:

- We have decided to replace the Humanities approach in Grade 9 with a more traditional English/SS philosophy with the thinking it better prepares students for Grade 10, frees up our timetable, and allows staff to more easily teach to their strengths.
- We have identified the courses where students are struggling the most in Grade 10, and are working with departments by challenging the to reconsider old practices and reimagine new ones.
- We have also built Gr 8-10 cohorts strategically to limit class size and better manage class composition.
- Focus on inclusive practice and UDL strategies

4. THOUGHTFULNESS. To increase the sense of connectedness and belonging in our school and to work towards changing the narrative that our school is a large and intimidating building for all families within our school community.

Rationale:

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.

Strategies:

- 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.
- Carry on with extra-curriculars, intramurals, and teacher sponsored clubs
- Continue to encourage and find ways for students to connect with our school
- Keep up GRIT incentives and increase opportunities for Student Voice
- Dr. Jody Carrington talks about students’ need for connection and the role it plays in academic success. Teacher quality is said to be as much as 3 times more impactful than other factors. If we can increase our teachers’ approachability and connection with their students, we stand to significantly improve student success.
- Programs like BRIDGE that allow vulnerable students to get connected to building and staff without heavy academic demand



Student Lead Wellness Conversation

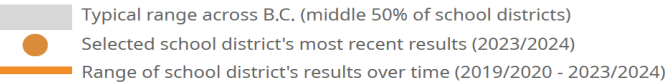
Evidence

Data is gathered from several sources. We rely specifically on our own school-based data, BC Ministry of Education Surveys, ADSS surveys, the Middle Years Development Instrument(MDI), the Youth Development Instrument (YDI), and the McCreary Foundation surveys. We also look at Completion Rates from the Ministry. 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, and student voice initiatives.

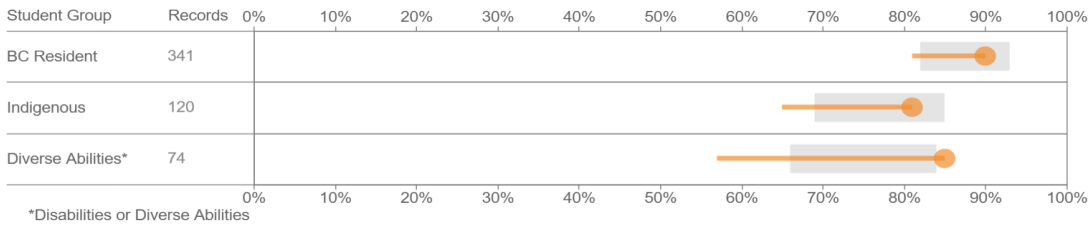
1. GROWTH - To continue to work towards improving completion rates for all our learners

Summary:

While our completion rates continue to improve, we are behind Provincial trends, overall, when it comes to this measure. There continues to be a need to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners. We are slightly above provincial rates when it comes to completion rates of our students with disabilities.



Completion Rates



2. RESPECT – To consider strategies that reinforce respect for our school, making it a place where students feel safe and can be successful

Summary:

Last year, over **24% (24.2%)** of office referrals were because of disrespect towards others or damage to the learning environment. Previous years' data is similar – **22%, 14% and 17%**. In a school survey, our washrooms were highlighted as an area where students felt unsafe/intimidated.

3. INNOVATION. To improve successful transitions from Grade 9 to Grade 10.

Summary:

Grade 10 continues to present as a challenge to many of our learners. Barrier courses like Sc 10, PHE10, and SS10 consistently cause issues for many Grade 10's. Heading into Year 2 of looking at this goal, we have established a bit of a baseline and will continue to look at failure rates and student survey results to measure success. Last year, for example,

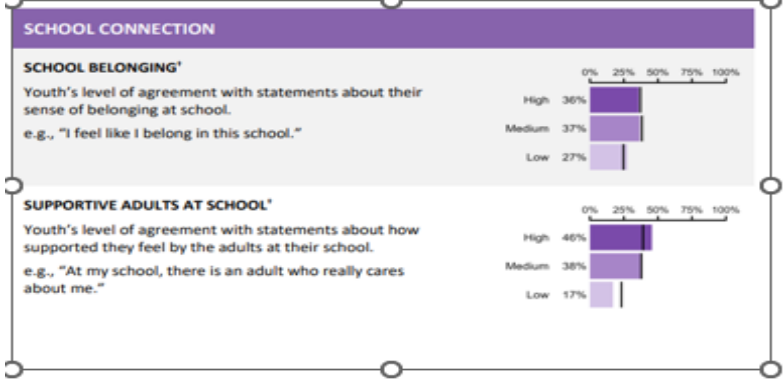
- PHE10 replaced SC10 as most frequently failed course
- SS10 has also been a significant challenge
- Approximately 10% failed grade 10 courses in general
- Academic recovery has helped recapture some of these credits, but we'd like that initial failure rate to be lower

4. THOUGHTFULNESS. To increase the sense of connectedness and belonging in our school and to work towards changing the narrative that our school is a large and intimidating building for all families within our school community.

Summary:

This has been a goal at ADSS for close to 10 years and has weathered reconfiguration, a pandemic, and is still a goal in the post-COVID world. More details are included in our Celebration Story. This continues to be where we have some of our greatest successes, as well as our most significant challenges.

(YDI/Youth Development Instrument - Survey Sample) – we didn't do YDI in 24/25



Sense of Belonging- 2023/2024 Student Learning Survey



Our School Celebration Story

ADSS first selected a goal of connectedness and belonging during the 2015/16 school year. Over the course of two years, we introduced 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. Now we are noticing that students struggling in Grade 10 may be a result of trying to provide a soft-landing spot at the Grade 8 and 9 levels. When they head into Grade 10, are assessed using letter grades and percents, and begin accruing credits, many are stumbling. While we still want students to transition smoothly from K-7 to ADSS, we are looking at ways to make the transition from Grade 9 to 10 less drastic. To that effect, we reached out to elementary schools and began to establish early connections to students that have adjusted some Grade 9 course offerings to more closely mirror a Grade 10 experience. We will continue visits to elementary classrooms and visits to our 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.

In 2023, the process of rebranding our school name started as people began to look at Armada as a rather colonial term and not representative or respectful of our diverse student population. Local Nations, parent groups, and SD70 staff worked together to come up with **Storm** as a new name for our school and its teams. Our gym was packed with students and guests when we introduced this fresh name to the public in the Fall of 2024. While not personally involved, this process was a good example of how ADSS has evolved in terms of considering all stakeholders in these types of decisions and how we were able to

While there has been notable improvement through our engagement with this goal, the experience of the pandemic has seen a decrease in the reported sense of connection to the school and staff. Families who may have been disengaged during COVID are still reluctant to participate fully and trust that ADSS has their students’ best interests in mind. Our belief in this goal has not wavered and our focus now is on expanding our efforts to rebuild connections to students and families and regain any progress interrupted by the pandemic.



Ed Ross and Jeff Gallic lead drummers/singers participating in Storm pep rally