GULF ISLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT 64

EPIC SCHOOL PLAN
2023 – 2024

GULF ISLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL
Creativity | Learning | Community

SIGNATURES

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PRINCIPAL

_____

PAC CHAIR

_____

TEACHER

_____

STUDENT

OUR SCHOOL

SCHOOL IDENTITY AND VALUES

Gulf Islands Secondary School is a Grade 8 to 12 school in SD64-Gulf Islands, serving students and families from Galiano, Mayne, Pender, Salt Spring, and Saturna Islands. The student population for 2023-2024 school year is approximately 685 students.

Shared School Values: In the 2022-23 school year, through a stakeholder engagement process, we identified a set of three Shared School Values: Learning, Creativity and Community, that describe what is important to us as a community and anchors the work of our EPIC School Plan.

OUR THEORY OF ACTION

Our overarching Theory of Action centres our EPIC Plan where maximum impact on learning occurs, in classrooms. It is an "If...then" statement that directly connects our strategies; the work we do, to our desires results, which are described in our recently updated 'Attributes of a GISS Learner' document, which is located on our school website.

Theory of Action:
"If we continuously develop equitable and meaningful learning environments using impactful teaching strategies and supports... then all students will achieve success in intellectual, personal, social and career and life development."

This year, guided by our SD64 EPIC School Plan Framework and our Provincial mandate to support the development of "educated citizens,' our EPIC School Plan focuses our collaborative learning on a smaller number of specific desired results from our 'Attributes,' as we continue to seek student success and achievement in the areas of intellectual, personal and social and career and life development.

2023-24 PRIORITIES AND GOALS

From our 'Attributes of a GISS Learner' document, we have selected the following learning priorities and goals for next year:

Priority One - Intellectual Development
Goal: All students will demonstrate proficiency in Critical, Creative, and Collaborative Thinking skills

Priority Two - Personal and Social Development
Goal: All students will demonstrate that they are thriving in their Health and Wellbeing, and in their Relationships, Connections, and Contributions

Priority Three - Career and Life Development
Goal: All students will demonstrate proficiency in Personal Development and Habits for Learning

AREAS OF STRENGTH/GROWTH

Through the work of previous versions of our EPIC School Plan, areas of strength developed include success for all learners as measured by steady improvement in graduation rates, overall achievement levels in courses and meeting or exceeding provincial averages in Provincial Numeracy and Literacy Assessments. Effective strategies in use include thorough student success tracking systems, and one-to-one intervention processes that support successful course completion and grade-to-grade transition rates of our priority learners, managed by our School Based Team.

Areas of growth in achievement and success for all learners described in this plan include:
1. Improved strategies and structures for collaborative implementation of classroom and school level instruction and support that engages priority and all learners across all areas of development.
2. Improved results in deeper learning competencies including critical, creative and collaborative thinking and improved student experience in health and wellbeing, relationships, connections, contributions, personal development and habits for learning.

FOCUSING DIRECTION

PROCESS FOR REVIEWING/REVISING/DETERMINING

Each year, the EPIC School Plan cycle focuses on using evidence and experience of all stakeholders to review current progress and determine next steps. In 2022-23 we consulted with staff, students and families to refine and synthesize our desired outcomes as described in our 'Attributes of GISS Learner' document and created an updated version.

Although all the 'Attributes' are important, it was determined that having a sharper focus on a select smaller number of 'Attributes' would create more impactful results. This led to further consultation and the selection of the three Priority Areas and Goals (see previous Section 2023-24 Priorities and Goals) to focus on in the 2023-24 school year.

PURPOSE / DATA RATIONALE

To see our most recent update on progress, see our GISS Online Data Dashboard, linked on our school website.

Priority 1 - Intellectual Development
Goal: All students will demonstrate proficiency in Critical, Creative and Collaborative Thinking
This goal was selected as our 'next level work' in intellectual development. After experiencing positive and sustained increases on the quantity of successful graduations, we move towards our next goal of increasing quality of each student's graduation. Our data shows an opportunity for growth in provincial assessments in strategic thinking and student experience data describes opportunities for growth in Critical, Creative and Collaborative Thinking.

Strategic Alignment: District Strategic Goal 1 Inspire Learning, District Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (FESL) Area Intellectual Development Outcomes 1,2, A, Indigenous Enhancement Agreement Goal 4 Success

Priority Two - Personal and Social Development
Goal: All students will demonstrate that they are thriving in their Health and Well-Being and Relationships, Connections, and Contributions
This goal was selected from experience and data that describes areas of growth that will impact student satisfaction and motivation for learning. Students survey data reports a concern in the current level of mental health and the level of learning about health and wellness at school.

Strategic Alignment: District Strategic Goal 1 Inspire Learning, FESL Area Human and Social Development Outcomes 3,B-E, Indigenous Enhancement Agreement Goals Belonging, Culture and Community

Priority Three - Career and Life Development
Goal: All students will demonstrate proficiency in Personal Development and Habits for Learning
This goal was selected because data and experience show that attendance rates, time management, study skills, are all seen as areas of growth that would directly impact the success for priority and all learners.

Strategic Alignment: District Strategic Goal 1 Inspire Learning, FESL Area Career Development Outcomes 4,5 Indigenous Enhancement Agreement Goal Success

ASSOCIATED ACTIONS

Continue monitoring and refining student success tracking processes and data sharing to build awareness and understanding of the progress of all learners with stakeholders.

Building collaborative cultures and structures to support all staff for continuous 'prepare, sprint, review' cycles for instruction and support (see upcoming sections) that develop the selected goal areas from the 'Attributes of a Gulf Islands Secondary Learner' in each student.

Build structures and processes to support student Personal Development and Habits for Learning, including Goal Setting, Core Competency self assessment, and 'Attributes of a Gulf Islands Secondary Learner' self reflections.

COLLABORATIVE CULTURES

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS / STUDENT VOICE

We engage and inform our school community and the greater community regularly on the process and progress of our EPIC School Plan throughout the year using various media including our school website, social media, and email updates. We produce and share widely our "How Are We Doing?" data report that describes stakeholder experience regarding progress towards desired results of our EPIC Plan, multiple times per year.

We engage, inform, and seek feedback and input on our EPIC School Plan from families and students in a variety of ways including at PAC Meetings, in classroom meetings and student assemblies, focus groups, and through school-based and ministry surveys.

We consult and get feedback from our students in a variety of ways that include School and Ministry Surveys, in-person discussions in classrooms, school assemblies and focus groups, and through emails and social media. In the 2022-23 school year we re-established the Student Council and are building this structure to engage with students and collect student voice. Staff also began discussions in 2022-2023 about the potential of an Advisory Block and are considering this a way to engage Student Voice.

We engage with Principals and Vice Principals and our SD64 Senior Admin Team to consult and get feedback on our EPIC Plan, and we continue seek opportunities to share and collaborate with other schools, districts and experts in relation to our EPIC School Plan.

We seek opportunities to empower individuals and groups of students, staff and families to engage in and lead the work of implementing the EPIC School Plan. We engage stakeholders through designed moments of Elevation, Pride, Insight, and Connection.

STAFF/SHARED WORK

Staff are engaged in the EPIC School Plan in many ways. Firstly, in the 2022-23 school year, we focused on cultivating a collaborative culture on staff through moments of connection and collaborative work. For example, all staff meetings were started 'in circle' to provide increased voice for each individual staff member and to build connections between members. We also engaged in transition activities that were active and team-work oriented. We also had collaborative table group activities at every meeting, to engage staff to work collaboratively on the EPIC School Plan and other important work such as preparing for the New Student Reporting Policy, to be implemented in the 2023-24 school year.

Some areas for development and focus for Cultivating Collaborative Cultures on staff in the 2023-24 school year include:

• All staff meetings will continue model best practice in collaborative instructional design and support
• Design structures that support increased opportunities for embedded staff collaboration supported by clear expectations and focused tasks

As an embedded approach to professional development, all staff will be introduced to the Teaching Sprints approach (Breakspear, 2018) this fall. Working in collaborative teams, teachers will be supported through cycles of 'plan, sprint, review,' using the Six Impactful Strategies (See Taking Action Section.)

DEEPER LEARNING

WHAT WILL STAFF NEED TO KNOW TO LEAD/PERFORM THIS WORK?

Our Theory of Action outlines our strategy as a staff, we will: "continuously develop equitable and meaningful learning environments using impactful teaching strategies and supports." To lead this work, staff will need to have clarity of learning outcomes, precision in pedagogy, and capacity building of expertise.

Clarity of Learning Outcomes:
Staff will work this fall to clarify the specific learning outcomes in each of the priority areas.

Precision of Pedagogy: Six Impactful Teaching Strategies (see school website) and Support were identified by staff through work in previous versions of this plan. These strategies develop the skills and understandings described in the 'Attributes of a GISS Learner' and include: Collaborative Learning, Cultural and Personal Identity Responsive Teaching, Authentic and Real World Learning, Purposeful Learning, Descriptive and Ongoing Feedback, and Assessment.

Capacity Building of Expertise: Work this year includes implementation and support of continuous cycles of 'prepare, sprint and review' using clarified learning outcomes and Six Impactful Strategies.

WHAT SKILLS WILL WE FOSTER WITH STUDENTS FOR THEM TO EXPERIENCE SUCCESS?

We will foster critical, creative and collaborative thinking skills with students. These skills directly impact achievement in all areas: intellectual, personal and social, and career and life development.

We will foster student Health and Wellness, Relationships, Connections and Contribution skills. Health and Wellness skills will allow them to thrive as learners as wellbeing and achievement are interrelated. Building relationships, connections and contribution skills will aid them in life, and allow them to thrive in a diverse world, understanding and advocating for inclusion, diversity, equity and environmental sustainability.

We will foster student Personal Development skills such as goal setting and self assessing. These skills will help students create ownership for their learning, which is a major influence on achievement.

We will foster student Habits of Learning including regular engagement in learning, leadership, planning and time management, and study and self-discipline skills that will positively impact them in all areas of their lives.

APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING?

Professional Learning will be embedded in multiple ways throughout the school year. Through our 'Teaching Sprints' approach (see Taking Action Section.) Learning will be collaborative, ongoing, embedded and personalized.

Collaborative Partner Teachers will work with classroom teachers to co-plan, co-teach and co-assess over the course of a unit or project. This intensive partnership is focused on building instruction and support skills selected from the Six Impactful Strategies.

Teacher Leaders. A new role being developed this year, they will facilitate groups of teachers through Teaching Sprints process. These groups will be for teachers to work together and reflect on their progress.

EPIC Teaching Resources. Through our EPIC Grant, resource packages were purchased and distributed to each staff member this year. These resources are all focused on developing skills to implement these strategies.

TAKING ACTION

How will the school structure an approach that can be measured in short formative cycles?
How will the school foster a sense of partnership to achieve a common goal of increased student achievement?

LEARNING SPRINT APPROACH

A 'Teaching Sprint' Approach is being fostered to build cycles of implementation and improvement for our identified Six Impactful Strategies. This approach develops skills and improves impact of teaching and assessment strategies using a 'design, sprint, review' process. All teaching staff will be supported to embed into their practice.

Actions:
Teaching and Learning EPIC Resources will be distributed to all teaching staff the fall and beyond to develop understanding and support implementation of Six Impactful Strategies
Teaching Sprint Approach will be reviewed and explored in Fall Staff Meetings.
Teaching Sprint Teams will be formed with Teacher Leaders in the first quarter.
Teacher Leaders (see below) will participate in a learning session including Teaching Sprints online course.
Collaborative Support Teachers (see below) will work with selected classroom teachers to implement and develop strategies.

Collaborative Partner Teachers
In the implementation of the action steps of our plan, deepening our collective expertise on the Six Impactful Strategies and classroom centred supports, is best supported through an embedded, collaborative approach. One high level support for this embedded collaborative approach, is our Collaborative Partner teachers (CPTs.) CPT's work directly side by side with classroom teachers to develop skills and improve impact of teaching and assessment strategies using the 'Teaching Sprints' approach of 'design, sprint, review.' CPTs and Classroom teachers co-design, co-teach, and co-assess a unit or project over a 2-4 week cycle. Building on the experiences in the past year, pre- and post- assessments of knowledge and skills, as well as student and staff experience will be added to measure impact. Results will be shared with the community. The staffing for Collaborative Partner Teaching will be three blocks this year. Resources for this initiative will include collaborative meeting expenses and additional professional learning activities and resources.

Teaching Sprint Teams
Teacher Leaders will be selected to lead teams of 4 teachers in discussion groups around the implementation of strategies using the 'Teaching Sprints' process. Teacher Leaders will meet once per month as a group to co-build structures and process for leading their teams and meet with their team members once a month as well.

SUSTAINING ACCOUNTABILITY

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL?

We continue to develop ways of identifying and selecting the measures that will inform our success. Measures selected must describe progress for all students and priority groups of students towards desired results as described by the 'Attributes of a GISS Learner' document. We consider data from multiple levels: provincial, district, school, cohort and individual, and we triangulate evidence from achievement data and experience reporting when analyzing and making determinations of progress. Through and equity lens, we also seek to disaggregate our evidence to look in more detail into groups of priority learners. Disaggregating for priority learners helps us make decisions about selecting specific, targeted and more intensive interventions to support those learners.

The following actions will be undertaken in the next year to support these accountability measures:
A revamp of the Gulf Islands Secondary Online Data Dashboard that builds on the previous version, adding more specific measures of success for the Priorities and Goals in this plan and adding ways to track cohorts over time and trends over time. Also an additional Data Analysis page(s) to describe the school's understanding of what the data is telling us about our current progress.

A revamp and relaunch of our in-house student success tracking system that continuously monitors progress to identify and support priority and all learners. This monitoring is regularly updated by and will be shared with educators to support the design and support in all learning environments.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA

Critical, Creative, Collaborative Thinking: Student outcomes in these curricular competences and deeper learning skills are reflected in proficient and extending levels of course-based interim, midterm and final assessments. They are also found in provincial assessments, as these assessments are broken out by item and categorized by levels of thinking. Specifically, for critical and creative thinking, this is reflected in scores of Level 3 or Strategic Thinking. Critical, Creative and Collaborative Thinking can also be assessed at major demonstration of learning events such as productions, demonstrations, and in exhibitions of learning events such as the Capstone Presentation Event.

Health and Well Being, Relationships, Connections and Contributions: Student outcome data measuring success in this area includes attendance rates, and student conduct and disciplinary data. They also include the quantity of student led events focused on health and wellbeing, inclusion, diversity, equity and/or environmental sustainability.

Personal Development: Student outcomes in these areas are measured by analysis of quantity and quality of goal setting and self assessment of progress towards these learning goals. Student success in this area can also be measured with completion of milestones such as Graduation Rates, Post Secondary acceptance and participation rates, career path plan rates.

Habits for Learnings: Student outcome measures in this area include attendance rates and course based work habit marks.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE EVIDENCE

In all priority areas, student experience evidence is measured through student experience surveys. We conduct multiple surveys throughout the year to measure and quantify levels of student experience, including Ministry Learning Surveys, the Youth Development Instrument (YDI), and/or our school-based EPIC School Plan Progress Survey, the How Are We Doing? Survey.

In the 2023-24 school year, the following actions are planned to deepen our understanding of student experience:
1. The How Are We Doing? Survey will be redesigned to focus specifically on stakeholder's experience about the priorities and goals of this year's plan.
2. To deepen our understanding of 'the why' behind our regular sources of data, we will be introducing a more intensive method of collecting, collating and sharing qualitative data through direct interviews with students, including being purposeful about seeking the voice of priority learners who have been most affected by systemic inequities. (See Additional Information Section, Street Data, 2021, Safir and Dugan)

EPIC STORY

STORY

Our EPIC Story is described by a journey of continuous improvement in learning environments and learner experience.

Through our plan, we seek to design, experience, and and share moments of Elevation, Pride, Insight and Connection (EPIC moments) in relation to learning and development. At our 2022-23 year-end staff meeting, educators shared a moment that stood out for them in the past year. Some of the moments shared are described below.

Moments of Elevation:
When a teacher got out their guitar and performed a student's song from their song lyric assignment in English Studies 12.
When a student created a 'Minecraft Edition' of J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit in his English 9 class.
The Winter Wrap Up, when students and staff competed in fun and silly games as a whole school on the day before winter break. Highly contested but the grade 11's won!
At staff meetings, when we played games and activities that brought people together in a fun, collaborative and at time competitive way!
When instead of a traditional final exam, the Calculus 12 class decided they wanted to find all the mathematical ways to calculate the volume of a watermelon.

Moments of Pride:
Watching the 'highest risk' student in the class graduate. They stood proudly at both (Indigenous and District) ceremonies and walked the stage.
At Grad, when 3 other students stood up behind our student giving the Land Acknowledgment to give their support. And the student's pride in everything she said in the Acknowledgment, especially in an inside joke that was for her mentor.
Students moving from being afraid to play in front of others at the start of the year to standing up and performing, and rocking! their solo in front of a full audience at ArtSpring in Jazz Band.
Seeing students succeed in a classroom setting, seeing a student with a cognitive disability's passion presentation in an Composition 11 Class.

Moments of Insight:
Competency-based/student-centred approach in essence is teaching our students how to trust themselves, trust that they can do it.
Realizing that choice, options taps into intrinsic motivation
How presentations like the Capstone presentation can provide so many insights into the interests/passion students have that we may not know of.

Moments of Connection:
The moment when a younger student spoke to the grads at Indigenous Grad and she got choked up, and all the grads gave her a giant group hug.
A student with a cognitive disability making connections with other EAs, teachers and students in the school after being mostly in an independent support room due to safety concerns.
When a grade 10 student wanted to support his little sister's craft fair and the rest of the class excitedly joined in on a spontaneous field trip to help him.
Students with daily attendance at Phoenix Place Alternative Program and building daily.
Last few minutes in a grade 8 class, a student was clapping about something random and the teacher, to be funny took a bow and said thank you. Then all the students started applauding and there were high fives all around. A great moment to end the semester!

Our long term EPIC Story direction has us towards a future where every student, regardless of background, has an engaging and life determining experience at our school. We seek to, over time, build the collective expertise and ownership of staff, students and families, into the values, ideas, beliefs, outcomes and empowerment to select, design, implement, reflect and refine the strategies of our plan.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NOTES

Professional Literature that supports our EPIC School Plan process and Implementation:

Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts and Systems (2015) by Micheal Fullan and Joanne Quinn

This book sets the framework for our plan, including the foundational areas of Focusing Direction, Collaborative Cultures, Deeper Learning and Sustaining Accountability.

The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact (2017) by Chip Heath and Dan Heath

This book inspires designing of moments for staff, students and families that have impact. This comes through in various ways, from how we plan and design school events focused on the outcomes of the EPIC Plan, to activities in staff meetings, to learning events and celebrations, to designing learning experiences in classrooms.

Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact for Learning (2013) by John Hattie

This book is used to check and build out our Six Impactful Strategies for teaching and our supports. As a meta-analysis, this book provides research that supports many of our strategies, specifically the strategies Purposeful Learning, Descriptive and Ongoing Feedback, Assessment and Student Centred Support.

Teaching Sprints: How Overloaded Educators Can Keep Getting Better (2021) by Simon Breakspear and Bronwyn Ryrie Jones

This book informs our process for collaborative implementation of the Six Impactful Strategies and Support. It describes a 'prepare, sprint, review' process for implementing new strategies or old strategies in new ways in classrooms.

Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation (2021) by Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan

This book informs a new data collection structure starting in 2023-24 to collect deeper levels of stakeholder experience, directly from individuals, including specifically seeking voices of those students and families who have been most affected by deep-rooted systemic inequities.