

My Ideal Vision for a Rural Elementary School



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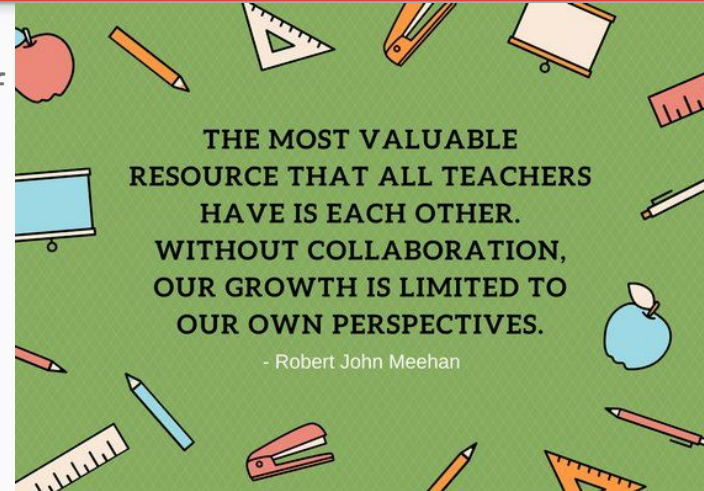
Guiding Principles & Values



- Nurture a strong sense of community built upon mutual respect
- Cultivate a calm environment with effective structure
- Strong focus on foundational literacy skills
- Consider context and care for the whole learner

Building a Cohesive School Culture Begins with the Staff

- A daily 10 minute morning staff meeting would be implemented before the morning bell rings to support staff relationships and stay up to date on any housekeeping.
- Teachers would be encouraged to collaborate with one another and bring their classes together so students from different grades have the chance to learn from and alongside one another.
 - ◆ This would help both students and staff view themselves as a school-wide team and community.



<https://twitter.com/theCEI/status/1009816026610102272>



Morning Meeting

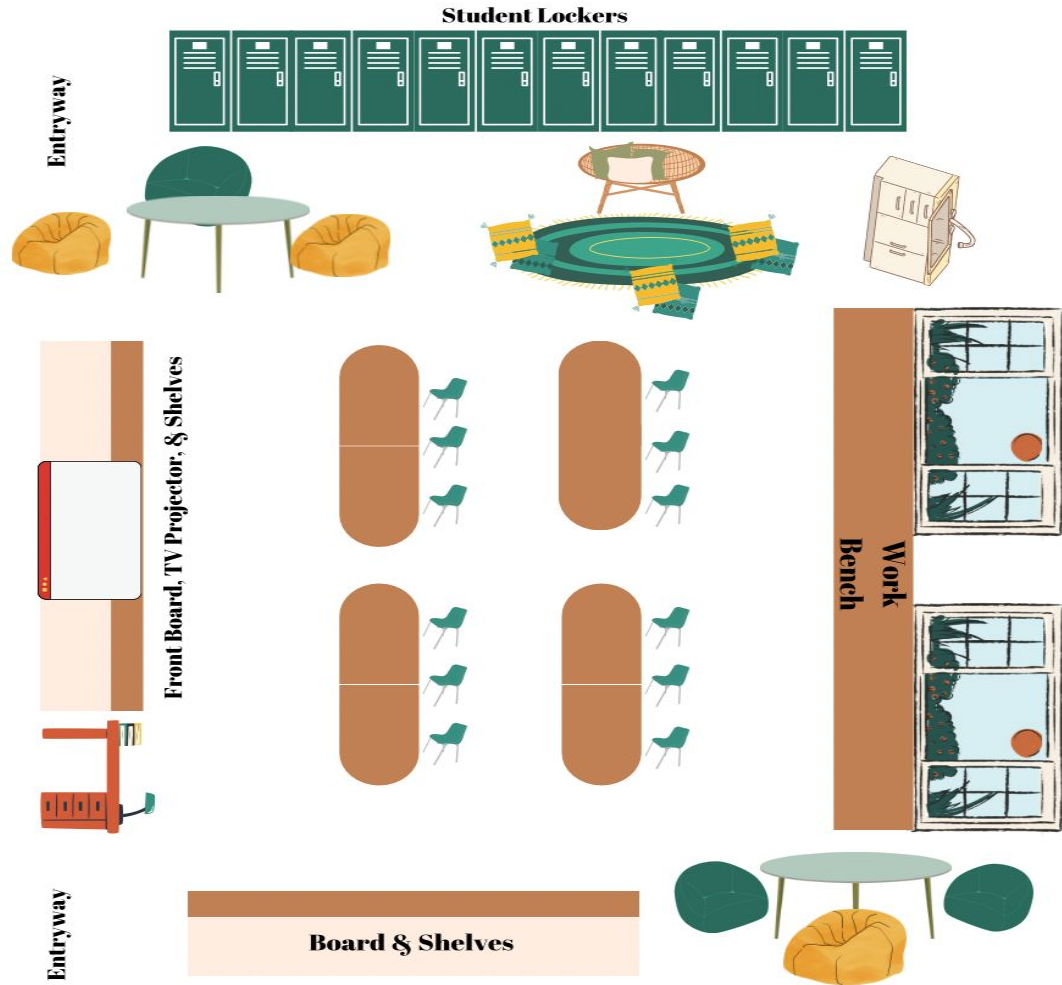
- The 4 basic parts of the Morning Meeting Model developed by Kriete and Davis (2014) are:
 - ◆ Greeting
 - ◆ Sharing
 - ◆ Group Activity
 - ◆ Morning Message/Announcements
- Morning Meetings can be an effective way to build structured routines, foster a sense of trust and mutual respect, and develop a sense of community in the classroom (Kriete & Davis, 2014).



<https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/what-is-morning-meeting/>

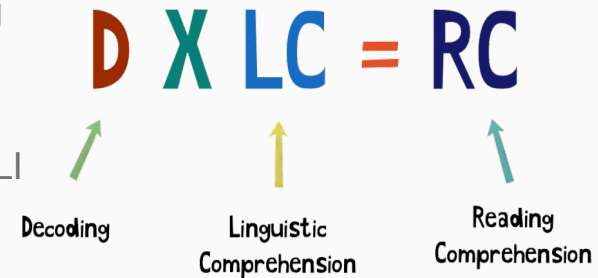
Classroom Layout

- Lots of natural light
- Students seated in small groups at tables
- Some options for seating
- Lots of space to work



Effective Focus on Foundational Literacy Skills

- An effective, science-backed focus on foundational literacy skills would be central to my ideal school's approach.
- The pillars of reading instruction are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (M. Baerg, personal communication, November 13, 2023).
 - ◆ All of these aspects would be attended to in my ideal school by UFLI and differentiated primary reading groups.
- Schools using UFLI Foundations have seen significant student progress in oral reading fluency, phonemic awareness, and decoding (UFLI, n.d.).
- The idea behind pairing UFLI with primary reading groups is that UFLI addresses decoding while the primary reading groups address linguistic and reading comprehension. Together, they address all aspects of the “Simple View of Reading” formula (M. Baerg, personal communication, November 13, 2023).



Primary Reading Groups



- Primary reading groups would be created where students from Grades 1 through 3 were mixed and matched to reading groups according to their current reading level. By differentiating instruction in this way, you recognize the diversity in your classroom and attend to different readiness levels (Avella, 2017).
- This approach would require significant teacher collaboration and educational assistant (EA) support to ensure that each reading group was led by an adult each day.
- Ideally, the classroom teachers and EAs would rotate leading different reading groups so the groups and students could be viewed from different perspectives and expertise.

Considering the Whole Learner

- Considering the whole learner and context is a thread I am trying to pull throughout my entire vision (eg. food programs, nurturing relationships, authentic Indigenous education, etc.) because learning does not happen in isolation!
- Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs puts forward the idea that when our physiological needs are not being met, it is extremely difficult to progress up the hierarchy (M. Baerg, personal communication, Oct. 16, 2023).



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Food Programs

Students cannot do their best learning when they are hungry.

To help honour students as whole learners, my ideal school would have a series of programs in place to help ensure students had access to the nourishment they need.



<https://www.breakfastclubcanada.org/>



<https://bcaitc.ca/>

→ Breakfast Clubs of Canada (2020).

- ◆ Non-profit organization that works to fund school programs to provide nutritious breakfasts to all students.

→ BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation (2023).

- ◆ Non-profit organization that works to bring BC's agriculture into schools because they believe students deserve to eat the best fruits and veggies.

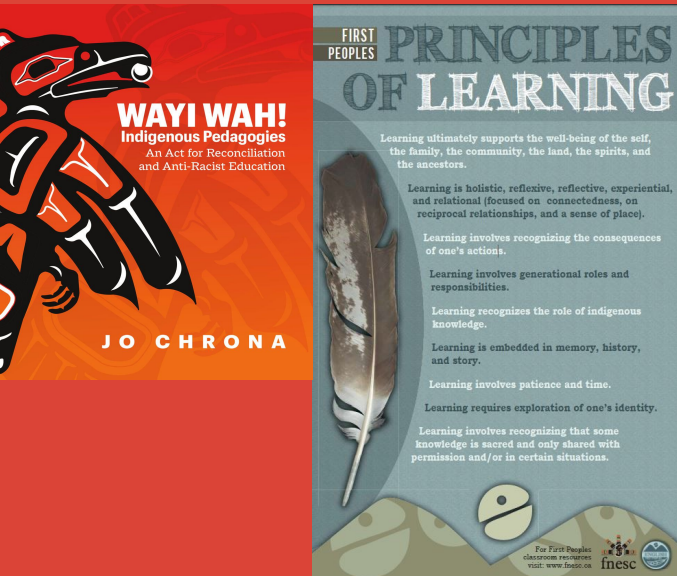
→ Backpack Buddies (2023).

- ◆ Charity that works to address the weekend hunger gap.



<https://www.backpackbuddies.ca/>

Elder-in-Residence & Authentic Indigenous Representation



<https://www.fnesc.ca/first-peoples-principles-of-learning/>

- My ideal school would work diligently to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action & Standard 9 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b; BC Teachers' Council, 2019).
- An Elder-in-Residence program would provide all students with the opportunity to learn about local Indigenous cultures directly from Indigenous individuals through their own voices, stories, and experiences.
- An Elder-in-Residence program would also encourage relationship-building and collaboration between teachers and Indigenous knowledge-holders as they work to infuse the public education system with more Indigenous perspectives.
- Non-Indigenous teachers would be strongly encouraged to critically assess the resources they use in their classrooms using the authentic resource evaluation criteria developed by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (2021).
<https://www.portageandmainpress.com/Books/W/Wayi-Wah!-Indigenous-Pedagogies>

Structured Outdoor Walks



<https://www.vecteezy.com/free-vector/outdoor-learning>

- Research shows that outdoor learning can have positive psychological impacts (Harvey et al., 2020).
- Spending even 1 hour per week learning outdoors can improve students' well-being, mood, and connection to nature (Harvey et al., 2020).
- Incorporating outdoor learning into the school day also helps to create opportunities for physical activity. Additionally, it allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the world around them and it brings learning alive in new ways (Beames et al., 2012).

Structured Outdoor Walks



<https://unsplash.com/s/photos/outdoor-learning>

- My ideal school would take students on structured, seasonal walks. This would be done at least 4 times per year so that students could take note of the seasonal shifts and develop their connection to the land.
- Front-loaded science and social studies lessons would be given prior to the walk.
- To build on this, local Indigenous language learning would be incorporated to create stronger connections with the land.
- This model also provides an opportunity to develop Two-Eyed Seeing (Thomas, 2016). Both Western and Indigenous science and perspectives would be incorporated into the frontloaded lessons.
- Dwayne Donald (2021), inspired by the Cree concept, *wâhkôhtowin*, argues that walking with intention on the land can help to teach and support the development of kinship relationality and a renewed understanding of the natural world.
- These walks would also be a great opportunity for teacher collaboration.



Any Questions?

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