

WHAT
WE
HEARD
SPRING
2025

Buffalo Trail Public Schools



Contents

History	2
Process	2
February 2025 Stakeholder Engagement Responses	3
Strengths of BTPS.....	3
Challenges	5
Continue.....	8
Outcome Focus Areas	10
Annual Education Results Report 2023-2024	12
Priority One: Supporting Learning Success For All Students.....	12
Priority Two: Supporting Learning Success for All Students	13
Priority Three: Building Strong Collaborations	13
Board-Student Engagements	13
Priority One: Supporting Learning Success for All Students	13
Priority Two: Fostering Safe and Caring Learning Environments	15
Priority Three: Building Strong Collaborations	15
Year Three Focus Areas (2025-2026)	16
Priority One: Supporting Learning Success for All Students	16
Priority Two: Supporting Learning Success for All Students	16
Priority Three: Building Strong Collaborations	16

History

During the 2022-2023 school year, Buffalo Trail Public Schools (BTPS) engaged over 500 stakeholders between November 2022 and February 2023. The Board of Trustees and division leadership are committed to accountability and value the time that students, parents, guardians, staff and community members took to share their hopes and dreams for BTPS. This input helped shape BTPS' priorities, outcomes and strategies through the 2026-2027 school year.

The engagement process focused on gathering input and ideas to inform possible ways forward. The aim of these engagements was for the Board of Trustees and division leadership to hear what priorities and goals stakeholders held for BTPS schools. Over the course of multiple sessions--in person and online--the following questions were posed:

- “What do you hope BTPS will achieve in four years?”
- “What do you want BTPS to stop, start or continue over the next four years?”

Many themes repeated, including the strong pride students, parents, guardians, staff and community members feel for their rural connections and communities. Along with a variety of data from past Annual Education Results Reports, budgets and research analytics, the feedback from stakeholders informed [BTPS' 2023-2027 Education Plan](#).

Stakeholders shaped the three Education Plan priorities including:

1. Supporting Learning Success for All Students
2. Fostering Safe and Caring Learning Environments
3. Building Strong Collaborations

Process

After the completion of the [BTPS 2023-2027 Education Plan](#), evidence was gathered from schools across BTPS to provide assurance on each of these priorities. This evidence is compiled and shared yearly with stakeholders as part of our [Annual Education Results Report](#). BTPS also tracks and shares our results publicly for the division and each school on our [Assurance Dashboard](#).

As part of the stakeholder engagement process, Board-student engagements are held monthly. Students from every school across the division are asked questions related to the Education Plan priorities and share these responses with the Board.

In February of 2025, four online stakeholder engagement sessions were held for staff, parents and community members. Results from the previous year were shared along with questions to provide direction for the division in the 2025-2026 school year.

These questions focused on:

- What are some of the strengths of BTPS?
- What are some of the challenges affecting BTPS schools?
- What do we need to continue to do in our BTPS schools?
- What outcomes should BTPS focus on for the coming school year?

February 2025 Stakeholder Engagement Responses

The online engagement survey had 476 respondents, including 228 staff, 193 students, and 55 parents. Respondents to the survey were asked to identify a school they most closely are affiliated with, and it was notable that every school was identified. As we look at different stakeholders, the major themes for strengths, challenges and actions to continue were similar.

Strengths of BTPS

What We Heard about Strengths

Student: "The smaller student population allows for a greater sense of community."

Student: "Access to take classes that are not offered in the school and through video conferencing. Teaming up with colleges to go try things."

Student: "We have really good communication and relationships with our teachers. We also have many opportunities at our school."

Parent: "Close knit community, good extra-curricular offerings, the staff get the chance to get to know students personally."

Parent: "Older student with younger student involvement and inclusion. (Example: high-school reading with kindergarten)."

Parent: "Caring staff who invest in the individual students, ensuring support is in place for the families, creating a safe, inclusive environment."

Staff: "Great, caring staff that go the extra mile to see the students, all students, succeed."

Staff: "Access to mental health expert. Smaller classes so more positive relationships can be built."

Staff: "Focus on student well-being; support of students and each other; dual credit programs, work experience, and Lakeland Partnership."

Themes from the Strengths

1. Strong Sense of Community & Relationships

- BTPS schools are deeply rooted in rural communities that foster a sense of connection, belonging, and mutual support.
- Small class sizes and close-knit environments allow students to be known as individuals, creating a small town feel that is both nurturing and inclusive.
- Families, staff, and community partners work collaboratively to create vibrant school cultures that extend beyond the classroom.

- Interactions between older and younger students, strong parental involvement, and local partnerships enrich the educational experience and cultivate a shared responsibility for student success.
- Across the division, the strength of community is reflected in the care, pride, and engagement evident in every school.

2. Caring and Dedicated Staff

- The commitment and professionalism of BTPS staff are consistently recognized as a cornerstone of the division's success.
- Teachers, educational assistants, support staff, and administrators are described as compassionate, student-focused, and unwavering in their dedication to learning and well-being.
- Staff members consistently go above and beyond, providing individualized support, creating inclusive spaces, and modeling positive relationships.
- Ongoing professional learning, collaboration across roles, and a deep connection to their schools—often as community members themselves—enable staff to build authentic relationships with students and families.
- Staff across the system are not only educators, but mentors, advocates, and champions for student growth.

3. Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments

- Stakeholders overwhelmingly describe BTPS schools as safe, welcoming, and emotionally supportive spaces.
- Students feel known, respected, and cared for, and families express confidence in the learning environments provided.
- A strong culture of inclusion is supported by meaningful practices that ensure all students—regardless of background, need, or ability—are valued and supported.
- Smaller school and class sizes allow staff to build strong relationships, foster a sense of trust, and provide timely interventions.
- Mental health and wellness are priorities, supported through programs, partnerships, and a commitment to social-emotional learning that helps students feel secure and ready to learn.

4. Academic Excellence & Diverse Learning Opportunities

- BTPS schools maintain a strong focus on foundational skills in literacy and numeracy while offering a wide range of engaging, hands-on, and relevant learning experiences.
- Students benefit from innovative teaching practices, access to modern technology, and creative programming designed to meet diverse interests and career pathways.
- Collaboration with Lakeland College to expand dual credit and Career and Technology Studies (CTS) programming, while continuing to grow Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP), work experience, and Green Certificate opportunities.
- The division's Learning Hub and distributed learning ensures access to high-quality programming and instruction across rural schools.
- Students are supported in reaching their academic potential while being encouraged to explore areas of interest that foster curiosity, confidence, and future readiness.

5. Strong Communication & Parent Engagement

- Open, transparent, and meaningful communication is a clear strength across BTPS schools.
- Parents report feeling informed, welcomed, and engaged—highlighting school staff who are approachable, responsive, and collaborative.
- Family engagement extends beyond information sharing to include meaningful involvement in school activities, collaborative decision-making, and the recognition of student success.
- Whether through School Councils, community events, or one-on-one interactions, families and schools work together in shared partnership.
- Strong communication culture fosters trust, enhances accountability, and ensures that students are surrounded by a network of adults committed to their well-being and achievement.

Statements unique to stakeholder groups

There is strong alignment across all groups on what makes our schools successful. While students focus more on day-to-day experiences, parents value communication and community involvement, and staff emphasize collaboration and external partnerships. Together, these perspectives reinforce what makes our schools strong.

Students highlighted

- Students valued having positive school climates and having control over course selections.
- Students appreciated events like pizza day, hot lunch, and daily gym class as important.

Parents highlighted

- Parents appreciated frequent updates via social media and newsletters, helping them feel informed.
- Parents shared the strength of involvement in school activities and the importance of rural connections.

Staff highlighted

- Staff emphasized the importance of working together within and across schools to strengthen teaching.
- Staff shared connections with Lakeland College, career programs, and support services as key strengths.

Challenges

What We Heard about Challenges

Student: "Not enough funding."

Student: "Too limited of opportunity/courses."

Student: "Limited courses and not educating students enough about life skills."

Parent: "Declining enrolment and funding small rural schools."

Parent: "A lot of kids would benefit from having a career councillor... different learning disabilities/mental health problems"

Parent: "Parent involvement with volunteering/council meetings."

Staff: "Teacher challenges including sub availability and additional supports. Provincial Funding Model."

Staff: "Mental health needs of our students (parents and families included)."

Staff: "We need more support for kids who have neurodivergence, or trauma, mental health, executive function."

Themes from the Challenges

1. Evolving Needs in Funding and Staffing

- Schools continue to navigate funding limitations.
- Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, educational assistants, and support staff remains a challenge in rural and specialized areas.
- Staffing challenges and increased responsibilities, including combined grade teaching and diverse learner needs, contribute to workload pressures.
- Fluctuating enrolment patterns affect the sustainability of small schools.
- Ensuring schools are resourced to meet student needs remains a shared focus across the division.

2. Complexities of Combined and Multi-Grade Classrooms

- Combined and multi-grade classrooms present unique challenges in planning, instruction, and classroom management.
- Teachers require time, tools, and supports to balance diverse learner needs and implement curriculum effectively.
- Increased focus to address behavioural and academic complexity within classrooms.
- Rural staffing models often require creative scheduling and flexibility.
- Continued collaboration and targeted supports will help optimize learning.

3. Supporting All Learners and Meeting Diverse and Complex Needs

- There is a growing need for targeted supports for students with needs and complex learning profiles.
- Mental health and wellness continue to be priorities for students and staff, requiring proactive and responsive strategies.
- Schools need flexible supports to address the wide range of student learning and wellness needs.
- Teachers and staff require access to specialized tools and professional learning to meet the evolving needs of learners.

- Preparing students for life beyond school, including career pathways and life skills, is an area of opportunity and continued focus.

4. Expanding Learning and Engagement Opportunities

- Schools face challenges in offering a full range of high school programming due to staffing and enrolment limitations.
- While the distributed learning model provides access, students express a preference for in-person instruction where possible.
- Opportunities for CTS, extracurriculars, and hands-on learning vary across the division and can be a challenge.
- Transportation and geographical distance can restrict access to opportunities and division-wide events.
- Exploring flexible delivery models and partnerships will be key to broadening access and engagement.

5. Enhancing Communication and Family Partnerships

- Families value clear, timely, and transparent communication.
- Stakeholders express a desire for open conversations around school and division-level decisions, including staffing and budgeting.
- Continued efforts are needed to build trust and strengthen relationships between home and school.
- Encouraging family engagement through councils, events, and volunteerism remains a growth area.
- Strong school-community collaboration enhances understanding, shared decision-making, and student success.

Statements unique to stakeholder groups

There is strong alignment across all groups regarding the core challenges facing BTPS schools, such as staffing shortages, classroom complexity, and funding. However, each stakeholder group brought insights based on their perspectives and experiences.

Students highlighted

- Students prefer in-person learning.
- Students want more course options to match their interests and future plans.

Parents highlighted

- Parents were concerned about multi-grade classes and the impact on student learning and inclusion.
- Parents raised concerns regarding whether the resources needed to support diverse learners were available.

Staff highlighted

- Staff highlighted the need for trauma-informed training, more mental health services, and additional resources for students.

- Staff see opportunities to improve collaboration, programming, and access to tools with increased funding allocations.

Continue

What We Heard about What to Continue

Student: "BTPS should continue having welcoming spaces for students. It helps many kids learn and participate better."

Student: "We need to continue or focus on numeracy and literacy as well as the mental health."

Student: "Keep having ways for community members to engage with schools."

Parent: "Social emotional wellness, mental wellness, engage parents and community, inclusive learning environments."

Parent: "Support strong numeracy and literacy programs for kids to get the basics in K-6, help students branch out in 7-12 to reach their full potential whether they are 'academic' students or more interested in hands on or trades."

Parent: "Community involvement, Having open discussions with stakeholders, continue to provide the data for reference points to celebrate achievements and acknowledge areas that still require improvement."

Staff: "Prioritizing student and staff well being and creating safe learning environments."

Staff: "To focus on numeracy and literacy, provide quality programming that meets the needs of students to the best of our abilities."

Staff: "Continue to be innovative and creative, open to new ideas for programming that individualizes learning."

Themes from What to Continue

1. Safe, Inclusive, and Supportive Learning Environments

- Continue to nurture schools that prioritize physical, emotional, and psychological safety for all students and staff.
- Maintain a division-wide emphasis on mental health and well-being, ensuring access to appropriate supports and services for both students and staff.
- Foster a culture of belonging and inclusion by recognizing and valuing the unique identities and experiences of each learner.
- Provide ongoing professional learning focused on creating positive, respectful, and trauma-informed classroom environments.
- Promote social-emotional learning practices that build student resilience, empathy, and healthy peer relationships.

2. Academic Excellence with a Focus on Literacy and Numeracy

- Sustain a strong division-wide focus on literacy and numeracy to ensure all students build essential foundational skills.
- Continue to differentiate instruction and offer targeted supports that meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Expand access to a broad range of courses, particularly in senior high, to support student choice, academic engagement, and post-secondary readiness.
- Promote hands-on, experiential learning opportunities that deepen understanding and connect classroom learning to real-world applications.
- Ensure all students, regardless of school size or location, receive high-quality, evidence-based instruction across all core subjects.

3. Strong Community and Parent Engagement

- Continue to invite and empower parent and caregiver involvement in school events, planning, and decision-making processes.
- Strengthen school-community partnerships to enrich student learning, expand access to local expertise, and celebrate rural identity.
- Maintain open, transparent communication with families to foster trust and alignment between home and school.
- Advocate for and support the unique needs of rural schools, ensuring equitable access to resources, programming, and voice.
- Expand collaborations with post-secondary institutions, local businesses, and community agencies to broaden student opportunities.

4. Teacher and Staff Support and Development

- Provide meaningful and ongoing professional development aligned to curricular priorities, instructional best practices, and emerging student needs.
- Increase staffing levels where possible to reduce class sizes, enhance student support, and alleviate workload pressures.
- Promote staff well-being through wellness initiatives, respectful workload planning, and access to mental health supports.
- Recognize and celebrate the contributions of teachers, educational assistants, and all support staff across the division.
- Protect time for teacher collaboration and planning to strengthen instructional coherence, creativity, and professional learning communities.

5. Diverse Learning Opportunities and Extracurricular Activities

- Continue to expand CTS, dual-credit, and work experience programming to ensure students are well prepared for multiple post-secondary and career pathways.

- Maintain and grow access to extracurricular activities, athletics, and student-led clubs that support engagement, leadership, and school spirit.
- Encourage field trips, cultural events, and interactive learning opportunities that bring curriculum to life and deepen student curiosity.
- Support diploma preparation programming and other academic supports that build student confidence and readiness for success.
- Broaden course offerings in both core and elective areas to ensure that student interests, strengths, and aspirations are reflected in their learning experiences.

Statements Unique to Stakeholder Groups

While all stakeholder groups supported safe, caring schools, strong literacy and numeracy, staff support, and diverse programming, each group also offered distinct priorities reflective of their experience.

Students highlighted

- Students value hands-on learning, field trips, CTS, and trades.
- Students want school to feel fun, connected, and supportive through activities and relationships.

Parents highlighted

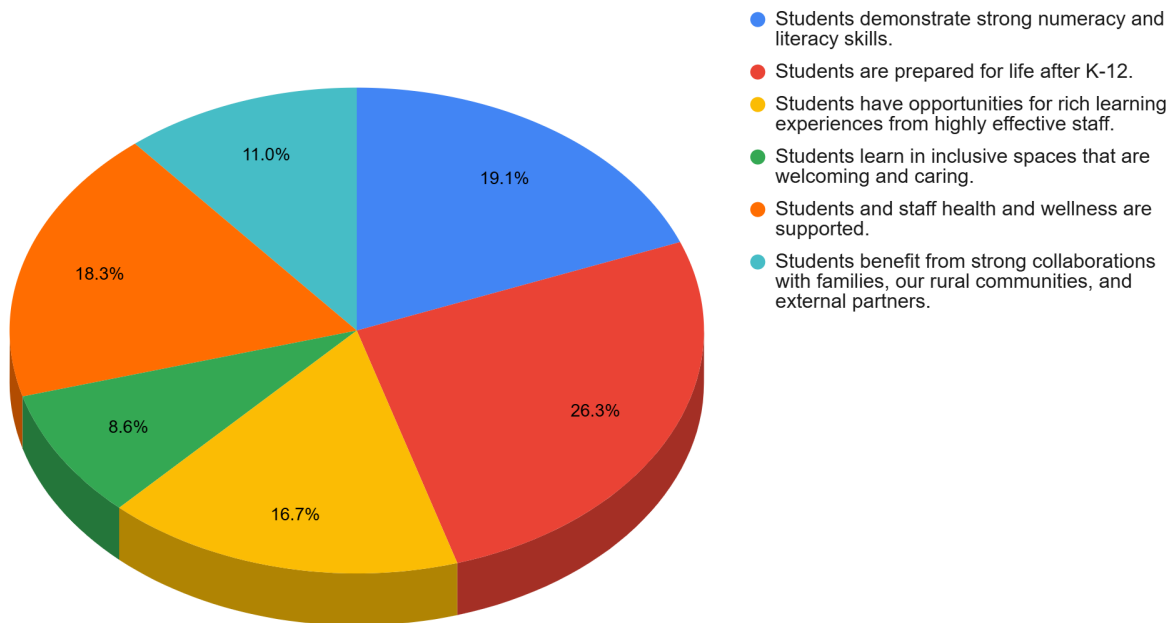
- Parents want a balance between strong academics and inclusive, student-focused approaches.
- Parents support rural schools, staff wellness, and clear communication.

Staff highlighted

- Staff prioritize time for collaboration, learning, and curriculum support.
- Staff want to protect rural identity while growing programs like CTS, distributed learning, and dual credit.

Outcome Focus Areas

Stakeholders were asked to identify two of the top outcomes that should be a focus in the coming school year.



The top three outcomes are:

- Students are prepared for life after K-12. (26.3%)
- Students demonstrate strong numeracy and literacy skills. (19.1%)
- Students and staff health and wellness are supported. (16.7%)

Annual Education Results Report 2023-2024

Buffalo Trail Public Schools is committed to transparency with our stakeholders. The BTPS Assurance Dashboard can be found [here](#). It shows performance data, historical data, and trends for all our schools and AERR measures.

Priority One: Supporting Learning Success For All Students

Outcome: Students demonstrate strong numeracy and literacy skills.

- BTPS has had a focus in the professional development of teachers, and school leaders in the areas of literacy and numeracy.
- Stakeholder engagement has highlighted numeracy and literacy as an ongoing focus of the division.
- BTPS schools continue to highlight and share the great work in creating learning and education quality across our division.

Outcome: Students are prepared for the life after K-12.

- BTPS has seen an increase in our academic results with PAT's in grade 6 and grade 9 as well as an increase in Diploma exams. Although PATs are at or near the provincial level, Diploma exams continue to be below but are trending in an upward direction.
- BTPS has developed a secondary math collaboration of teachers to support teaching instruction and learning in this area.
- High School Completion remains very high and drop out very low.
- All other measures of Citizenship, and Student Learning Engagement have improved.

Outcome: Students have opportunities for rich learning experiences from highly effective staff.

- BTPS has been responsive to staff requests and needs with a robust feedback system.
- Professional Learning continues to be targeted to the Priorities from the Education Plan and allowing time for staff to collaborate on implementing ideas into their practice.
- Staff had a diversity of learning opportunities at both the division and school level.
- Guided by Administrative Procedure 402.5 AP, each teacher develops an annual growth plan, which is reviewed by their principal. Teachers new to the division or holding interim teacher certification undergo three observations and evaluations during the year. Principals provide ongoing guidance and support to teachers through a structured Instruction Profile Inventory process.

Priority Two: Supporting Learning Success for All Students

Outcome: Students learn in inclusive spaces that are welcoming and caring.

- BTPS is continuing to see an upward trend in Welcoming Learning Environments, Safe and Caring and Access to Supports and Services.
- The work of school leaders and staff in this area is evident across our schools.

Outcome: Students and staff health and wellness are supported.

- The Board has prioritized Student and Staff Wellness as a key focus for the upcoming school year. Keynote speakers at Division Learning Days addressed strategies for fostering wellness, providing insights on both supporting staff well-being and creating a healthy, supportive environment for students.

Priority Three: Building Strong Collaborations

Outcome: Students benefit from strong collaborations with families, our rural communities, and external partners.

- BTPS is focusing on parental engagement across the school division through clear communication, community collaboration, and school councils.
- This coming year will see the implementation of a Council of School Councils.

Board-Student Engagements

Board-student engagements involved over 100 students throughout the school year. Each month, students joined the Board of Trustees to provide valuable feedback. They were asked questions related to each priority area, utilizing a structured format that encouraged them to share their ideas and experiences on a given topic before expressing additional needs or aspirations. Topics covered included school start-up, student wellness, technology for learning, literacy and numeracy, innovation, and community collaboration.

Priority One: Supporting Learning Success for All Students

Engaging with Literature in Creative and Personal Ways

- Students enjoy a wide range of books—from adventure to classics—that help them relax, laugh, and explore different perspectives.
- They appreciate stories with rich descriptions, strong characters, and meaningful messages that stay with them.
- Many wish for more interactive reading opportunities like audiobooks, book scavenger hunts, and personalized book reviews.
- Writing their own stories based on what they read is a way students want to deepen engagement with literature—and they love when teachers bring reading to life through creative class activities.

Expanding Hands-On, Experiential, and Student-Led Learning

- Students value projects like woodworking, greenhouse programs, chick hatching, and life skills classes that make learning tangible and meaningful.
- High school students enjoy taking the lead on mentorship and research-based projects, often working with younger students and staff they admire.
- Real-world experiences like fieldwork in agriculture, construction, and engineering help prepare them for future careers.
- They want more field trips, shop classes, and chances to learn from professionals and appreciate when teachers go out of their way to create these experiences.

Empowering Students Through Technology and Innovation

- Students use technology for coding, robotics, 3D design, digital collaboration, and game-building, which supports both creativity and problem-solving.
- They value real-world applications, such as automating systems in agriculture or participating in esports to build teamwork and technical skills.
- Students appreciate digital tools like Chromebooks, smartboards, and Google software for organization and collaboration and many are excited by how their teachers integrate tech into engaging lessons.
- While some are eager for more tech options (like VR and podcasting), others want balance with hands-on learning and trust their teachers to find that balance.

Fostering Independence and Flexible Learning

- Students benefit from personalized learning environments like the Learning Hub, where they feel trusted to manage their own pace and revisit concepts when needed.
- One-on-one support and flexible timelines help reduce frustration and build deeper understanding.
- They enjoy the responsibility of managing their own progress and find motivation in seeing their hard work pay off.
- Across schools, students express how much they value staff who take the time to check in, offer help, and support their learning journey.

Creating Safe, Supportive, and Positive School Environments

- Students consistently highlight how much they like and appreciate their teachers and staff, noting how welcomed, supported, and safe they feel at school.
- Positive relationships with staff help students feel comfortable asking for help, trying new things, and staying motivated.
- A smooth start to the school year, with engaging activities and social connection, sets a positive tone, and students notice the effort teachers make to build community.
- They suggest more welcome activities, flexible transition days, and continued support from caring adults to make school a place they feel proud to belong.

Priority Two: Fostering Safe and Caring Learning Environments

Wellness Through Reflection and Mindfulness

- Students recognize the importance of a growth mindset, managing emotions, and focusing on what they can control.
- They highlighted mindfulness, breathing techniques, and positive self-talk as key strategies for wellness.

Incorporating Wellness in Daily Routines

- Many students value physical activity, hobbies, and creative outlets such as art and music to support their mental health.
- They suggested incorporating more gym time, body breaks, outdoor activities, and opportunities for self-expression into the school day.

Building a Supportive Community

- Students appreciate learning about wellness through teachers, coaches, and family members.
- They suggested more structured wellness activities, Fun Fridays, and wellness-focused lessons to encourage connection, communication, and emotional well-being.

Priority Three: Building Strong Collaborations

Valuing Community Connections and Traditions

- Students appreciate the strong ties between schools and local groups, including shared events like the Terry Fox Run, pancake breakfasts, boss day fundraisers, and open houses supported by organizations.
- They enjoy community traditions like rodeos, parades, senior banquets, and seasonal events that connect different generations and foster a shared sense of belonging.

Building Relationships Across Generations

- Students cherish opportunities to connect with seniors, whether through leadership classes, visiting lodges, hosting senior meals, or playing games at the manor and many wish for even more of these interactions.
- They are eager to mentor and support younger children, including reading to daycare kids, volunteering at events, and leading in-school mentorship and partnership programs.

Expanding Opportunities to Get Involved

- Students want more ways to contribute to their communities, such as volunteering, gardening, job shadowing, and participating in local clubs and citizenship initiatives.
- They're also looking for greater access to sports, clubs, and drop-in activities, expressing a desire for expanded extracurriculars like gymnastics, motocross, and equine programs.

Year Three Focus Areas (2025-2026)

In reviewing the responses from stakeholders, analyzing the AERR data and listening to student voices, the following focus areas have been identified. These are identified under each Education Plan Priority.

Priority One: Supporting Learning Success for All Students

- Strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy through targeted professional learning, effective use of screeners, and student-centred instruction.
- Expand career and post-secondary pathways by growing dual credit, CTS, experiential learning, and Learning Hub offerings.
- Review and refine resource allocation to support equitable access to high-quality programming, staffing, and teaching and learning.

Priority Two: Supporting Learning Success for All Students

- Enhance mental health and wellness supports for students and staff through dedicated programs, professional learning, and health champions.
- Advance inclusive practices by expanding multidisciplinary supports and embedding trauma-informed, relationship-centred approaches.
- Use division and school-level data to identify and respond to areas of need, ensuring safe, welcoming, and supportive learning spaces.

Priority Three: Building Strong Collaborations

- Deepen parent and community engagement through School Councils, stakeholder voice opportunities, and local partnerships.
- Celebrate rural identity and school-community connections by sharing success stories and leveraging community expertise.
- Expand student voice and leadership through mentorship, wellness initiatives, and meaningful roles in school and division decision-making.