# Optimal Learning Environments

Learning environments are optimized when teachers create opportunities for students to learn by doing and to actively engage with materials and people. It is important to design physical and social environments that maximize instructional time and support learning for all.

Optimal learning environments are created when:

- social and emotional competencies are modelled and practised.
- healthy relationships are fostered between students, between adults and between students and adults.
- an enhanced understanding and appreciation of diversity is developed among students, staff, and school community.
- Diversity is meaningfully incorporated into learning environments and activities.
- student voice is honoured and perspective-taking is encouraged.
- Safe and Caring Schools policy procedures are implemented.
- school and classroom routines are developed to maximize use of learning time, allow a smooth transition between activities, and provide students with opportunities to seek help when teachers cannot provide immediate attention.
- teachers plan lessons (materials, activities, and environment) based on the principles of *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) to ensure teacher readiness and student engagement.
- classrooms are organized to allow students a variety of ways to engage in learning independently or collaboratively (e.g. tables of different shapes and sizes, learning centres, access to technology).
- students view their work as meaningful and authentic.
- experiences and resources that support student learning extend beyond the classroom.
- students have access to safe spaces and equipment that promote physical activity and emotional safety.
- students have time to eat, socialize and have opportunities for outdoor play.
- students have access to healthy foods and beverages ie. breakfast programs etc.

# Reflection

The following data sources and questions can be used to guide discussion.

**Performance Measurement Framework Report:**

**Outcome 2:** Students experience a safe, caring and inclusive school environment.
- Indicator 2.1: Positive School Climate - Student
- Indicator 2.2: Positive School Climate - Staff
- Indicator 2.3: Positive School Climate - Family
- Indicator 2.4: School Safety - Student
- Indicator 2.5: School Safety - Family
- Indicator 2.6: School Belonging - Student
- Indicator 2.7: Major Behaviours

**Outcome 3**: The education system is responsive to students' strengths and needs
- Indicator 3.1: School Engagement - Student
- Indicator 3.4: School Fit - Family

**Reference Documents**

District policies and/or procedures;

Safe and Caring Schools Policy;

Indigenous Education Framework;

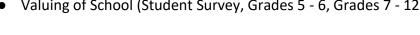Dedicated to Diversity: A Framework For Multicultural Education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**School Development Survey Scales:** these results are reported separately from the PMF Report.
- Family Engagement (Family Survey)
- Barriers to Engagement (Family Survey)
- Teacher-Student Relationships (Student Survey, Grades 7-12)
- Grit (Student Survey, Grade 7-12)
- Learning Strategies (Student Survey, Grades 5 - 6, Grades 7 - 12)
- Valuing of School (Student Survey, Grades 5 - 6, Grades 7 - 12)

- Professional Learning (Staff)

**School-based policies and/or procedures:**
- Outside play schedules.

- Code of Conduct, including teaching/modelling plan for behaviour matrix.
- Proactive programs to support positive character development.
- CPI plan.

**Additional Evidence:**
→ Record of co-curricular/extra-curricular activities.
→ Short and long term instructional and assessment plans.
→ Course enrollment (general; academic & advanced).

# Questions to Consider

Use evidence of current practices to support your discussion points, strengths, and opportunities for growth.

⟩ What elements of optimal learning environments as listed above, exist in your school? What evidence supports this?

⟩ Have your initiatives relative to these elements been effective? What is the evidence of impact?

⟩ How are the principles of UDL used to develop learning environments?