PSII
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The path is made by walking....
rationale

The world currently faces many unprecedented challenges. Yet the mainstream paradigm in education, based on industrial principles and consumerism, continues to prepare students for a known yesterday—a yesterday that is becoming less and less relevant. In contrast to that paradigm, the PSII engages learners to co-construct highly personalized learning paths that are designed to build competency and to help learners shape the world, not just conform to it. It is only by supporting young people to develop a true sense of independence, to engage deeply with their own learning, and to recognize learning as a natural process that happens in all contexts that education can help young people to empower themselves to thrive in the world that they can play a major part in creating.
key concepts at PSII

PSII is based on a small number of foundational concepts that set it apart from most high schools in the western industrialized world. These concepts are well-researched and are known to have a positive effect on learning, especially for adolescents. PSII actually closes the "knowing-doing gap" – the distance between what we know we should be doing in education and what we are actually doing.

| de-compartmentalization of learning and support |
| authentic assessment of competency and skill |
| co-constructed learning paths |
| independent and interdependent learning settings |
| blurring the lines between school and greater community |
| use of modern tools and strategies |

de-compartmentalization

Most school curriculum is built on a base of discrete subjects and disciplines. At PSII, while disciplines are sometimes referenced separately, curriculum is organized by competencies and skills, out of recognition that the world is not made up of isolated parts but is rather an interconnected whole. Organizing formal learning through competencies helps learners see these connections as well as new ones, and to challenge their own self-imposed limitations formed under the old-fashioned subject-based view. Learners will often work with teams of teachers as a means of maximizing interdisciplinary learning and assessment. Interdisciplinary instruction, problems, and inquiry-based projects are the norm. Learners will still be exposed to all the key concepts they need to graduate in BC, but will experience them in a much deeper, more natural consilience.
authentic assessment

PSII learners will engage fully in the assessment of and for their own learning. This will take place through the use of a portfolio from which key artefacts will be selected from time to time as exemplars of the learner’s skill or competency level. Learners and teachers will co-create assessment rubrics that help learners know how they are doing in a particular competency area, how to improve, and when to look for connection between topics and competencies. As for reporting on student progress, parents will be able to see quite easily how their children are progressing, and in very rich terms, as opposed to a mere letter grade on a report card. If you went to your doctor for a physical and she told you that your results were “B+ and a pleasure to have in the examination room,” how helpful would that be?

coco-constructed learning paths

Teachers and learners co-construct short- and long-term learning plans with clearly articulated, organically-occurring pathways leading to competency development and concept attainment. Learners will become adept at developing inquiry-based starting points into topics of interest. These paths of inquiry are monitored by teachers through regular check-ins and are enhanced and changed regularly through consultation with the learner, as well as a bit of respectful “nudging.” When teachers are given a chance to really get to know learners for who they really are, it is much easier to guide them as needed on a completely personalized learning path.

independent and interdependent

Personalized learning at PSII does NOT mean modular learning, like correspondence school papers or workbooks and worksheets. Rather, it is based on a learner-centred set of inquiries that will sometimes lead to completely independent learning, and as lines of inquiry cross and merge, will also often lead to interconnected, interdependent, and social learning opportunities. As appropriate, when teachers recognize moments of mutual learning readiness, some learning at PSII will be cohort-based, where a whole “class” of learners will be involved in a discussion, a lab, a project, or an activity. Within these whole-group activities, though, there will always be opportunity for customization by the learner. There will always be room for individual goals within any group endeavour. It is extremely important to balance the independent and the interdependent as adolescent learners develop a sense of collegiality and the skills associated with collaboration. Adolescents will also enjoy the satisfaction that comes from being generous with one’s own learning.
blurring the lines between school and community

Adolescents learn best when they see relevancy. Relevancy is often found naturally when helping learners draw connections between the home, the greater community, and the school. Rather than sheltering students away from the "real world," PSII teachers will expertly facilitate safe and meaningful connection between the learners and the learning opportunities that exist outside the walls of the school. Parents of PSII learners will be encouraged to become mentors and resource people for learners at the school. Over time, we will have a mentorship database — a living library — that will help learners find pre-screened real-world mentors as they work through their inquiries and investigations. The learners themselves will become mentors too.

Using modern tools and strategies

Concepts and paths of inquiry are linked together in a complex web. Interestingly, this is also how our brains are organized. PSII will use both modern and older technology to help its learners access ideas, opinions, and curricular content. In a personalized learning environment, where the learners may very well find themselves knowing more on a particular topic than the teachers, the teachers’ jobs become that of facilitators of learning, connecting learners with what they need to continue to develop. One example of a tool that PSII will use, is a mind-map style content interface, allowing both teachers and students to see the interconnected topics and concepts as they work along personalized learning paths. This tool, among others, will help teachers and learners know what is possible, what is next, and how surprisingly well-connected and interdisciplinary our world really is.

the ideal PSII learner

Everyone is an ideal learner, because learning is natural. It is, however, important that learners and their families realize that PSII is not the same as other schools. Many successful students have learned the game: find out exactly what the teacher wants and give them what they want to a very high level. PSII will not work this way. Students need to be comfortable with the idea of non-competitive learning environments, planning for their own learning, co-constructing learning paths and methods of assessment and evaluation, working with teams of teachers, not being told what to do and when to do it, learning a lot, failing once in a while, and being completely engaged in their own learning.
founder and principal

details temporarily removed

learningstorm education society

The PSII is governed by the Learningstorm Education Society, a not-for-profit society dedicated to the betterment of the world through improved educational structures and practices. The purposes of the society are:

- to operate an independent, not-for-profit secondary school where learners can enjoy an educational context that best suits adolescent learners
- to operate a "laboratory school" in which both prospective and practising teachers can observe cutting-edge, research-based education methods in action
- to contribute to the knowledge base related to best practices in adolescent education
- to foster in adolescent learners a passion for learning through the use of inquiry-based, interdisciplinary, and project-based learning methods
- to challenge and overcome unnecessary and obsolete status quo structures in education that can represent barriers to optimal learning
- to promote connections between the school and the greater community and among different generations of people

PSII

tuition

In its first year or two, until enrollment stabilizes and until all funding sources are identified, tuition may fluctuate somewhat from year to year. PSII is dedicated to keeping tuition as low as possible so as not create an elitist atmosphere. Based on a conservative estimate of enrolled students, operating grants from the BC Ministry of Education, building lease costs, equipment, salaries, and operating budget, tuition can be expressed now in approximate terms. Tuition in
the first few years will be in the range of $7000 to $8000 dollars per year, based on current cost projections.

location

Great question! Until plans have progressed further, a specific location is yet to be identified. In general terms though, the school will be located in or very near the downtown core of Victoria, BC, likely in a storefront or other similar commercial property. We will be seeking space that allows for approximately 35 to 45 square feet per learner, the North American standard for adolescent learning environments. The school will be located near public transportation routes for easy access. Physical education and daily physical activity requirements will be met through a partnership with a third-party provider – likely the Victoria YMCA. The cost of using the YMCA is included in the tuition.

why invest?

Are you working in an environment that demands both critical and creative thinking? Would your sector benefit from more young people who know how to think, how to research, how to collaborate effectively, and how to take initiative? Do you believe the world needs more innovators? Would you like to see the education system in BC and beyond benefit from observing and learning from a school that puts all the right pieces into place? Would you like to help someone access such a school, even when the tuition cost is beyond their means? Then you should invest. Contributions can be made to Learningstorm Education Society, a not-for-profit society that operates the PSI1.