



The Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
Education Policy and Directions Committee

AGENDA

Date: Monday, November 2, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

Location: Tolmie Boardroom, 556 Boleskine Road

Chairperson: Trustee Duncan

Pages

A. COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

A.1. Acknowledgement of Traditional Territories - Jon Hamlin and John Harris

The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.

A.2. Approval of the Agenda

Recommended Motion:
That the November 2, 2020 agenda be approved.

A.3. Approval of the Minutes

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Recommended Motion:
That the September 14, 2020 Education Policy and Directions Committee meeting minutes be approved.

A.4. Business arising from Minutes

B. PRESENTATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE

B.1. VCPAC Member Feedback - Kristil Hammer

C. NEW BUSINESS

C.1. Introduction of Student Representatives

a. Bryn Nyvall - Spectrum Community School

b. Lassah Johnson, Esquimalt High School

C.2. District Team Update - Tammy Sherstobitoff & Tammy Renyard

C.3. District Team Operational Plan Update - Deputy Superintendent Whitten, Associate Superintendents Caldwell & Roberts

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C.4. MyEd Forms - Trustee Painter

Recommended Motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) write a letter to the Ministry of Education requesting that MyEd specific forms include "X" as an option for the "Gender" category

AND FURTHER

That the request of notification of gender for parents and siblings be removed.

C.5. Foundation Skills Assessment #1 - Trustee Whiteaker

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Recommended Motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) write the Ministry of Education requesting the cancellation of the Foundation Skills Assessment for the 2020-2021 school year during COVID-19.

C.6. Foundation Skills Assessment #2 - Trustee Whiteaker

Recommended Motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) instruct the Superintendent to instruct principals to advise parents who opt their children out of Foundation Skills Assessment, not excluded from writing the FSA as described in the FSA Administration Manual, that optional learning opportunities and spaces cannot be accommodated, therefore they will be required to keep their student home if they choose to opt out.

Recommended Motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) direct the Superintendent to develop a policy addressing religious accommodation in schools in consultation with local religious and First Nations leadership, with specific attention to:

- Creation of a multi-faith calendar identifying key religious and spiritual days of observance developed;
- Guidance respecting how practices can be reasonably accommodated;
- Direction on how parents and/or students can request accommodation for their practices and/or days of observance; and
- Direction to staff regarding their obligations to recognize requests for religious accommodation in scheduling activities, tests and assignments.

D. NOTICE OF MOTION

E. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

F. ADJOURNMENT

Recommended Motion:

That the meeting adjourn.

Note: This meeting is being audio and video recorded. The video can be viewed on the District website.



Education Policy and Directions Committee Meeting

MINUTES

September 14, 2020

Tolmie Boardroom, 556 Boleskine Road

Trustees Present: Nicole Duncan, Tom Ferris, Diane McNally, Ryan Painter, Rob Paynter, Jordan Watters, Ann Whiteaker

Administration: Shelley Green, Superintendent of Schools, Deb Whitten, Deputy Superintendent, Colin Roberts, Associate Superintendent, Andree Porter (recorder), Kim Morris, Secretary Treasurer, Harold Caldwell, Associate Superintendent

Stakeholders, Other Staff & Guests: David Hovis, District Principal, Tammy Renyard, District Principal, Shelly Niemi, District Administrator of Indigenous Education Department, Connor McCoy, VPVPA President, Cindy Graf, GVTA Representative, Kristil Hammer, VCPAC Vice-President

A. COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

A.1 Acknowledgement of Traditional Territories

Chair Duncan recognized and acknowledged the Esquimalt and Songhees Nation, on whose traditional territories we live, we learn and we do our work.

A.2 Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Trustee Ferris

That the September 14, 2020 Education Policy & Directions Committee meeting agenda be approved with the following amendments:

Add C.7 Dispensation for secondary level French Immersion students impacted by COVID-19

Motion Carried Unanimously

A.3 Approval of the Minutes

Moved by Trustee Painter

That the June 1, 2020 Education Policy and Directions Committee meeting minutes be approved.

Motion Carried Unanimously

A.4 Business arising from Minutes

B. PRESENTATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE

C. NEW BUSINESS

C.1 Introduction of Student Representative

Superintendent Green provided Trustees with a brief introduction to 5 of our 9 new Student Representatives for the 2020-2021 school year. In attendance were, Gillian Clark of Lambrick Park Secondary School, Felix Jensen of Victoria High School, Celeste Vickery of Oak Bay High School, Lassah Johnson and Thunder Defayette of Esquimalt High School.

C.2 Equity Scan - Shelly Niemi

Shelly Niemi, District Administrator of the Indigenous Education Department, provided Trustees with an overview of the District's upcoming participation in the Ministry of Education's Equity Scan via their Equity in Action initiative. Questions of clarification were asked.

C.3 District Team Updates (August - Fall 2020) - Tammy Renyard & David Hovis (verbal)

Chair Duncan provided a brief introduction of the District Team's structure. District Principals Tammy Renyard & David Hovis provided Trustees with an update on the District Team's recent focus and efforts in regards to Learning, School Systems/Structural Support, and Transitions for students and teachers returning to school. Questions of clarification were asked.

C.4 Rescindment of January 19, 2015 Motion re: Foundation Skills Assessment Testing - Superintendent Green

Superintendent Green provided Trustees with an overview of the Foundation Skills Assessment and the history surrounding the original motion from January 19th 2015. Discussion ensued.

Moved by Trustee Ferris

That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) rescind the following motion that was carried at the January 19, 2015 Board of Education meeting:

“That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) direct the Superintendent to inform school-based principals to honour parent requests to withdraw their child from the FSA testing and to refrain from contacting them upon receipt of their withdrawal request form as of January 2016.”

For (3): Trustee Ferris, Trustee Painter, and Trustee Watters

Against (1): Trustee McNally

Abstain (1): Trustee Duncan

Motion Carried (3 to 1)

a. Letter from GVTA re: FSA

C.5 Parent Education Fund (2020-2021) Update - Deputy Superintendent Whitten

Deputy Superintendent Whitten referred Trustees to the Parent Education Fund memo included in the meeting package.

C.6 Draft Terms of Reference - Police Liaison Officer Ad Hoc Committee - Associate Superintendent Caldwell

Associate Superintendent Caldwell provided the Committee with a brief background regarding the framework used to create the draft Terms of Reference for the Police Liaison Officer Ad Hoc Committee.

That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) accept the amended Draft Terms of Reference for the Police Liaison Officer Ad Hoc Committee.

Discussion ensued among the Trustees with a recommendation to amend the Terms of Reference as follows:

Moved by Trustee McNally

That "including consideration of cessation of the program." be added to the end of item #2 under "Purpose" of the draft Terms of Reference for the Police Liaison Officer Ad-Hoc Committee.

For (4): Trustee Duncan, Trustee McNally, Trustee Painter, and Trustee Watters

Against (1): Trustee Ferris

Motion Carried (4 to 1)

Further discussion ensued among Trustees with a recommendation to amend the draft Terms of Reference as follows:

Moved by Trustee Painter

That "2 Secondary Students" be stricken from the "Membership" section of the draft Terms of Reference for the Police Liaison Officer Ad Hoc Committee, and be replaced with "1 Student from each Secondary School who identifies as being racialized" be added.

Prior to voting on this amendment, further discussion ensued and an amendment to the amendment was suggested.

Moved by Trustee Paynter

That "2 Secondary Students" be stricken from the "Membership" section of the draft Terms of Reference for the Police Liaison Officer Ad Hoc Committee, and be replaced with "1 Student from each Secondary School who identifies as a member of an equity seeking community".

For (4): Trustee Duncan, Trustee McNally, Trustee Painter, and Trustee Watters

Against (1): Trustee Ferris

Motion Carried (4 to 1)

Discussion ensued and the following motion was put forward.

Moved by Trustee Paynter

That "interventions" be stricken from item #4 under the "Deliverables" section of the draft Terms of Reference for the Police Liaison Officer Ad Hoc Committee, and be replaced with "Data Driven Assessments of PLO programs informed by such surveys or other data requests the Committee deems necessary."

Motion Carried Unanimously

Discussion ensued and the following motion was put forward.

Moved by Trustee Watters

That "(preferably from an equity seeking group)" be added to "2 Parents/Caregivers" under the "Membership" section of the draft Terms of Reference for the Police Liaison Officer Ad Hoc Committee.

Motion Carried Unanimously

Two friendly amendments were made to the document. The first is in regards to references to SRO which will be stricken from the document and replaced with PLO. The second friendly amendment is to strike "Prioritizing" from item # 3 under "Deliverables" and to replace that with "Reviewing". After receiving all recommendations, Chair Duncan put forward the draft Terms of Reference, as amended, for approval.

Moved by Trustee Duncan

That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) accept the amended Draft Terms of Reference for the Police Liaison Officer Ad Hoc Committee.

Motion Carried Unanimously

C.7 Dispensation for secondary level French Immersion students impacted by COVID-19 - Trustee Paynter

Trustee Paynter presented the following motion and provided a rationale.

Moved by Trustee Paynter

That the Board of Education of Greater Victoria (School District 61) instruct the Chair to write a letter to the Minister of Education asking that Graduation Program Requirements for the Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires en Colombie-Britannique be relaxed for secondary students unable to attend in person classes to receive French language instruction during the 2020/2021 school year.

A discussion took place among Trustees. A recommendation to amend the motion and refer to the Advocacy Committee was made.

Moved by Trustee Watters

That the motion "That the Board of Education of Greater Victoria (School District 61) instruct the Chair to write a letter to the Minister of Education asking that Graduation Program Requirements for the Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires en Colombie-Britannique be relaxed for secondary students unable to attend in person classes to receive French language instruction during the 2020/2021 school year." be referred to the Advocacy Committee.

Motion Carried Unanimously

D. NOTICE OF MOTION

E. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

F. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 p.m.

Moved by Trustee Ferris

That the meeting adjourn.

Note: This meeting is being audio and video recorded. The video can be viewed on the District website.

Motion Carried Unanimously

Chair

Secretary-Treasurer

October 5th 2020

District Team Operational Plan Update

Background

The District Team is comprised of members from the Learning Team, Indigenous Education Department, Learning Support Team, Pathways and Partnerships and Modern Languages and Multiculturalism. Historically each team created an Operational Plan with separate strategies, goals and metrics to measure progress. Through the Education Policy Committee each team presented their Operational Plan on an annual basis. The development of the 2020-2025 District Strategic Plan created an opportunity for the teams to work collectively and better align goals, strategies and outcomes. As such, it was decided that the District Team would work collaboratively to create one Operational Plan with goals, strategies and key result indicators in alignment with Goal 1, 2 and 3 of the District Strategic Plan.

While the District Team is early in the process we are excited by the prospect of working together to create an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment that will support and improve all learners' personal and academic success; to create a culturally responsive learning environment that will support Indigenous learners' personal and academic success and to create an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment that will support all learners' physical and mental well-being.

Update

For the 2020-2021 school year, the District Team will focus on collecting and examining baseline data in order to help identify the strengths, challenges and gaps in our work. Concurrently, we will also focus on developing a greater understanding and knowledge of culturally responsive and equitable learning environments so that during years two through five we can critically examine personal and systemic biases, attitudes, beliefs, values and practices to increase student and staff understanding and appreciation of Indigenous worldviews, histories and perspectives. We will also focus on engaging and collaborating with students, families and staff to provide an inclusive learning environment that will enhance and support student learning, identities and well-being.

The District Team anticipates having the completed 2020-2021 Operational Plan in time to present at the November 2, 2020 Education Policy Committee meeting. At that time, members from the District Team will share with the committee the goals, strategies and metrics of the plan in order to allow for clarifications questions and discussion.

During subsequent Education Policy Committee meetings members of the team will provide updates related to the Operational Plan in order to ensure a regular feedback loop is established.

Deb Whitten, Deputy Superintendent
Colin Roberts, Associate Superintendent
Harold Caldwell, Associate Superintendent

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MEMO

To: The Education Policy Committee

Date: November 2, 2020

RE: District Team Operational Plan 2020-2021

Update

The District Team, comprised of members from the Learning Team, Indigenous Education Department, Learning Support Team, Pathways and Partnerships, and Modern Languages and Multiculturalism has collaborated to create the District Team Operational Plan. The District Team Operational Plan's primary goal for 2020/2021 will be to focus on developing a greater understanding and knowledge of culturally responsive and equitable learning environments. In subsequent years we will continue to critically examine personal and systemic biases, attitudes, beliefs, values and practices to increase student and staff understanding and appreciation of Indigenous worldviews, histories and perspectives. Creating an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment through this process will support and improve the personal and academic success of all learners specifically, our indigenous students, children and youth in care and students with diverse needs and abilities.

District Team Operational Plan 2020-2021

Goal:

Develop a greater understanding and knowledge of culturally responsive and equitable learning, teaching and working environments in order to close the opportunity and achievement gaps for all learners.

Strategies:

1. Develop a framework that will be used by district staff and stakeholders to increase their understanding and ensure implementation of culturally responsive and equitable learning, teaching, and working environments.
2. Develop and support high quality culturally responsive and equitable learning opportunities and resources in order to close the achievement gaps for all learners
3. Utilize the Equity Scan to critically examine personal and systemic biases, attitudes, beliefs, values and practices to inform future growth and change.

Deb Whitten, Colin Roberts and Harold Caldwell

 www.sd61.bc.ca |   @sd61schools

The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.

TO: Education Policy and Directions Committee

FROM: Trustee Ann Whiteaker

RE: Foundations Skills Assessment

DATE: November 2, 2020

Background

In March of 2020, the COVID – 19 pandemic halted in person learning in schools across the province. In April 2020, after only 2 weeks of preparation teachers, admin and support staff redesigned and created on line lesson plans, sourced and provided technology to those in need, and everyone learned new ways of teaching and learning. Additionally, as the pandemic continued the need for front line workers to have access to childcare was identified as a real need and the responsibility to provide the resource of space and staff was undertaken by District staff. Safety protocols were developed, implemented and monitored.

After a considerable community effort COVID 19 was put in check and the curve flattened by mid May 2020. Again staff were given two weeks to create a new plan to re-opened schools for the month of June to those families wishing to send their child. More safety measures and protocols were developed and implemented, lesson plans once again redesigned and adapted to ensure learning outcomes were attainable by year end. Described as a test run for September return to school, Approx. 50% of primary and middle school students returned requiring teachers to instruct and maintain both in class and online lesson plans.

Learning from the lessons of the June “test run” and without contrary direction, staff did as they always do in July, and developed back to school schedules and logistics. Safety protocols were expanded, timetables, electives, teacher assignments etc. considered and drafted ready for September. The District learned the details of the Covid back to school plan late July which greatly varied from the drafted “test run” planning. Once again, August saw the redesign of back to school planning, timetables, teacher assignments, student schedules, transportation, classroom set ups, traffic flows, more safety protocols etc. once again.

Rationale

To say planning has been continuous and exhausting for staff over the past 6 months is an understatement. The amazing task of successfully returning students to school while still in a pandemic has been implemented but the cost on staff and families is evident. Staff are tired of planning, and adjusting; there is a yearning to focus on student wellbeing and learning. Students have also experienced continuous change; to their educational environment, their social interactions, and routines.

Additionally, families of our students have experienced and continue to experience uncertainty during these times emphasizing the benefit school plays in the daily lives of vulnerable students. School connectedness has clearly been identified by Dr. Bonnie Henry as a critical component to the overall health of our students and cited as a one of the major considerations in returning students to school; in a full time, in person, in traceable cohorts manner that allowed for social interaction and school connectedness for students.

Teachers and staff are being caring, creative and courageous within the modified learning environments and protocols to ensure students feel connected to their learning as well as to their school communities. Now more than ever schools need to be focused on routine and reliability while being responsive to possible changes to health orders. Upsetting class routines and directing resources to administering the FSA will detract from the more important work of building and maintaining school connectedness for our students. Students have lost field trips, community activities, assemblies, sports competitions, parent volunteers, and in some cases separated by cohort from their friends. If we can take all this away, removing the FSA is not an unreasonable request allowing classes to focus on the mental wellbeing of students rather than measuring the system during a pandemic.

We must consider the mental wellbeing of staff along with the restricted resources cohorts have created. Supervision of exams will rely on those adults currently assigned to the cohort – adding another layer of responsibility to the grade 4 & 7 learning teams. Staff has done an amazing job keeping students first in the return to school plan, now it is our job as the employer to keep the needs and wellbeing of our staff in the fore front. Eliminating the FSA for the 2020/21 year will provide some welcome relief and lessen the work load for some of our teachers and schools while maintaining routine for students, allowing them to focus on learning and mental wellbeing.

Alignment

The motion supports the emotional and mental wellbeing of students and staff to support learning during unprecedented times.

TO: Education Policy and Directions Committee

FROM: Trustee Rob Paynter

Re: Religious accommodation in schools

DATE: 05 October 2020

Background:

Caveat: Nothing in this proposal is intended to suggest that there is any intentional discrimination on the part of School District 61 (Greater Victoria) or any of its staff or representatives. There is however an opportunity to recognize how the structure of our society results in systemic bias against members of our school community.

Section 76 of the School Act states that:

76 (1) All schools and Provincial schools must be conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles.

(2) The highest morality must be inculcated, but no religious dogma or creed is to be taught in a school or Provincial school.

Within the context of a multi-cultural society in which many different religious perspectives are held it is reasonable and appropriate that limitations on religious instruction are established. It has also been accepted however that religions may be examined and explored in an academic manner which insures that no particular views are elevated nor denigrated.

It must be recognized however that our system of public education exists within a western, Judaeo-Christian construct. Christian holy days, in particular, Christmas and Easter are state authorized public holidays. School holidays follow a similar pattern with vacation periods overlapping or being closely related to these significant dates. As a consequence there is little if any conflict between dominant religious views and public education. The same is not the case for other religions or days of cultural observance. In this respect, the current situation in public schools can be systemic in its discriminatory conduct; the discrimination is not due to the deliberate action of any particular party but because society's structures and institutions inherently favour one perspective or segment of community over others.

The BC Human Rights tribunal provides that with respect to [Human Rights in Services, Facilities and Accommodations](#)¹, discrimination can occur in the negative form by treating a person the same as others which consequently has a negative effect on them:

For example: A child with a disability does not receive meaningful access to educational services.

The BC HRT stipulates specific conditions where discrimination in poor treatment may occur²:

- [Justification defence](#) (bona fide and reasonable justification)
- [Public decency defence](#)
- [Defence regarding life or health insurance contracts](#)
- [Age distinction in legislation](#)

The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario while not a replacement for the BCHRT, nevertheless serves as a source for guidance and reference materials. The following policy guidance pieces are relevant to this topic:

- [Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed](#)³
- [Policy statement on religious accommodation in schools](#)⁴

It is important to recognize that there are a numerous Indigenous spiritual and cultural practices and observances that do not necessarily conform to a Western conception of religion which are nevertheless significant to individual and cultural identity and requiring of equitable consideration. The University of BC's Senate [Policy J-136: Academic Accommodation for all Student's religious Observances and for Cultural Observances of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Students](#)⁵ provides some guidance on this matter.

Rationale:

Specific points that I view as relevant to the discussion at hand include this excerpt from the OHRC policy on religious accommodations in schools(highlighting added) :

The duty to accommodate requires that the most appropriate accommodation be determined and provided, again, to the point of undue hardship. Accommodation is considered appropriate if it results in equal opportunity to enjoy the same level of benefits and privileges experienced by others, or if it is proposed or adopted to achieve equal opportunity, and meets the individual's creed-related needs. The most appropriate accommodation is the one that:

¹ Web address: <http://www.bchrt.bc.ca/human-rights-duties/services.htm>

² Web Address: <http://www.bchrt.gov.bc.ca/human-rights-duties/services.htm#pdd>

³ Web Address Printer friendly format: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/book/export/html/16276>

⁴ Web Address: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-statement-religious-accommodation-schools>

⁵ Web Address: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,330,0,0>

- Respects dignity (including autonomy, comfort and confidentiality);
- Responds to a person's individualized needs; and
- Allows for integration and full participation.

The OHRC's Creed Policy provides practical examples of how the creed-based protections under the Code operate in everyday life. For example, it looks at how the duty to accommodate applies in situations where a person is adversely affected and prevented from observing a creed belief as a result of an organizational rule, practice, standard or requirement. In such situations, an education provider has a duty to accommodate the observance short of undue hardship.

The duty to accommodate creed beliefs extends to situations where prayer observances conflict with regular daily routines or school hours. Our policy provides the following example:

Example: A school board advises school administrators to accommodate students and staff who need to observe time-specific prayers, including when these occur during class time. Teachers are advised to keep in mind such prayer observances when scheduling exams, tests, class outings and overnight trips. Sample accommodations include designating private areas or a room for prayer observances; permitting use of a private washroom, or, if not possible, identifying a washroom within the school for washing before prayers; not requiring participation in school activities during obligatory congregational prayer observances; and allowing students and staff enough preparation time to observe Sabbath, especially during days when the sun sets early.

Religious and creed observances sometimes take communal forms. An education provider may consider offering on-site space to observe congregational forms of worship, as an inclusive design approach, where people require accommodation during normal school hours to fulfill congregational worship needs.

Example: A high school permits the use of a designated private space to accommodate the weekly Friday congregational prayer observances of its large Muslim student population.

An inclusive design approach that accommodates the needs of the group is generally preferred to removing barriers after they become apparent, or making "one-off" accommodations. This is because it enables accessibility and inclusivity from the start, proactively meets the needs of many people, and minimizes the need for people to ask for individual accommodations.

The Peel District School Board has a [Religious Accommodation](#) policy⁶ that offers one approach to addressing this matter. It includes a [Parent/Student Religious Accommodation Form](#)⁷ that could serve as a template for inviting members of our school community to make their request

⁶ Web Address: <https://www.peelschools.org/aboutus/equity/Pages/default.aspx#religiousaccommodation>

⁷ Web Address: <https://www.peelschools.org/aboutus/equity/Documents/Parent-Student%20Religious%20Accommodation%20form.pdf>

known. An example of an [interfaith calendar](#)⁸ depicting significant religious events is also available for consideration.

Alignment to the Strategic Plan: This proposal aligns with:

Goal 2

Create a culturally responsive learning environment that will support Indigenous learners' personal and academic success..

Strategy 1:

Critically examine personal and systemic biases, attitudes, beliefs, values and practices to increase student and staff understanding and appreciation of Indigenous worldviews, histories and perspectives.

Strategy 2:

Engage and collaborate with local Nations, Indigenous educators, Indigenous community leaders, Elders and families to enhance Indigenous student learning and well-being and identity.

Goal 3

Create an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment that will support all learners' physical and mental well-being.

Recommendation:

That the Board of Education of Greater Victoria (School District 61) direct the Superintendent to develop a policy addressing religious accommodation in schools in consultation with local religious and First Nations leadership, with specific attention to:

- ***Creation of a multi-faith calendar identifying key religious and spiritual days of observance developed,***
- ***Guidance respecting how practices can be reasonably accommodated,***
- ***Direction on how parents and/or students can request accommodation for their practices and/or days of observance,***
- ***Direction to staff regarding their obligations to recognize requests for religious accommodation in scheduling activities, test and assignments.***

⁸ Web Address: <https://peelschools.org/calendar/schoolyear/Documents/Days%20of%20Significance%202020-21.pdf>

Office of the Associate Superintendent

School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
556 Boleskine Road, Victoria, BC V8Z 1E8
Phone (250) 475-4220 Fax (250) 475-4112

Harold W. Caldwell – Associate Superintendent

To: Education Policy Committee

From: District Team

Date: November 2, 2020

RE: Mental Health Grants

Background:

In November of 2019 and September 2020, the Greater Victoria School District received 2 grants in the amounts of \$24 500 and \$48 000 respectively, to support mental health and well-being promotion in our school communities. We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education.

The November 2019 \$24 500 grant was used to support two programs within our mental health infrastructure; PISE Teacher Partnership Program and Second Step.

PISE Teacher Partnership Program is designed to develop physical literacy within our middle school grade 6 and 7 advisories. Lesson plans emphasise fundamental movement skills and social-emotional skills with emphasis on movement and participation. All teachers receive PISE resources, including comprehensive lesson plans and access to an always growing games and activities database. \$21 000 of Mental Health Grant was used to fund this initiative and to date, every middle school has participated and will participate again in the 2020/2021 school year.

Second Step is a K-5, research based program rooted in social-emotional learning. It helps children sort through complicated emotions, make sound decisions, build positive relationships and manage strong feelings. Second Step's holistic approach helps create a more empathetic society by providing education professionals and families with tools to take an active role in the social-emotional growth and safety of children. The program provides instruction in SEL with units on skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, friendship skills, and problem solving. Second Step was introduced across the district in the 2018/2019 school year with every school receiving a K-5 kit. \$3 500 of the Mental Health Grant was used to purchase a kit for our district counsellor and healthy schools coordinator to continue to provide support with Second Step to our elementary schools.

The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.

Office of the Associate Superintendent

Harold W. Caldwell – Associate Superintendent

A plan for the use of the September 2020 \$48 000 grant is outlined below and was developed by the district team with consideration of the following key elements:

- Indigenous perspectives and culturally safe and inclusive environments
- Compassionate Systems Leadership
- Inquiry-based conversations around data
- Social and emotional learning, trauma-informed practice and mental health literacy

Clinical Consultation for Teacher-Counsellors \$15 000

Rationale:

The grant states that the Ministry encourages for this year, “a focus on compassionate systems leadership and supporting adult well-being when planning activities. Research confirms many school staff are experiencing high levels of stress, which is directly linked to students’ stress. Taking a compassionate lens acknowledges that adult well-being is a critical element in supporting children in the classroom and allows for a systems-wide approach to mental health promotion and improved mental health outcomes for students and the school community.”

We know, that as the mental health leaders in schools, we need to support our counsellors in their ability to process, debrief and create thoughtful, culturally responsive strategies for supporting the wide range of youth with their own mental health concerns.

It is considered best practice for counsellors to have either peer or clinical consultation opportunities, and it is currently more difficult to provide the peer model, following Pat Fisher’s work, that we instigated last year. There is also real interest by the school counsellors to investigate a more individualized clinical consultation strategy. This framework aligns with our strategic plan, and will specifically include that all support provided to our counsellors will be viewed through the lenses of culturally responsiveness and equity.

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Office of the Associate Superintendent

Harold W. Caldwell – Associate Superintendent

Steps:

1. Plan was introduced to all teacher counsellors at monthly zoom counselling meeting
2. A committee that includes elementary, middle and secondary counsellors met October 22nd to create a proposal for either small group consultation or individual consultation. They will present their work to District Counsellors on Nov 7th and then it will be presented to all teacher counsellors on November 10th.
3. Based on committee work, a contract position for clinical consultation will be posted, with the goal of identifying a clinician with an understanding of the issues impacting school counsellors in their jobs, a culturally responsive professional framework and the professional experience and training to offer effective, targeted support for teacher-counsellors.
4. The goal is to have the program in place for January 2021 at the latest.

Youth and Family Counsellor Outreach for vulnerable LINK @ Lambrick students \$9 000

Rationale:

The Mental Health grant states, “ Mental health promotion is about fostering learning environments in which all members of the school community are supporting individual resilience, creating supportive settings and addressing the influence of the broader determinants of mental health. Research shows that schools have been identified as the most appropriate environment for universal mental health promotion, as well as for early recognition of mental health challenges.”

The LINK at Lambrick program focuses on supporting a wide range of students whose mental health challenges and/or other vulnerabilities have made it difficult for them to be successful in a regular school setting, yet these youth hope to transition back into a regular school setting when they have the skills to be successful. Youth that struggle to commit consistently to this flexible system are identified and supported through outreach by the Youth and Family Counsellor with the goal of being re-connected to the program, through the identification and removal of barriers to attending school that may include physical, mental, social, or cultural themes for the youth. Interventions may include home visits, practicing getting to school with the counsellor, family meetings, and connecting to outside agencies including MCFD, CYMH and other partners as needed.

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Office of the Associate Superintendent

Harold W. Caldwell – Associate Superintendent

Steps:

1. Youth and Family Counsellor given time (7.5 hours a week) to do outreach work
2. Students are identified who are currently unable to attend the twice a week program consistently
3. YFC creates individualized plans to connect youth to program (see above in rationale)
4. YFC meets with District Counsellors for ongoing updates, consultation and problem solving

District Outreach supporting Vulnerable Youth and Families \$24 000 (will try and match funds from other sources in order to hire two professionals)

Rationale:

As stated in the earlier rationale, the Mental Health grant states, “ Mental health promotion is about fostering learning environments in which all members of the school community are supporting individual resilience, creating supportive settings and addressing the influence of the broader determinants of mental health. Research shows that schools have been identified as the most appropriate environment for universal mental health promotion, as well as for early recognition of mental health challenges.” The document also promotes, “ Indigenous perspectives and culturally safe and inclusive environments”.

The Mental Health and Indigenous District teams are working together to create a pilot program targeting vulnerable youth and families that are currently struggling with school engagement. The program will identify youth who may be a child/youth in care, urban indigenous, or other cultural minority and are struggling with any school connection, regardless of current or prior interventions of support. The goal is to hire professionals to support the youth and families by working with them in their homes and community. They will identify and reduce or eliminate barriers to school connection while working with other district and community supports in finding ways to reengage the youth with an equitable, culturally responsive school plan.

Steps:

1. Indigenous and Mental Health team meet again (Oct 29th) to align plan with current supports and strategic goals
2. Create job description and work with HR on process for creating new position
3. Identify families for support and plan for measuring success
4. Goal is to have program in place by December 2020

The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.



September 25, 2020

Ref: 239445

Shelley Green, Superintendent
Greater Victoria, SD 61
Email: sgreen@sd61.bc.ca

Dear **Shelley Green**

We are pleased to inform you that **Greater Victoria, SD 61** has been awarded a grant in the amount of **\$48,000** to support mental health and well-being promotion activities in your school community. An Electronic Funds Transfer will follow on September 30, 2020.

The 2020/2021 grant funding represents year 2 of the 3-year \$8.87-million investment that was [announced](#) by the Province on September 4, 2019, as well as the additional \$2-million boost [announced](#) on September 2, 2020.

The intention of this funding is to:

- Use existing student data (as chosen by **Greater Victoria, SD 61** from any relevant and appropriate data source) to fund the development of new/enhanced evidence-based, inclusive mental health and well-being activities;
 - Mental Health activities may be universal or targeted in support of students, families, and/or educators;
- Build upon 2018/19 and 2019/20 funding for continued and sustainable mental health resources in the district. This year, we are promoting a focus on compassionate systems leadership and adult well-being, while still considering the approaches of social and emotional learning, trauma informed practice, and mental health literacy; and
- Support districts to engage with Indigenous Rightsholders and Partners within the District/School community to ensure planned activities are culturally safe and meet the needs of Indigenous children and youth;

Please see the attached [Overview for Mental Health in Schools Grant Funding Document](#) for more information.

A grant of this nature requires that the Ministry outline its standard expectations in terms of accountability and acknowledgement.

In accordance with conditions placed on all government grants, *Greater Victoria, SD 61* must:

- Use all grant funds only for the purpose outlined above.
- By **December 1, 2020**, provide the Ministry a report through the Action Plan Questionnaire outlining how the funding has been or will be spent. Funding must be spent before the end of the fiscal.
- Completion of the 2020/2021 Action Plan Questionnaire is **required** and may impact future grant funding if not completed.
- The Ministry may reclaim any portion of the grant should *Greater Victoria, SD 61* not use the funds received for the purposes outlined in this letter.

Further, we ask that you acknowledge the Province of British Columbia's assistance on written materials related to this grant. The following acknowledgement may be used:

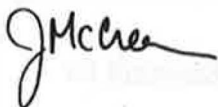
"We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education."

Action Plan Questionnaire:

- Action Plan Questionnaire link: _____ s _____
(please note this link will be active October 1 – December 1, 2020).
- The initial password to access the Action Plan Questionnaire for *Greater Victoria, SD 61* is _____. This password is only shared with the recipient of this letter.
 - If *Greater Victoria, SD 61* wishes to provide access to multiple parties, please ensure to share the secure password.
- You will have the capacity to save, log out, and log in as desired prior to submitting the final Action Plan by **December 1, 2020**.
- If you are experiencing technical difficulties accessing the Action Plan Questionnaire, please contact AWIS at support@awinfosys.com or 1-866-558-5339.

Thank you for your continued commitment to supporting the students, educators and families of your district with building mental health and well-being capacity and supporting our Provincial commitment to overall student success.

Sincerely,



Jennifer McCrea
Assistant Deputy Minister
Learning Division
Ministry of Education

September 25, 2020

To: Superintendents of British Columbia School Districts and the Federation of Independent School Associations in BC

Overview for Mental Health in Schools Grant Funding

The Ministry of Education is once again pleased to provide grant funding to each school district, as well as to the Federation of Independent School Associations in BC (FISA BC) on behalf of independent schools, to better support mental health for children.

The Province recently announced a boost to funds for school-based wellness programs and supports by \$2 million, topping up the \$8.8-million investment over three years that was announced last September. This means that for the 2020-21 school year, school districts and independent school authorities will receive a collective total of \$3.75 million in grants to promote mental wellness and provide additional supports for students, families and educators.

These grants provide school districts and FISA BC with an opportunity to build capacity in mental health and well-being related knowledge, skills, and resources in school communities. Grants may be used for a range of different activities, such as student workshops and staff training. Sustainable capacity building initiatives are encouraged - such as train-the-trainer programs and the development of video or web-based resource materials for educators, students, and/or families. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, school districts and FISA BC should ensure that grant-funded initiatives adhere to the BC Centre for Disease Control's [comprehensive health and safety guidelines](#), advice on [B.C.'s Back to School Plan website](#), and should consider the importance of providing access to digital and online resources for blended learning opportunities.

Supporting Information

The Ministry of Education has recently announced the [Mental Health in Schools \(MHIS\) Strategy](#) which embeds positive mental health and wellness programs and services in all aspects of the education system. Strategic direction for MHIS comes from [A Pathway to Hope](#) which highlights the importance of promoting early childhood social and emotional development and mental health in schools.

Mental health promotion is about fostering learning environments in which all members of the school community are supporting individual resilience, creating supportive settings and addressing the influence of the broader determinants of mental health. Research shows that schools have been identified as the most appropriate environment for universal mental health promotion, as well as for early recognition of mental health challenges.

In 2018/19 and 2019/20, school districts and FISA BC were asked to consider the approaches of social and emotional learning, trauma-informed practice, and mental health literacy, which are foundational elements of

mental health promotion. This year, the Ministry also encourages a focus on **compassionate systems leadership** and **supporting adult well-being** when planning activities. Research confirms many school staff are experiencing high levels of stress, which is directly linked to students' stress. Taking a compassionate lens acknowledges that adult well-being is a critical element in supporting children in the classroom and allows for a systems-wide approach to mental health promotion and improved mental health outcomes for students and the school community.

This year, as in years past, the Ministry is asking that the following key elements are considered for planning mental health activities – these elements will be reflected in the action plan questions and are described in detail below:

- Indigenous perspectives and culturally safe and inclusive environments
- Compassionate Systems Leadership
- Inquiry-based conversations around data
- Social and emotional learning, trauma-informed practice and mental health literacy



Indigenous Perspectives and Culturally Safe and Inclusive Environments

Significant engagement and collaboration with Rightsholders is necessary to facilitate the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives on positive mental health in meaningful ways. School districts and FISA BC should work closely with Indigenous partners when planning grant-funded initiatives to ensure they are culturally safe and meet the needs of Indigenous youth.



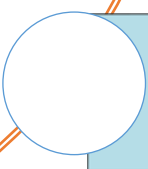
Compassionate Systems Leadership

Leadership that is compassionate, collective, and able to think and act across organizations and systems is an important component in a more systemic approach to mental health in schools. Systems Leadership is anchored in self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, self management and relationship skills.



Inquiry-based Conversations around Data

Developing a comprehensive plan is essential for an effective and sustainable mental health strategy. The Ministry encourages the use of a variety of data sources to ensure decisions regarding mental health initiatives are evidence-based, including the **Mental Health Dashboard** which was recently updated to include 2019/20 data.



Social and emotional learning (SEL), trauma informed practice (TIP), mental health literacy (MHL) are key components of mental health promotion. School districts and schools have varying needs, priorities and approaches that inform how they will weave together SEL, TIP, and MHL. When combined, these approaches create strong foundations for positive mental health.

Grant funding must be spent by the end of the fiscal. Any questions can be directed to Danielle Carter-Sullivan, Director, Mental Health, at EDUC.StrategicPriorities@gov.bc.ca.

2020/2021 Action Plan Questionnaire – Points to note:

- Completed Action Plan Questionnaires are due by **December 1, 2020**.
- Please submit Action Plan Questionnaires online at: <https://www.awinfosys.com/surveyfull3/minofed/main/>
- **The online submission portal will be available October 1 – December 1, 2020** (the above link will not be active prior to October 1st).
- Each school district and FISA BC has been provided a confidential password, found in their grant letter.
- If you are having trouble accessing the Action Plan Questionnaire (e.g. password issues, website not loading), please contact AWIS at support@awinfosys.com or 1-866-558-5339.
- The Ministry may contact school districts and FISA BC for additional information regarding action plan items to share learnings, opportunities and to promote provincial alignment of mental health and wellbeing strategies.

Grants are being provided with a **requirement to complete the Action Plan Questionnaire – failure to submit a completed questionnaire may impact future grant funding**. Information provided in the questionnaire is collected to fulfil reporting requirements on funding investments and results. It also provides insights on mental health promotion initiatives in school communities, which informs Ministry priorities moving forward.

To gain a greater understanding of the mental health promotion initiatives being implemented in B.C. schools, the Action Plan Questionnaire has been expanded for 2020/2021. In addition, this year, we have provided access to the 2019/20 *Directions Report* for your review, this Report provides analysis and a summary of last year's Action Plans and outcomes from 2018/19 and can be accessed from the secure District SharePoint site, in the folder "Provincial Reports/Documents for all School Districts".

We wish you continued success with your mental health activities for 2020/21. If you have questions, please contact Danielle Carter-Sullivan, Director, Mental Health, at EDUC.StrategicPriorities@gov.bc.ca.

Stay well!

The Ministry of Education, Mental Health Team



For more information on mental health and well-being, including definitions, supports and resources, please visit the *erase*: Mental Health & Well-being website at erase.gov.bc.ca.

The Ministry looks forward to receiving completed Action Plan Questionnaires by December 1, 2020.