



VICTORIA
CONFEDERATION
OF
PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS
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September 22, 2024

RE: Ensuring Equitable And Inclusive Learning Environments

Dear School District 61 Trustees,

On behalf of the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (VCPAC) Executive, I am writing with significant concerns about the disparities that exist between schools and within schools in providing access to learning environments that are both inclusive and equitable. Further, I am writing to request that the Board take immediate action to improve the tracking of key performance indicators in order to improve educational opportunities, student experiences and student outcomes.

VCPAC is in the final stages of reviewing an engagement opportunity sent out to all parents, teachers and support staff within the district in June of this year. While we will provide a fulsome update in the near future, common themes emerging include concerns about student-to-student and student-to-teacher incidents in the classroom, lack of resources to support the school district's inclusion policy (such as EAs and counselling staff), and unequal student experiences and access to quality education across schools and programs of choice.

To better understand these themes, VCPAC is also in receipt of a partial Freedom of Information response regarding the district's tracking of student-to-student incidents in elementary schools across the district. The little data that have been received indicates that **"there is no consistency of how each school tracks [student-to-student incidents] (some schools do not track at all); nor are there specific criteria in place on how to track this information..."** Further, of the actual data regarding student-to-student incidents in 2023/2024, George Jay Elementary School, a priority school with both English and French streams, **had 634 student-to-student incidents**. This means that George Jay Elementary last year averaged over three incidents daily, worthy of documenting.

Further to the engagement opportunity and the response to the Freedom of Information request, we also understand from talking with numerous teachers that the impact of student-to-student and student-to-teacher incidents in the classroom can be significantly disruptive (sometimes resulting in classroom evacuations that impact students' learning and sense of wellbeing at school), and are incredibly stressful on teachers and support staff. Unsurprisingly, we are aware of staff on leave as a result of unmet needs in their classrooms.

VCPAC believes that the responses to its June survey and the spirit behind the Freedom of Information request closely align with the questions asked by trustees during last Monday's Operations Policy and Planning Committee meeting regarding the tracking of meaningful data on student-to-student incidents. Moreover, VCPAC believes that parent input and better tracking of student-to-student incidents, among other things, will support a better understanding of 'holistic' safety as outlined in the Board's open letter to the Province published last week.

VCPAC urges the School Board to take the steps necessary to better understand and address the disparities that may exist between schools and within schools, particularly in dual stream priority schools, to ensure all students and families can expect equitable and inclusive learning environments regardless of catchment or program of choice in which they enrol.

This could include, but is not limited to, (1) creating an ad hoc committee made up school district partners and those with lived experience to examine issues related to ensuring both equitable and inclusive learning environments (and in particular to review and update outdated district policies, programs and resource allocations that may hinder these efforts), (2) directing staff to bring forward updated policies for approval before the end of the calendar year to ensure that all student-to-student incidents, and other key performance indicators, are consistently documented across all schools (and



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programs of choice) and regularly reported to the Board, and (3) continuing to advocate for additional resources from external sources to support advancement of meaningful solutions to these issues.

Doing so would help the Board, administration and district partners better understand trends from year to year, across schools and across programs of choice, and allocate limited resources to ensure both equitable and inclusive access to quality educational opportunities for all students.

Sincerely,

Braden Hutchins
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