

Greater Victoria School District

Greater Victoria School District No. 61
556 Boleskine Road, Victoria, BC V8Z 1E8
Phone (250) 475-4162 Fax (250) 475-4112



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Response to the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association's Report

The Greater Victoria School District has reviewed the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association's (GVTA) report titled *This should not be the norm: an examination of teachers' experience with violence in schools*. The District acknowledges the experiences shared by staff members and wishes to take this opportunity to thank the teachers, educational assistants, counsellors, administrators, and all employees who support students every day. Our district and schools are filled with skilled professionals who care deeply about children and work tirelessly to help them succeed.

The report raises important questions about how to best support students and staff in increasingly complex educational environments. At the same time, we believe it is important to be thoughtful about how we frame this conversation. Using the language "violence in schools" risks oversimplifying a complex reality that could have a harmful impact on families with young children navigating behavioral challenges.

The report highlights a GVTA staff survey with an 8.3% response rate and incorporates District reporting data from a specific period that stems from 3.7% of the more than 20,000 students the District serves. Of the District data referenced in the report, 96% involve young, elementary-school-aged children whose behaviour reflects challenges with communication, self-regulation, mental health, or disability-related needs rather than an intent to cause harm. While behaviours that raise safety concerns must always be taken seriously and addressed appropriately, it is important to recognize that behaviour is often a form of communication, especially when children aged 5-10 are learning to regulate their emotions and responses to stress or frustration. When children struggle to communicate their needs, our responsibility is to understand and respond to the underlying factors contributing to their behaviour.

In addition to safety, the District remains firmly committed to inclusive education. Inclusion is both a core value of the District and is a legal responsibility under the BC Human Rights Code, which requires school districts to provide equitable access to education and accommodate students with disabilities and diverse learning needs. Inclusion is not optional, and neither is safety.

Significant investments are made each year to ensure students can participate meaningfully in school life, feel welcome, and access the resources they need to be successful learners. While the Ministry provides supplemental funding generated through student designations, the District invests millions of dollars beyond those allocations each year to support students with disabilities and diverse abilities. These investments include staffing such as educational assistants and specialist teachers, district services such as speech-language pathologists and psychologists, safety-related training and professional learning opportunities, sensory spaces, and specialized resources.

As students' needs continue to evolve, our practices must evolve as well. We remain committed to ongoing continuous improvement, and meaningful engagement with staff, families, Indigenous partners, and community partners, so that safety and inclusion can continue to shape learning and working environments that are conducive for all.

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.