

# Trisha L. Renken-Sebastian

Speaking Across Barriers 2022

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13 January 2023

Dear District Executives, Principals, and Vice Principals of Sooke Schools District 62,

I hope all is very well with you today, and I greatly appreciate you taking the time to read this letter and consider my request.

My name is Trisha L. Renken-Sebastian and I'm a third-year grad student in the Community Development program at the University of Victoria (UVic). As a recent permanent resident who is living and studying on lands which were the traditional territory for many Coast Salish peoples including the W̱SÁNEĆ, the Esquimalt, the Songhees, and the Sc'ianew, I am very grateful to living here in Langford while I begin my career as a community developer in Canada.

Since February 2022, I have been planning and conducting a research project titled *Speaking Across Barriers: How Parents in a Canadian Public School System Learn About Their Children's Diversity Education* (Human Research Ethics Board #22-0136). The focus of this project is parents, guardians, and caregivers of students who either have attended or are currently attending a school in Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62). For more background about this project, you may visit the research project's website here: <https://renken-sebastian.ca/speaking-across-barriers-2022>.

As of today, I have received approval from SD62 Superintendent Scott Stinson to proceed with data collection for my project, and I am inviting district and individual school administrators to participate in this project as participants and prospectively, as co-researchers and co-presenters.

## Research Purpose and Goals

Through conducting this research, my (Renken-Sebastian's) goals are to:

- Learn about the methods by which the leadership within a public school district communicates with parents, guardians, and caregivers about their strategic plan objectives;

- Discover how parents, guardians, and caregivers find out what their children are learning in public schools that is related to the concepts of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA);
- Provide recommendations on how school communities can continue to foster clear lines of communication about the progress they are making on their strategic planning objectives; and ultimately,
- Ensure that Canadian public school students are more likely to develop empathy and understanding for people who hold different beliefs and values than their own.

## Meet the Supervisory Team

The principal supervisor is [Dr. Evert Lindquist](#) of UVic's School of Public Administration. [Dr. Sarah Marie Wiebe](#) is my co-supervisor and my second reader is [Dr. Lyndze Harvey](#) of UVic's Faculty of Education (Curriculum & Instruction). I am excited to be working with them to bring this research to SD62 as it can help close a gap in the academic understanding of how the public administration and education disciplines can work together to support parents, guardians, and caregivers who are raising children within the province.

## Data Collection

This study includes one data-collection phase for District Executives, Principals, and Vice Principals, the Knowledge-Sharing Sessions (aka Focus Groups).

I am seeking participants for between one (1) to three (3) focus groups, or as I am choosing to call them, Knowledge-Sharing Sessions (KSS's). The KSS's may take between 60 minutes and 75 minutes to complete and can be conducted over the video conferencing platform of your choice or in person, in accordance with provincial health orders and/or the group's preferences. Each session will consist of at least one (1) district executive and/or individual school administrator and up to three (3) participants. Audio recordings will be made of these discussions with additional notes being typed into an electronic text file. These recordings and notes will be used to create a transcript and/or summary of the overarching themes from the interview or discussion.

Upon completion of the knowledge-sharing session, *each participant* will be provided with a *\$25.00 gift certificate* to the restaurant of their choice as a compensation for any inconvenience which may arise because of their participation. All participants will also receive a summary of the overarching themes of the discussion as well as a transcript of only their responses and will have

the opportunity to provide clarification where needed, have portions of their response removed, and/or revoke their consent to participate.

## Eligible Participants

You are eligible to participate in this research if you:

- Are at least 18 years of age, and
- Must have been appointed by the SD62 Board of Trustees for at least one month prior to the date they are being interviewed; possess a Master's degree in Education (or related area); possess a Bachelor's degree in Education (with an emphasis on Elementary, Middle, or Secondary); possess a valid B.C. teaching certificate or eligibility for certification; and have in their professional background at least five (5) years of recent teaching experience; and were active in their profession during the 2021-2022 school year, and
- Possess the ability to speak with confidence about your experiences as District Executives, Principals, and/or Vice Principals in the SD62 community, and
- Have an interest in the improvement of how IDEA is taught in public schools, and
- Have some amount of Interest in the results of the current cycle of strategic planning for SD62 from September 2021 to June 2025.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate.

## Providing Your Informed and Ongoing Consent

Knowledge-sharing session participants will be sent a PDF version of the informed consent form by email or by postal mail which contains full study details and a list of questions at least two weeks prior to their scheduled interview. On the day of the interview, I will also obtain a recording of your verbal consent. By giving your verbal consent, you are indicating that you have had the opportunity to have your questions about the study answered by the researchers and that you freely consent to participating in this phase of the research project.

## Potential Benefit to District Executives, Principals and/or Vice Principals in SD62

All the objectives and outcomes in *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*, if achieved, would be of great and direct benefit for increasing the awareness and understanding of the importance of IDEA competency for SD62 students. With this research project, I hope to make recommendations

which will help SD62 district leadership make further progress on their objectives and engage SD62 parents, guardians, and caregivers more fully into helping those objectives become a reality for their children who may have different social identities than those of their peers.

### Potential Risks to District Executives, Principals and/or Vice Principals in SD62

A risk which district executives and/or individual school administrators may face if they choose to become research participants is that the nature of the questions being asked can cause discomfort and moments of vulnerability, particularly if a line of questioning about the strategic planning process or the 2021-2022 school year is focused on a specific executive or administrator's actions or statements. These questions are not intended to call into question the professional judgment of the individuals; however, feelings of hurt and vulnerability may occur.

If participants choose to attend an in-person KSS, there may be health risks associated with meeting in person, up to and including the contraction of communicable diseases such as COVID-19. All participants in an in-person KSS will be encouraged to use personal protective equipment such as face masks and hand sanitizer in alignment with the [UVic Communicable Disease Plan](#).

If at any time you begin to feel as if you are not safe while participating in a Knowledge-Sharing Session, you are free to perform any action which will result in your continued safety, up to and including leaving the session. If you take this action to ensure your safety, you will still be eligible to receive the incentive gift certificate; I will follow up with you after the end of the session.

### Anonymity, Privacy, and Confidentiality

Due to the small number of SD62 District Executives, Principals and/or Vice Principals, participants may not be able to enjoy the benefit of anonymity, especially individual school administrators at the middle school and secondary school level.

If a participant uses their personal contact information, only the principal researcher (Renken-Sebastian) will have access to it for the purposes of scheduling a KSS and sending the informed consent letter and list of questions prior to their scheduled interview date.

If district executives, principals, and/or vice principals choose to participate in a group KSS, everyone in the same KSS will be expected to keep confidential the knowledge that is being shared by other members of the group. In the community development discipline, this is called the Chatham House Rule, and you can find more information about it [at this link](#).

If a response which contains information about other stakeholders in the district warrants inclusion in whole or in summary in the project deliverables, pseudonyms will be used using a consistent naming scheme (e.g. Superintendent 1, Middle School Administrator 2, etc.) and details which could be used to positively identify a participant and/or any other member of the SD62 community will be excised.

### Feedback and Further Information

If you have questions about myself or the research project, you may contact me any time by email at [tlrenkensebastian@uvic.ca](mailto:tlrenkensebastian@uvic.ca) or by phone or text at +1 (236) 314-3444 between 9:00 am and 7:00 pm on weekdays and between 12:00 pm and 7:00 pm on weekends. Emails and phone calls will be returned within 2 to 3 business days. Thank you very much for your consideration.

With my greatest appreciation,



Trisha L. Renken-Sebastian

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