

Speaking Across Barriers: How Parents in a Canadian Public School System Learn About Their Children's Diversity Education

UVic HREB #22-0136

I acknowledge with greatest respect that I live, work, and study on the traditional territory for many Coast Salish peoples including the W̱SÁNEĆ, the Esquimalt, the Songhees, and the Sc'ianew. Without their stewardship of the land, what I will accomplish during my life here will not be possible.

General Problem and Study Focus

Strategic planning is a well-known community development tool that a public school district can use to address challenges in their strategic priorities, such as increasing students' exposure to the concepts of IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility) and competency in acknowledging, valuing, and navigating the complex issues which can surround them. During the strategic planning process for Sooke Schools District 62 in British Columbia, Canada which began in December 2020, it was discovered that parents, guardians, and caregivers did not feel that enough was being done within the school district to both promote the benefits of IDEA and to communicate with the public about their operational plans.

This capstone project seeks to resolve this primary research question:


How can parents, guardians, and caregivers of children in public schools be informed and engaged about the progress by which their children are developing skills and/or competence in recognizing, conversing about, and handling issues relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion (IDEA)?

Methodology and Conceptual Analysis

A cyclical inductive-deductive mixed methods approach was used in this report, with a wide variety of data gathering activities, including a literature review, field observations, an online survey, focus groups (knowledge-sharing sessions; KSS's), and a jurisdictional scan. The themes that emerged were further analyzed to determine

the areas where the most effective and wanted improvements could be made to increase parental engagement with what students are learning about IDEA concepts.

The format of the final report follows a shape and format which is similar to the playbills a drama department will create for their theatrical musical productions. The literature review and findings from the data collection activities gathered from three stakeholder groups form the first two acts while the final act will consist of the thematic analysis, recommendations, and conclusion. Additionally, all the elements which comprise the formation and communication of a strategic plan and its results are like the "below the line" creative staff of a musical production ranging all the way from sound design to choreography to the book, music, and score.



University of Victoria | Public Administration
&
T.L. Renken-Sebastian present

Speaking Across Barriers:
How Parents in a Canadian Public School System Learn About Their Children's Diversity Education

WHO'S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION?


Executive Producer	.....University of Victoria School of Public Administration
Director	.....T. L. Renken-Sebastian Master's of Community Development Graduate Student
Orchestra	.....Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62)
Conductor	.....Scott Stinson Superintendent of Schools
Concertmaster	.....Ravi Parmar Chairman of the Board of Trustees
Stage Manager	.....Sue Grundy Manager of Executive Operations
Book & Lyrics	.....Lesson Plans
Music	.....B.C. Curriculum Requirements
Set Design	.....Framework for Enhancing Student Learning
Costume Design	.....School Newsletters
Lighting Design	.....Social Media Platforms
Sound Design	.....Historical, Sociological, and Cultural Attitudes
Hair & Makeup Design	.....Press Releases
Choreographer	.....Communications Strategies
Dance Captain	.....Communication Barriers

Main Characters	Supporting Characters
Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers District and School Administrators Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers	Teachers Educational Assistants District and School Staff Members of the Community


Act 1: Exposition	Act 2: Rising Action	Act 3: Denouement
Wherein the audience is introduced to the issues, people, and systems involved with strategic planning for a Canadian public school district as well as the initial interactions	Wherein the characters begin to gather the tools they need to address initial conflicts, further interactions between characters and within systems are also uncovered; initial solutions and systems are considered and further developed	Wherein the characters enact their plan to resolve any initial conflicts, manage the ensuing conflicts, and work together proactively to avert future conflicts

There will be a 10 minute intermission between acts.
Figures and Tables can be viewed at the concessions stand in the lobby.


Sooke Schools 62 Proudly Includes the Following Member Organizations




Na'tsa'mah Education Council
SD62 Principals and Vice Principals



STA
Sooke Teachers' Association



CUPE459
SPEAC and Canadian Parents for French Immersion



SD62 District Student Council

Congratulations on a fantastic strategic plan!

Designed by ShidaBluDesign * <https://shidabludesign.myportfolio.com>
This work is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Figure 1: The conceptual framework underpinning this project

Findings

The unique challenges of strategic planning for children's education include balancing the sometimes emotions-based priorities of frontline workers, administrative and managerial staff, and the parents, guardians, and caregivers of the students for whom the planning is being performed. This clash of priorities was observed during public meetings of the Board of Trustees and expressed during KSS's with participants from three groups of stakeholders: parents, guardians, and caregivers; Trustees; and district and school administrators).

It was determined that clearer lines of communication and improved transparency in school district operations could help bring the parties closer towards achieving some of the strategic objectives that are related to IDEA principles.

Thematic Analysis

The role parents play in a student's education has changed over time. Because of the changing demographics in the region, it has become more important than before for students in SD62 to be able to develop skills and competencies around IDEA. The flow of information between school district leadership and parents has also changed over time as well, leading to an imbalance for parents, guardians, and caregivers in their understanding of how the district is achieving the lofty goals it sets for themselves in a strategic plan. Any solutions towards remedying this imbalance prior to the conclusion of this strategic plan must include operational activities that will aid in this remediation.

Options for Consideration

This report recommends that the district incorporate a series of implementation activities which are time-limited and can be feasibly achievable by one or two people or a very small team into the current operational planning process. The activities which could be included in Operational Plan 2024-2025 are:

Operational Plan 2024-2025

- The creation of documents (including handouts, webpages, etc.) which define the concepts within IDEA for the district.
- Investigation by Digital Solutions team for digital archive of recordings of public Board and committee meetings with backups.
- One or two additional task(s) which will help enhance the district's Strategic Communications suite of tools.

Strategic Plan 2025-20XX

The following implementation activities are those which would require much more extensive collaboration with key stakeholders in the district, especially the activities which seek to advance objectives within the NEA separate from the overall district strategic plan.

- Incorporating Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) ways of knowing into organizational practices
- Creating opportunities for parents, guardians, and caregivers to openly engage with SD62 Trustees and administrators regarding strategic plan updates
- Implementing the remaining recommendation(s) which did not become part of the 2024-2025 operational plan
- Developing a plan to create more time for teachers to communicate with parents, guardians, and caregivers on a one-to-one basis

Principle Researcher: T.L. Renken-Sebastian  trishalynn@renken-sebastian.ca  tlrenkensebastian@uvic.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Evert Lindquist  evert@uvic.ca

<p>Learning Objectives L1. Provides opportunities for learners to understand, respect and appreciate diversity and inclusion. L3. Ensure our learning environments are safe, accessible and welcoming.</p> <p>Engagement Objectives E1. Develop, expand and implement inclusive and collaborative practices and processes.</p> <p>Growth Objectives G1. Strengthen organizational practices to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion.</p>

Figure 2: Graphic of SD62 strategic plan objectives which are related to IDEA concepts as presented in the survey