

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

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University of Victoria

This report was developed where 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.

The University of Victoria acknowledges and respects the ləkʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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

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ABSTRACT

Strategic planning in public education in British Columbia is considered by the Ministry of Education and Childcare to be an idea tool for learning about how a given school district plans to help its students become educated citizens. The second strategic plan for Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) places an emphasis on ensuring that students understand and become competent with issues regarding inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA). However, this mixed methods capstone project revealed the communications barriers which are preventing some parents, guardians, and caregivers from being able to fully support IDEA becoming a more integral part of their children's education. The findings of this capstone project recommend that to alleviate this issue, some implementation activities can be undertaken in the next school year and others may become strategic plan objectives for the forthcoming strategic plan. Further research may be able to divine other types of implementation activities which may also support IDEA-related strategic objectives in other school districts in Canada and around the world.

Keywords: strategic planning; school district communications; parents; diversity; equity; inclusion; accessibility

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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.

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/caregivers, Trustees, and 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.

Analysis

The role parents play in a student's education has changed over time and because of the changing demographics in the area, 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

A series of implementation activities which were time-limited and feasibly achievable by one person or a very small team were recommended that could be incorporated into the current operational planning process. These are:

- 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

Other more systemic implementation activities which can become part of the underpinning of the forthcoming strategic plan are:

- 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 Strategic Communication 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

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DEDICATION

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Canada, education is a public good through which the provincial government can help children, adolescents, teenagers, and young adults understand the world and their place in it while imparting the skills they will need to participate in greater society. For residents in British Columbia, part of this care is evidenced through how students learn how to interact with people in their community who may not have the same ethnicity, gender or sexuality, chronic medical or mental health conditions, and/or type of neurology. As such, the monitoring of the progress made regarding the encouragement of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) in B.C. public school districts is an important concern.

Strategic planning is a well-known organizational and 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 and competency in acknowledging, valuing, and navigating the complex issues which can surround them. Through the use of a strategic plan, the school district leaders can "effectively address the challenges [you] face" through a deliberate examination of "where you are...where you want to be [and] how to get there" (Bryson, 2018, p. 35). In September 2021, Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) enacted a new strategic plan which they will use to move the district and its students forward from 2021 to 2025.

A key finding from SD62's strategic planning process was 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 (SD62, 2021, pp. 14–22). The goals of this research are to uncover how parents, guardians, and caregivers of SD62 students learn about how well their children are doing when it comes to learning about the concepts within IDEA, develop effective communication practices for the leadership in a public school district to use when reporting on the efficacy of their IDEA-related strategic plan initiatives, and lay the groundwork which can be used by stakeholders in the district to better inform the district's next strategic plan.

The primary research question animating this project is:

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)?

The secondary questions which arise from this primary research question are:

- How will school administrators ensure that parents, guardians, and caregivers understand the rationale behind their strategic plan's objectives for IDEA?
- In what way will parents, guardians, and caregivers be consulted regarding changes to how their children learn about issues regarding IDEA?

- How do school administrators determine whether their strategic and operational plans are effective in increasing the ability of students to understand IDEA issues?

This interdisciplinary capstone project seeks to resolve these questions using several methods including: a literature review; observing district and parents' group leaders during public meetings; conducting a survey and Knowledge-Sharing Sessions (focus groups; or KSS's) with parents, caregivers, and guardians of students who attended an SD62 school during the 2021-2022 school year; holding KSS's with members of the Board of Trustees, district-based administrators, and individual school-based administrators; and performing a jurisdictional scan of SD62 and other school districts in British Columbia which have undergone similar periods of rapid growth. With my project, I hope to demonstrate some methods which leaders in a public school district can employ to convey to the parents, guardians, and caregivers in the community that their trust in the efficacy of the public education system to provide the skills their children need to understand IDEA concepts is not misplaced.

This report has three parts. **Part I** (Sections 2-4) will introduce Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) and detail how the district is administered, provide some demographic information about the students who attend SD62 schools and the community members around them, summarize how inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility became a growing concern within the B.C. Ministry of Education, and detail a timeline of how the district created *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*. There will also be a discussion of the methods I used to inform the setting of the literature review as well as uncover various findings through this project's production.

Part II (Sections 5-9) will report on the findings about how the strategic plan was received by the members of the SD62 community during Year 1 of the strategic plan through interactions at public Board, committee, and District Parents' Advisory Council (DPAC) meetings as well as through the surveys and KSS's conducted with some of the parents, guardians, and caregivers, Trustees, district-based administrators, and school-based administrators. To balance the focus on SD62, the final section of this part will describe how some similar school districts in British Columbia present their strategic plans and communicate with their school communities about their planning successes and the achievements borne out of the completion of their strategic and operational IDEA-related objectives.

Part III (Sections 10-12) will first reflect on the findings and explain how they relate to the roles played by parents, guardians, and caregivers, the Board of Trustees, the district-based administrators, and the school-based administrators. The next section will identify options and recommendations to help all SD62 stakeholders move forward to help district leadership achieve the *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* objectives around IDEA concepts to benefit everyone who lives in the district. A brief concluding section will remind readers about what was accomplished with this study and consider how similar research might be carried out in different areas of British Columbia and around Canada.

Part I: Background and Approach

Section 2: The Background

Section 3: Literature Review

Section 4: Methodology

“Why do you need a vision statement? All focus related to students should be about revising programs to provide relevant educations to students....skill building, budgeting; how credit and mortgages work, first aid, etcetera.”

–Anonymous respondent to the SD62 strategic plan survey conducted in April 2021

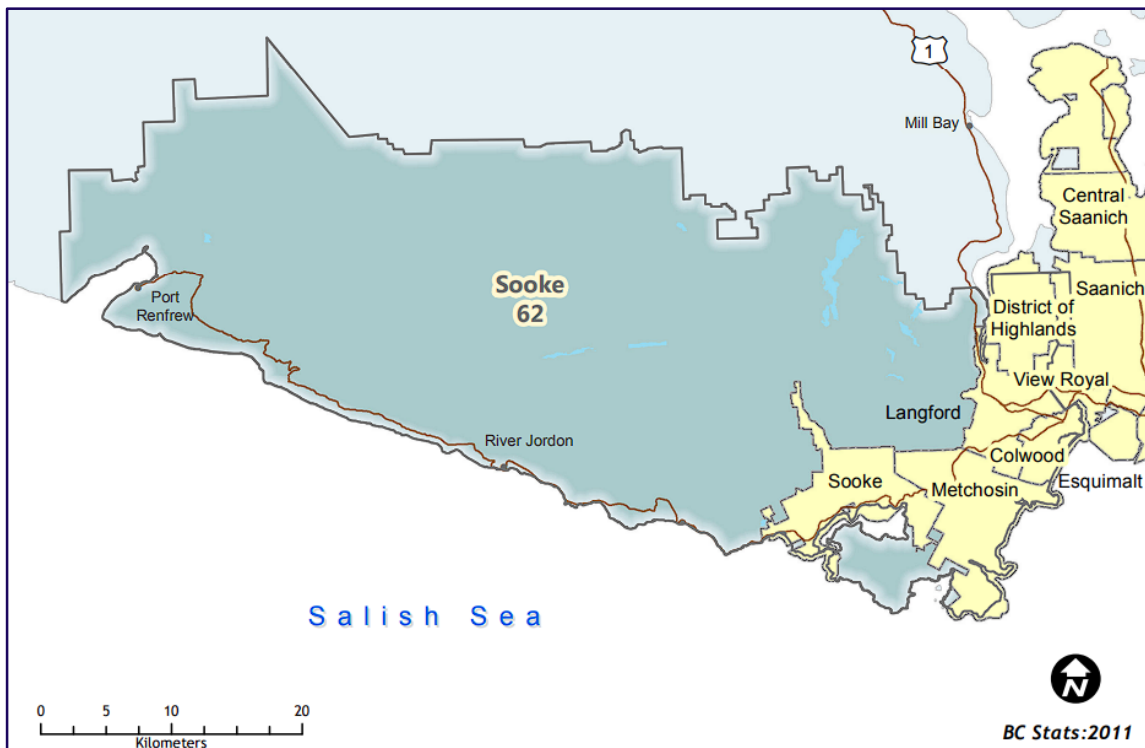
2.0 THE BACKGROUND

This section of the report provides an overview of the levels of administration found within Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) and the demographics of the students and their communities. This background section will also provide a brief background on how inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and competency became a concern of the BC Ministry of Education and finally, detail the process and provide a timeline by which SD62 created its second-ever strategic plan.

2.1 Overview of SD62 Administration

Primary and secondary education in Canada is a responsibility that is delegated to the provinces; this is administered through the now-named BC Ministry of Education and Childcare (BCMEC) and its school district system. The district of SD62 is comprised of five municipalities and districts and one unincorporated place located in the western part of lower Vancouver Island: City of Langford, City of Colwood, District of Metchosin, District of Sooke, District of Highlands, and the unincorporated town of Port Renfrew. The district acknowledges the traditional territories of three First Nations (T'Sou-ke First Nation and Sc'ianew First Nation and Nuuchah-nulth: Pacheedaht First Nation) and that some schools in SD62 reside on the traditional territories of Songhees First Nation and Esquimalt First Nation. This geographic area is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Current map of SD62 (B.C. Stats, 2011; adapted from Province of British Columbia, 2023)



The district is represented by a seven-person Board of Trustees from two zones: four from the Belmont Zone (Area 1: Colwood, Highlands, Langford, Metchosin) and three from the Milnes Landing Zone (Area 2: Sooke, Port Renfrew). Trustee elections are held alongside municipal elections and the most recent one for SD62 took place in October 2022, where two incumbents retained their seats and five new Trustees were elected.

At the district office there is contact information for one superintendent, one deputy superintendent, two associate superintendents, one secretary-treasurer, and six district principals and vice principals who in combination represent these departments: Curriculum Transformation, Inclusive Education, Na'tsa'maht Indigenous Education, Pathways & Choice, and Safe & Healthy Schools. Additionally, there is at least one district principal (Capital Planning) whose contact information is not on the district website; it is unclear if there are any additional district-level principals and vice principals.

There are 19 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, 3 secondary schools, and 1 adult/alternative learning school within the district. Each school has a principal (or co-principals) and a vice principal; some of the schools with larger student bodies have additional vice principals.

Each school has a Parents' Advisory Council (PAC) and all parents are eligible to become PAC members at their children's school. There is also a district-wide PAC called Sooke Parents' Education Advisory Council (SPEAC) where each school PAC designates one person to be their representative at SPEAC meetings.

2.2 The Demographics of SD62 Students and Their Communities

SD62 has been widely reported as the fastest growing in British Columbia, and this figure was borne out by the 2021-2022 enrolment figures reported at the September 2021 board meeting. As per the Information Note, 582 more FTE (full-time equivalent) students were enrolled than during the previous year for a total enrolment of 11,513 students, the largest amount of growth projected by the district for the last 21 years. The breakdown per grade level for both school years is in Table 1.

The BCMEC is responsible for providing basic allocation and supplemental funds to public school districts based on these enrolment numbers with the amount per student spread out into categories which are defined below:

- Standard (Regular) Schools: Includes students who attend a school that "relies primarily on in-person communication among students and teachers" (BCMEC, 2022, sec. Standard Schools).
- Continuing Education Schools: Includes students who over 18 years of age.
- Alternate Schools: Includes students whose "educational, social, and emotional...needs are not being met in a traditional school environment" (Province of British Columbia, 2023a, sec. Policy Statement).

- Distributed Learning: Includes students whose method of instruction relies on indirect communication between students and teachers (Province of British Columbia, 2023c).
- Level 1 Special Needs: Includes students as presenting with physically dependent or deafblind.
- Level 2 Special Needs: Includes students as presenting with moderate or profound intellectual disability, physical disability, or chronic health impairment, visual health impairment, deaf or hard of hearing, and/or autism spectrum disorder).
- Level 3 Special Needs: Includes students with intensive behaviour interventions and/or serious mental illnesses (BCMEC, 2023, p. 6).

Table 1: Enrolment of FTE Students in SD62. Adapted from SD62, 2021c, p. 146.

| Grade Level | 2020-2021 school year | 2021-2022 school year | Increase | |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | | Count | Percentage |
| Elementary | 5,182 | 5,455 | +273 | 5.26% |
| Middle | 2,521 | 2,680 | +159 | 6.31% |
| Secondary | 3,228 | 3,378 | +150 | 4.65% |
| Total | 10,931 | 11,513 | +582 | 5.32% |

Additional supplemental funds are provided for students enrolled in special programs such as French Immersion, English Language Learners (ELL), and Na'tsa'maht Indigenous Education; students in all three of these categories are enrolled in SD62 schools. As such, it is important for the district to maintain an accurate count of the number of FTE students whose education fits into each funding category so that they can request and receive the resources they need to encourage their educational success.

Enrolment numbers also include students from the International Student Program (ISP) who are studying at SD62 schools. This is a national program which pairs up international students who are interested in furthering their studies in the Canadian public education system with B.C. families who provide housing and receive a stipend to supplement the costs of caregiving. In addition to the funds provided by the BCMEC, international families also pay tuition fees directly to the school districts where their children will be enrolled.

According to a presentation at the March 2022 board meeting, 315 SD62 students were enrolled in the ISP from 16 different countries with the top seven being Germany, China, Japan, Mexico, Italy, Spain, and Korea. As a result of this and the immigration of families who are on work or study permits, the ELL program provided supportive

education to 406 students during the 2021-2022 school year (SD62, 2022, p. 79), with the top five languages spoken by the students being Filipino, Korean, Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic (SD62, 2022, p. 80). Data was not readily available for the 2020-2021 school year.

Several subject and discipline-specific academies maintain programs within SD62. As an example, for the 2023-2024 school year and for an additional fee payable by the students' families, students can participate in sports academies (such as hockey, soccer, lacrosse, and mountain biking), arts and humanities academies (musical theatre, dance), and science and environmentalism academies (ecology) (SD62, 2023). For families who may need financial assistance for their child to participate in an academy subject, they can contact the district regarding a bursary program.

As of the most recent census, Table 2 shows that 88,442 people live within SD62 along with the population breakdown by municipality for people, number of two-parent households with children (between newborn and 17 years), and number of single-parent households with children.

Table 2: Population Breakdown of the Municipalities located Within SD62. Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2021a; Statistics Canada, 2021d; Statistics Canada, 2021e; Statistics Canada, 2021b; Statistics Canada, 2022b.

| Place Name | Population (people) | Couples with Children (households) | Single-Parents with Children (households) |
|--------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Langford | 46,584 | 5,480 | 2,220 |
| Colwood | 18,961 | 1,730 | 785 |
| Metchosin | 5,067 | 555 | 130 |
| Sooke | 15,086 | 2,320 | 620 |
| Highlands | 2,482 | 315 | 65 |
| Port Renfrew | 262 | 15 | 10 |
| Total | 88,180 | 10,400 | 3,820 |

As per the guidelines set forth by Statistics Canada, the poverty line for SD62 families within those municipalities and districts is a household income of \$42,829 or less (Statistics Canada, 2020, tbl. 1). Using the data from the year 2020, almost 20% of the children living within the boundaries of SD62 are living in a low-income family; the breakdown is in Table 3.

Table 3: Number of Children Living Within SD62 in a Low-Income Family. Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2023c; Statistics Canada, 2023a; Statistics Canada, 2023d; Statistics Canada, 2023e; Statistics Canada, 2023b; Statistics Canada, 2023f.

| Low-Income Status as a percentage of population in 2020 | Langford | Colwood | Metchosin | Sooke | Highlands | Port Renfrew |
|--|-----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Total | 46,190 | 18,795 | 4,710 | 14,975 | 2,480 | 255 |
| Persons aged 0 to 17 years | 9,460 | 3,760 | 735 | 2,880 | 485 | 40 |
| Percentage | 20.5% | 20.0% | 15.6% | 19.2% | 19.6% | 15.7% |

The *Employment Equity Act* defines a visible minority as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”, with ten main groups that are designated (Statistics Canada, 2022b, para. 2). From a total visible minority population of 10,730 in all the places but Port Renfrew, the top five groups are South Asian (21.4%) Filipino (17.4%), Chinese (16.2%), Black (10.2%), and Latin America (8.6%) (Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2023c; Statistics Canada, 2023a; Statistics Canada, 2023d; Statistics Canada, 2023e; Statistics Canada, 2023b; Statistics Canada, 2023f).

As a result of these demographics, it stands to reason that strategic improvements on how to support children who possess social identities such as students of colour, students in single-parent households, and students in low-income households in achieving educational success is an important priority for the leadership of SD62. As more demographic information becomes available due to district-led equity and accessibility scans, strategic and operational plans must be improved and/or implemented for the children who identify with social identities such as students with special needs, students who are or whose parents have diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and students who are or whose parents are neurodiverse.

2.3 IDEA and the B.C. Ministry of Education

Several theories form the underpinnings of the Canadian public school system, but the consideration of such concepts as inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) was not present at first. As argued by Mallea (1989), at the level of individual schools and teachers there is a difficult dialectic to maintain where “teachers are expected to help socialize children in accordance with traditional mainstream values while at the

same time preparing them for life in a pluralistic society and global community" (Lynch & Plunkett, 1973; as paraphrased by Mallea, 1989, p. 12).

It was during the period after the release of the Putnam-Weir survey of the provincial public school system that the then-named B.C. Ministry of Education (BCME) first encountered the clash between traditionalist thought regarding education and the cause of what was at the time called "the New Education" which focused on celebrating the diversity of the youthful minds for which they were responsible for educating. As part of his tenure within the BCME as first an advisor, then Chief Inspector of Schools from 1941 to 1942, Dr. H.B. King championed the cause of progressive education where the teaching of specific subjects attempted to break away from "an over-emphasis on textbook centred-learning" (Johnson, 1964, p. 165) by performing new interactions and engagements with students such as conducting lessons through the use of audio and video recordings rather than through rote memorization. King would encourage this proliferation of the new curriculum in the province by stating "The Programmes of Study recently issued in other Canadian Provinces are based on a similar philosophy" (King, 1940, B32; as cited by Johnson, 1964, pp. 165–166), implying that B.C.'s education system would be inferior if they did not implement what was considered successful in the rest of the country and other former British colonies.

Other education philosophers in Canada and the United States denounced the tenets of progressive education throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and according to Canadian education historian F.H. Johnson, "The Canadian public, nourished by the American press, tended to accept uncritically such condemnations of American education as applying with equal validity to the Canadian scene" (1964, p. 167). In response, Dr. John Ewing, the principal of Victoria College, stated that the BCME's push towards instituting a progressive education was "an almost exclusive preoccupation with the present" amongst other opinions and challenged educators who espoused both schools of thought to synthesize what was effective from both camps into a unified whole (Ewing, 1948, pp. 20-21; as cited and paraphrased by Johnson, 1964, pp. 166–167).

Out of this synthesis of traditionalist and progressive views of education came the first consideration of education for students with different abilities and the gradual assumption of responsibility by the BCME. Originally, schools and classes for the blind, deaf, the "mental defectives" and the "slow-learners" existed in B.C. and were jointly maintained by other provincial entities such as the Department of Health and Welfare, the Health Centre for Children, Child Guidance Clinics, and the privately-operated Association for Retarded Children (1964, p. 169). Beginning in 1956, the BCME began to assume operation of the privately-operated schools and create separate classes and schools for the "slow-learners" and considerations for other types of "special needs" students would follow.

For students who lived too far away from the schools in the urban population centres, the BCME had already implemented schooling by correspondence for children in the elementary grades; this courtesy and accommodation began to be offered in the 1950s for secondary students whose "home" school did not offer the subjects they wished to

take. According to Johnson, such distributed learning “[enabled] many to complete high school who otherwise might not have been able or inclined to do so” (1964, p. 188).

Other innovations in inclusive education followed in the 1970s and 1980s (Inclusion BC, 2022, sec. History of Inclusive Education), culminating in the passage of the *Special Needs Students Order* where the second mandate was that:

A [public school] board must provide a student with special needs with an educational program in a classroom where that student is integrated with other students who do not have special needs, unless the educational needs of the student with special needs or other students indicate that the educational program for the student with special needs should be provided otherwise (Special Needs Students Order, 1989).

Recently, there has been a tension between the parents, guardians, and caregivers of special needs students and the school districts which provide for their education with regards to their inclusion in a “normal” school day. As part of a summary of how British Columbian school districts are handling these tensions, then-chair of the Greater Victoria School District (SD61) was quoted in a 2019 article in *The Globe and Mail* regarding the efforts they were making to understand the nature of how those students are being excluded from a “normal” education. The school board’s stance was that by learning how and why special needs students are being asked to say home, or are sent home early or dropped off late and being excluded from field trips Trustees could “understand the challenges so supports can address them and children with special needs can be meaningfully included” (Alphonso, 2019, paras. 34–35).

The need to provide an education for an increasingly diverse student population also began to rise as waves of non-Anglo and non-Franco families found their way to Canada, starting with first the East Asian labourers who worked on the transcontinental railroad, then populations from Europe such as Germans, Ukrainians, and Icelanders, then finally large numbers from the other regions in the world such as Africa, the Caribbean, South Asia, and South America (Mallea, 1989, p. 27).

In British Columbia, this became codified with the implementation of the *School Act* in 1996, wherein “the school system must strive to ensure that differences among learners do not impede their participation in school, their mastery of learning outcomes, or their ability to become contributing members of society” (BCME, 2008, p. 4). As part of the mandate to help the development of the “educated citizen”, a redesigned curriculum for B.C. schools was launched in 2017.

Previously, the way diversity was acknowledged by the BCME surrounded the concept that a graduate of the school system would have “the knowledge and skill required to be socially responsible citizens who act in caring and principled ways, *respecting the diversity of all people and the rights of others to hold different ideas and beliefs*” (2008, p. 16; emphasis mine). The hope behind the implementation of the new curriculum was that concepts such as inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility would become natural parts of what was expected of a Dogwood diploma holder.

With the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, incoming Kindergarten students will be the first cohort to enjoy the full implementation of the 2017 B.C. curriculum. It has become more important, then, for a responsible Board of Education, its district-based administrators, the school-based administrators, and all the parents, guardians, and caregivers to be united in ensuring that the strategic plans for increasing competency around IDEA concepts be similarly fully realized.

2.4 The Creation of *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*

Planning and discussion about the creation of the second-ever strategic plan for SD62 which would commence as of July 2021 and end on 30 June 2025 began at the Education-Policy Committee (EPC) meeting on 1 December 2020 as New Business. Any presentation or any specific discussion and/or remarks from the committee chairperson, the members of the Board of Trustees, district superintendents, principals and vice principals, or the SPEAC representative regarding any changes in the direction of the strategic plan is not recorded in the official meeting minutes (SD62, 2020, p. 3). The creation of this plan would build upon the first plan which spanned from July 2018 to June 2021 and was deemed an important component of accountability and responsibility for the SD62 Board of Trustees as per the new regulation called *Board Governance Bylaw No. 1* which had its first reading during the 15 December 2020 board meeting (2020a, p. 141; 2020c, p. 5).

During the EPC meeting of January 2021, the manager of executive operations gave a presentation about the process of updating the strategic plan and reported on the discussions between the district executives and the Trustees had regarding improvements they would like to see. Four of the key points mentioned were that:

- Concepts of diversity and inclusion should be woven throughout the wording of the plan's goals and objectives;
- Data should be regularly collected to monitor the progress towards achieving the goals and objectives;
- Stakeholder groups should be consulted regarding what changes they felt would be necessary to achieve the greatest amount of educational success; and
- More information about the plan progress and successes should be communicated over the duration of the plan (2021j, p. 33).

It was also decided during the discussion that the district would create a Strategic Planning Committee and that representatives from stakeholder groups would be invited to participate. There was also a Q&A session at the end of the presentation; none of the questions or responses were recorded in the official minutes (SD62, 2021c, p. 2).

However, as part of the agenda for the public Board meeting of 26 January 2021, the minutes were updated to include a copy of the project charter which had been requested at the EPC meeting for the now-named Strategic Plan Steering Group (SPSG). This project charter provided a more detailed timeline of the outcomes anticipated from the SPSG's work with the district as seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Timeline of Anticipated Outcomes for the SD62 Strategic Plan Steering Group. Adapted from SD62, 2021d, pp. 81–84.

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| February 2021 | The SPSG will seek feedback on drafts of communications which will be sent to the members of the stakeholder groups; these communications may also be finalized during this time. |
| March 2021 | The SPSG will seek feedback on drafts and finalize communications which be transformed into a community engagement survey to be conducted via the ThoughtExchange platform and at SPEAC meetings. |
| April 2021 | The district will launch and promote the ThoughtExchange community engagement survey to gain input from SD62 community members on what they would like to see in the strategic plan. |
| | The SPSG will review the feedback and provide a summary during the April 2021 public board meeting. |
| | The SPSG will gather feedback and determine the most effective data streams for collecting evidence of the strategic plan's progress towards its goals and objectives. |
| June 2021 | The SPSG will present a penultimate draft of <i>SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)</i> at an Education Committee of the Whole and gather feedback to be incorporated over the summer into the final draft to be released in September 2021. |

The charter also indicated that the desired composition of the SPSG would consist of the Superintendent (Executive Sponsor), the Manager of Executive Operations (acting as the project manager), and at least one and up to three representatives from the following stakeholder groups: the SD62 Executive Steering Group (consisting of the Human Resources, Information Technology, and Finance departments), CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) 459, STA (Sooke Teachers Association), district Principals and Vice Principals (PVP), the District Student Council (DSC), and SPEAC (Sooke Parents Education Advisory Committee). One or two Trustees were also invited to participate in an advisory capacity only (SD62, 2021d, p. 83).

The SPSG was able to achieve all their anticipated outcomes in the timeframe allotted. *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* was approved in June 2021 and formally presented to the public for the first time at the first Board meeting of the 2021-2022 school year.

2.5 Summary of Background

From the viewpoint of someone who was not raised within it, the demographics and makeup of the students and community members of the places within SD62 can be summarized as being comparable to that of any suburb of a major metropolitan area of Canada. There is a diverse mix of students coming from families whose members

include but not limited to those who have a low household income, families where the primary language spoken at home is not English or French, Indigenous (First Nation, Métis, and Inuit) families, immigrant families, families of visible minorities¹, families with special needs, and adult students who may or may not have families of their own.

Because SD62 is responsible for providing a comprehensive education for all these students, it is vitally important that every family living within the district can trust that the leaders of the district are abiding by the goals and objectives they set forth within *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*. How they will be able to do this can be seen within the next section of this report.

¹ See Glossary item for Visible Minorities.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective strategic planning, effective strategic communication, and the importance of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) in education are important issues, but the amount of research into the intersection of these topics has been limited. There is more research available regarding any one of these topics both within and without a Canadian context. Because of this gap in academic research, the following literature review develops several analytical concepts and frameworks from multiple disciplines and from multiple nations.

3.1 The Intersection of Strategic Planning and Education

In North America, academic research into *strategic management* and the movement to create strategic plans for organizations began with Taylor's 1911 *The Principles of Scientific Management*. According to Person, Taylor initially developed the system of management of shop workers because of a conflict between himself as a manager and the labourers under his supervision (1947, p. 12). Later, as part of his testimony before the United States House of Representatives in 1912, Taylor would argue that for the principles of scientific management to be truly effective, it would "involve a complete mental revolution on the part of the [labourer]...as to their duties toward their work, toward their fellow [workers], and toward their employers" (1947, p. 399). As part of this mental revolution, Taylor also opined that the average worker in a manufacturing plant held an unwarranted fear of management concepts such as automation, machines, time studies, and efficiency exercises because they held the misconception that "[they could not] see how it could be for the interest of his [*sic*] particular trade...to very greatly increase their output per day" (1947, p. 381).

Mintzberg's views of how strategic management developed since Taylor's time is decidedly more pessimistic. In his 1994 book *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, Mintzberg argued that the "most sophisticated, subtle, and at times subconscious of human cognitive and social processes" (1994, p. 227) play a significant role and had not been properly studied or included in the strategic planner's toolkit and/or framework. Mintzberg would return to this theme in 2019 with a less academic but more reader-friendly book called *Bedtime Stories for Managers* in which he employed many varied metaphors to relate how much managers need to be human and in touch with more than just the big picture. Most essential, he claimed, is the ability to recognize when an innovative tactic or strategy can lead to organizational change: "The point is that organizations cannot always plan where a strategy will begin, let alone plan the strategy itself. Accordingly, productive strategists build gardens in fertile ground, where all kinds of ideas can take root and the best of them can grow (2019, sec. Growing Strategies Like Weeds in a Garden).

According to Dooris et al. (2004), the use of Taylor's principles of strategic management and their synthesis with business practices in Western thought began somewhere between the end of World War II and the 1970s (p. 6). They assert that it was the instability of the 1970s which led to the publication of Keller's *Academic Strategy* in

1983, a book which helped propel colleges and universities through the process of strategic planning. In their view, strategic planning was introduced to educational administrators as a "rational tool for orderly, systematic advancement of the academic enterprise" (2004, p. 7). This characterization of the strategic planning process did little to promote itself amongst frontline workers in the education sector, as pointed out by Sevier who wrote, "There are probably few phrases that cause a greater group groan on most campuses than 'strategic planning'" (2003; as cited by Dooris et al., 2004, p. 9). Regarding this tension between stability and change, Keller encouraged higher educational administrators to continue to strive to achieve a "new planning culture," one that indulged in "more active management, a new emphasis on innovation and adaptation to new conditions" (1983, p. 167).

Dooris et al. concluded the critiques from Sevier and others towards strategic planning in education (Birnbaum, 2000; Rosenberg and Schewe, 1985) are the result of this inability for those people who have experienced strategic planning failures to similarly incorporate "less rational, structured, and rigid" approaches (2004, p. 9). They identified three needs that eventually emerged as being essential to the process of creating and implementing an effective strategic plan for an educational institution:

- Results that are gained from scientifically developed processes must be tempered with human-conscious intent;
- Planners must employ creative and intuitive approach to existing processes; and
- Leadership must recognize that the praxis of a desired outcome is more important than the process used to create it (2004, pp. 7–8).

It was not until the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year that the BCME began to emphasize strategic planning as a tool set which they expected school districts to use going forward. In September 2020, the BCME enacted an order which mandated that all public-school boards create a 10-page report to be submitted between June 30 and September 30 of every calendar year. This report would provide statistics about the educational outcomes within the realms of their students' intellectual development, human and social development, and career development during the previous school year. The ministerial order also mandated that each board was to "include information relating to the board's approach to continuous development of student achievement" (BCME, 2020, sec. 5). This has resulted in the current need for all B.C. public school districts to create and enact a multi-year Strategic Plan.

3.2 Strategic Planning for Public Organizations

It was Bryson who took the principles of strategic management for businesses and developed a method that could be more properly employed by public and nonprofit organizations. Initially published in 1988, Bryson's *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* has become an important text for public administration students and nonprofit organization practitioners alike regarding how to take the principles of strategic planning and strategic management and adapt them for the public sector. He

calls his approach the Strategy Change Cycle, and Bryson's book has become one of the seminal references for public administrators in the Western world to employ when creating an implementing an effective strategic plan.

The last two parts of Bryson's Strategy Change Cycle take place after a strategic plan has been approved by a board of directors and helps guide the organization staff in implementing activities, tracking the outcomes, refining the parameters, and preparing for the next round of strategic planning. This capstone project is focused on determining where SD62 can make improvements during Steps 9 and 10, which are:

- Develop[ing] an effective implementation process: Where the organization creates an implementation plan which includes methods for "building capacity for sustained implementation, goal achievement, and ongoing learning and readjustment based on that learning" (Sandfort & Moulton, 2015; as cited by Bryson, 2018, p. 79); and
- Reassess[ing] strategies and the strategic planning process: Where the organization looks at the progress which has (or has not) been made during the individual years of the strategic plan to determine which strategies have been successful, whether they should be maintained, replaced, and/or terminated, and recommend modifications are made which will improve the next round of strategic planning (Bryson, 2018, p. 80).

Though uncovering whether Bryson's work was also influential in creating the strategic plan for SD62 was beyond the scope of this project, the precepts from his work as well as the involvement of some of the concepts which are vital to enacting strategic change are important to understanding how stakeholders such as parents, guardians, and caregivers can become more informed about how to support successful strategic planning around the concepts within IDEA.

3.3 Systems Thinking and Leverage Points

In addition to strategic planning and management, there are two other community development concepts which have been instrumental in formulating the recommendations made in Section 11.0 of this report. The application of these concepts lead to a greater understanding of how each research participant group related to each other, their relative position in the communication hierarchy, and what types of implementation activities would be the most effective during the years to come.

Systems thinking and its application to the realm of education was described by Shaked and Schechter (2020) as being a fruitful avenue of research because "it offers a new way to consider events, people and processes" due to its being a "comprehensive way of both conceptualizing and practicing" how a school administrator thinks about their school and its place within the school district (2020, p. 107). As defined by Stroh (2015), systems thinking is a way of learning how different elements within a defined problem area interact with each other to produce a desired effect or purpose (2015, p. 16). Systems thinking can be utilized within a strategic planning process by developing a

systems map for the organization and determining which systems stories are at play. Stroh further points out that there are four strategies to continuous learning which are essential to the implementation phase of a strategic plan:

- Extensive and ongoing inclusion of stakeholders.
 - A clear strategic plan with specific projects in support of the plan.
 - A strong focus on data to support evaluation against the goals and metrics.
 - Quarterly and annual evaluations that inform updates to the plan.
- (2015, p. 160)

Once a system maps and systems stories are identified and developed, an organization may begin to discuss with its stakeholders where and how to apply leverage and/or change inputs that may result in the desired outcomes that were developed during the process. The efficacy of these leverage points and where an intervention can be made was developed by Meadows (1999) who determined that they could be condensed down to 12 places within a system; they are ranked from least to most effective, with the most effective leverage point being “the power to transcend paradigms” or “[the] falling of scales from eyes [leading to] a new way of seeing” (1999, p. 18). While conducting the thematic analysis of my findings, care was taken to link the recommendations and suggestions from my analysis to their respective type of leverage point.

In combination, the precepts behind these community development tools and skills will be used to develop recommendations which can help the SD62 school community communicate about the successes they have achieved in the realm of improving how IDEA is experienced within the district.

3.4 Canada, the Multicultural Mosaic, and Its Educational Implications

Along with the influence of strategic planning, the civil rights movement and the economic state of the 1960s and 1970s played a major role in how Canada defines itself now as a place where parents, guardians, and caregivers from multiple cultures are encouraged to provide for their children with a comprehensive and competitive public education system. Both multiculturalism and pluralism were focal points in sociologist Porter’s major work *The Vertical Mosaic: A Study of Class and Power in Canadian Society* (1965) which gave rise to the conceptual metaphor of Canada’s people as individual pieces within a cultural mosaic (Mallea, 1989, p. 19). While Mallea claims that Porter’s focus was on eliminating disparity between the socioeconomic classes of students by impressing upon school administrators at the time the importance of “the primacy of assimilation over diversity” (1989, p. 21), the writers of the introductory essay to the 50th anniversary edition of Porter’s book have provided some additional insight and context.

Jedwab and Satzewich (2015) state that Porter was not very different from the other Western sociologists of his day. Rather than professing an encouragement of diversity and respect for non-Canadian cultures, they write that Porter grew to “[blame the practice of multiculturalism] on the encouragement [it] offered to newcomers and their

descendants to retain their ancestral identities” (2015, p. xix). They add that “[Porter] was confident that Canada would be better off by encouraging forms of association other than ethnicity and religion as a basis for improving mobility opportunities and democratizing institutions.” This opinion was influenced by the contemporaneous schisms between French-Canadians and Anglo-Canadians regarding the “wide acceptance of the myths of British superiority” which led to the kind of economic inequities which fueled the Révolution tranquille (Quiet Revolution) in Québec. Simultaneously, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB) was convened to provide recommendations on what the federal government could do to ease tensions between French-Canada and Anglo-Canada. This mandate included the directive to consider the cultural, social, economic, and educational contributions of visible and non-visible minorities (2015, p. xviii) such as the immigrants who were being accepted into Canada through revised immigration policies which were now based on the economic value immigrants and their families would provide the country (2015, p. xx).

Of education, Porter believed that because the Canadian constitution provided for its administration through the provinces and territories and not the federal government, inequities in the level of education between groups of students were related not just to their ethnic and ancestral backgrounds but due to religious backgrounds as well. He wrote, “Religion is a difficult variable to separate from ethnicity [and] the two are intricately interwoven in the more general phenomenon of culture” (2015, p. 171), referring mostly to the disparities in funds available for school districts in Roman Catholic Québec compared to those from the more Protestant-influenced provinces. Porter continued, “Religion, then, along with socio-economic status, ethnicity, size of family, and region, is an important variable affecting the availability of education. The interrelatedness of these variables must be kept in mind” (2015, p. 172).

According to Porter, barriers to an equitable education were instead drawn psychologically along socioeconomic class lines, appealing to his 1960s-era stacks of knowledge which informed him that “Those who are reared in a milieu indifferent to education are not likely to acquire a high evaluation of it”, concluding that the Canadian education system was “class-determined” (2015, p. 172) and that “[until] educational systems are constructed to break down those psychological barriers they are not fully democratized” (2015, p. 173). This and other analysis contained within *The Vertical Mosaic* would influence the education discipline for many decades, leading to the current research into how students experience and are influenced by IDEA concepts as they become adults.

3.5 Definitions of IDEA and Competency within the Educational Context

There has been much debate around how *inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and competency* are defined in a school system, an acknowledged theoretical challenge. In this section, I will discuss the not just the academic view of these concepts and phrases but also their current role within public education.

Inclusion and Diversity: Belonging as an Individual

In British Columbia, *inclusion* in education has been defined as:

[The] principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with full integration in regular classrooms, and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others (BCME, 2016, p. v).

Kovač and Vaala (2021) asserted that understanding how inclusion relates to education cannot occur without understanding the concepts of *diversity* and *belonging* because inclusion “tends to cover multilevel systems” and “includes contextual ideologies, values, policies, practices, groups norms, and organizational climates all the way down to interpersonal behaviour and individual experiences” (Ferdman, 2014; as cited by Kovač & Vaala, 2021, p. 1206).

Kovač and Vaala began their conceptual analysis of educational inclusion by stating that *inclusion*, *diversity*, and *belonging* are interconnected terms which while they have different specific meanings, they must be contemplated together (2021, p. 1206). They included the term *belonging* because of how experiencing it is essential it is to the developing human:

The general tendency for belongingness is visible in the wide variety of specific behaviours, such as in forming friendships and associations with other people, in greeting and recognising the presence of others, in joining and living with people, cooperating and conversing sociably, and in loving and intimate relationships. (2021, p. 1207)

It is easy to see, then, that improving how inclusion is experienced within the British Columbia public education system is essential to child development because students are generally at school amongst their classmates and supervised by teachers and staff for approximately 6 hours a day, five days a week (excluding holidays and breaks). Therefore, the same type of belonging a child naturally experiences within their family at home must be continued into the school day as well.

However, Kovač and Vaala added that a complicating factor with regards to *belonging* is the idea that as much as humans want to form in-groups with other people who share their social identities, there is also a strong urge to maintain a level of individuality within their in-group (Brewer, 1991; Leonardelli et al., 2010; as cited by Kovač & Vaala, 2021, p. 1210). Coined the Optimal Distinctiveness Theory by Brewer, this factor along with concepts from Blos (1967) who sees the process of adolescence as being a “continuous disengagement of the young person from his or her parental affiliations” (Blos, 1967; as cited by Kovač & Vaala, 2021, p. 1210) can help explain in part why two children who are similar in age in the same family may develop very different personalities from both each other and from their parents and thus require different pedagogy when it comes to ensuring their educational success.

Kovač and Vaala also contend that *diversity* is an important concept to comprehend when ensuring that educational practices are inclusive because “many challenges with the implementation of the inclusive measures in education revolve around the issue of reconciling all sorts of differences among and between different groups of children” (2021, p. 1209). The comingling of children at school with all their varied family histories, backgrounds, and lived experiences can also result in the early recognition of which classmates can be considered as being part of their “in-group” because of their shared social identities versus which classmates do not appear to belong to the same social identity groups (Knippenberg & Ellemers, 1997; Oakes et al., 1994; as cited by Kovač & Vaala, 2021, p. 1209).

Kukar (2016) takes a different approach to the implications present behind the value of ensuring that children have experiences with a diverse range of people throughout their development into young adults through increasing how IDEA is taught and modeled at school. In her observations about how philosophers Stein and Butler have defined and challenged assumptions about empathy and its utility to society, Kukar states that even under Ontario’s mandate regarding teaching empathy in the public education system in 2008, there was little discussion in the mandate about how increasing empathy intersects with social injustice or the imbalance of power (2016, pp. 2–3) to perpetuate the inequities present in our society. She also points out scholarship from other psychologists who have noted that “students are happy to empathize with people from an out-group as long as it is in the abstract” and not about the other kids, teachers, and staff they interact with every day (Vorauer and Sasaki, 2009; as cited by Kukar, 2016, p. 3). When students are asked to empathize with people they have a real chance of encountering (perhaps a classmate with disabilities or a SOGI² school lead), according to Vorauer and Sasaki, “their focus shifts...to concern about how they would be perceived”. Equally, Kukar points out that empathy practitioners in non-educational fields such as physical therapy like Davis (1990) have recognized that “[anxiety], self-doubt, prejudice and self-esteem focus one's attention inward, making it difficult to establish a therapeutic presence for others, and thus these behaviors can prevent empathy from occurring” (Davis, 1990; as cited by Kukar, 2016, p. 8).

However, current scholarship about antiracism for educators by writers like Rembert (2023) has shifted to include the exhortation that when educators are introduced to the practices of being antiracist through professional development or their own studies, “they [must] assess themselves, take stock of their own principles, attitudes and behaviors (*sic*), and...make purposeful and shared decisions (with students) about how to apply this knowledge to the classroom” (2023a, p. 24). When this happens, the anecdotal findings Rembert supplies later in her book reveal that some of the Grade 7 to Grade 12 students she interviewed as part of her research for her book were very open to learning more about the experiences of their peers who held different social identities than theirs (2023b, pp. 151, 166, 170).

² See definition of SOGI in the Glossary.

In short, if IDEA-related strategic plan initiatives are implemented without first addressing antiracism in educators as well as alleviating the mental health issues students face, execution of those strategic plan initiatives may fail even when the strategic planning committee accurately performs all the steps outlined in a Bryson-style Strategy Change Cycle.

Equity: Addressing Societal Imbalances

A study by Tuters and Portelli (2017) described how educational leaders in Ontario have been supported and prepared to become administrators of diverse student populations; in doing so, they helped to define how those educational leaders came to understand how to implement equity within their schools and districts. Through a document review and interviews with educational leaders in Ontario and the United States, Tuters and Portelli found that “most policies and programmes are subordinated to the achievement movement” (McMahon & Portelli, 2012; Pinto, 2012; Sattler, 2012; as cited by Tuters & Portelli, 2017, pp. 602–603).

Rather than encouraging academic success for all students for reasons related to the concept of education as a public good, there was a stronger pressure for district and school leadership to produce students who would be able to help spur economic growth. Amongst other scholars studying this topic, Tuters and Portelli cited the example of Ontario Bill 13 (aka the *Accepting Schools Act* [2012]) which sought to sidestep the human rights issue of allowing secondary school students to create a Gay-Straight Alliance club at Catholic schools by focusing on its prohibitions against bullying as helping to eliminate barriers to learning and achievement (Winton & Tuters, 2015; as cited by Tuters & Portelli, 2017, p. 603) and eventually joining the adult population in Ontario as contributing adults.

Another factor which could hinder efforts to create equitable learning environments which Tuters and Portelli uncovered in Ontario was related to the number of White, middle-class school principals who are leading the administration of schools with student populations that are much more diverse than the teachers and staff who interact with them daily (Ryan & Rottman, 2009; Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2011; Zilio, 2016; as cited by Tuters & Portelli, 2017, p. 603). Even when they attempted to reduce social inequities, educational leaders would “often experience struggles associated with their work in the form of things such as unsupportive colleagues, policies, and superiors” (Armstrong et al., 2013; Ryan, 2012; Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2007; as cited by Tuters & Portelli, 2017, p. 603). Tuters and Portelli concluded that one of leverage points leaders could use towards creating a more equitable environment at schools would be to improve the amount of educational future principals received in their qualification and degree programs around how to “overcome these challenges and serve their diverse student populations” (2017, p. 604).

In their content analysis of policy documents from Ontario and British Columbia, George et al. (2020) found that policy language around equity in British Columbia was found to be subsumed into discussions about diversity and inclusion. Pointing to *Diversity in BC*

Schools: A Framework (which was first published by the BCME in 2008), they noted that it “spoke about [equity] in general terms, with reference to treatment, access, and participation, but without reference to specific groups” (2020, p. 168). Only further along in the framework document does it reveal through quoting an excerpt from the *Employment Equity Act* of 1995 that “[employment] equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences” (*Employment Equity Act*, 1995; as cited by B.C. Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 37). Later, equity would be defined within the province as when “something is fair and just for everybody” but “recognizes that we are not starting at the same place” and the achievement of equity “seeks to redress these imbalances” (2023d, sec. Equity).

In this way, it can be said that educational equity would refer to the fact that to achieve equitable treatment of all students within the public education system, more support and resources may need to be allocated to certain groups of students over others—up to and including advancing the employment of teachers, staff, and administration whose underrepresented social identities are shared by the student body in the district. In other words, the way by which justice can be achieved in the BC educational system is more concerned with providing opportunities for students to receive supports that are tailored to their own situations and family values rather than imposing a strict interpretation of methods which have been found to be successful for specific students and their families.

Accessibility: When Experiencing is Knowing

Meanwhile, accessibility—or more accurately, barriers to accessibility—has been more recently given an official definition, first for the country by the *Accessible Canada Act* (2019) and then for British Columbia with the *Accessible British Columbia Act* which passed in June 2021. The definition of accessibility barriers within the B.C. act reads:

- (1) For the purposes of this Act, a barrier is anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment.
 - (2) For certainty and without limiting subsection (1), barriers can be
 - (a) caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications or technologies, and
 - (b) affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.
- (*Accessible BC Act*, 2021, pt. 1, sec. Barriers)

Under the *Accessible BC Act*, one of the mandates to all school districts, both public and independent, is to create an accessibility committee whose purpose is to advise the district in its creation of a three-year accessibility plan. Another mandate is they are required to have a mechanism by which community members can report barriers to accessibility, and another function of the accessibility committee is to also provide guidance on how to alleviate the described barriers as well (*Accessible BC Act*, 2021, pt. 3).

As it has only been two years since this bill became law in British Columbia, it will be the work of future scholars to determine how well the creation and implementation of accessibility policies and regulations within school districts have succeeded in improving the lives of those affected students and their classmates.

Competency: Much More Than a Skill

Much of the literature about the historical use of the word *competence* (or *competencies*) in the education discipline discusses how it came to be first defined and programs developed to increase student competency within the United States. In his review, Tuxworth (1989) wrote that it was rooted in education for aspiring teachers before it grew to be extended to elementary, secondary, and vocational school students (p. 10). Just as the practice of strategic management and strategic planning emerged from the 1960s and 1970s, the demand for curriculum aimed at improving how students learn likewise became the progenitor of the search for a comprehensive pedagogy.

At the time according to Tuxworth, both teachers and administrators were interested in ensuring that teachers possessed specific attributes and skills that would aid them in effectively delivering curriculum to students which would prepare them to successfully enter the workforce (Swanck & Campbell, 1981; as cited by Tuxworth, 1989, p. 10). However, by the 1970s, there was little evidence from research to show positive, causative links between the increase in competency training for teachers and student success (Huff, 1976; Heath & Neilson, 1974; as cited by Tuxworth, 1989, p. 11). Undeterred, Burke et al. (1975) and their fellow scholars worked to disseminate these and other criteria for describing and assessing competency-based training for teachers (and students):

- *Professional Programs:* All personnel employed by a program must be able to demonstrate and embody the skills and behaviours which have been deemed necessary for success in the specific profession. Staff must be provided with the resources they need to deliver curriculum which will teach students these specific skills as well as sufficiently compensated for their level of expertise in successfully delivering the curriculum. There should always be research being conducted to determine the efficacy of the program in placing students within the profession as well as how the delivered curriculum holds up against real-world conditions for program graduates.
- *Competency Specifications:* Professions and careers require specific skills. Some of them are unique to the profession, others are tangentially related. To become successful in a specific profession, a student will need to be successful in acquiring and demonstrating these skills.
- *Instruction:* Training for a specific profession is linked to the group of skills required for the profession; this can be generally described as competencies. This training should be manageable enough to be delivered in reasonable amounts of time, relative to the student's level of development, "learner style, sequence preference, pacing and preferred needs." A student who demonstrates

proficiency in a foundational skill can then progress to the understanding of the more complex skills, and the student should be aware of how much they have achieved through learning about the skill during their instruction time. Curriculum can change based on feedback received from a variety of sources related to the profession and/or the student population.

- *Assessment*: Competency measures are “specific, realistic, and sensitive to nuance.” They are generally known and/or easily accessible by the public and are designed to determine how well a student has understood why they are important to the profession.
- *Governance and Management*: Policy statements around specific types of instructional programs should be written in ways which support the acquisition of these competencies through the hiring and management of provenly proficient personnel (managers and instructors), instruction materials, and procedures. (Burke et al., 1975; as cited by Tuxworth, 1989, pp. 11–12)

Understandably, as this list of program criteria developed, so did a resistance to idea of a total overhaul of the education system. As Tuxworth further explained, “Not every institution was ready and willing to adopt the whole system; indeed many felt that the major aims of competency-based evaluation and training could be met without serious disturbance to existing schemes” (1989, p. 13). This is a common refrain upheld by Western policy makers and administrators of all types who are reluctant to undertake extensive restructuring due to the amount of time, energy, and resources it requires while successful program delivery is hampered by the redevelopment effort. There are even colloquial idioms which have developed due to this resistance such as the idea of “throwing the baby out with the bathwater”, implying that it is not possible to remove the non-working attributes of a system for fear of discarding the wanted attributes.

Today, proponents of competency-based education have come to understand that a curriculum which is competency-based, such as the updated curriculum for British Columbia elementary and secondary school students which was launched in 2017. Known as “BC’s New Curriculum”, the curriculum seeks to have “students demonstrate mastery—sometimes called proficiency or competency—of required knowledge and skills” (Marzano et al., 2017, p. 1). In their handbook, Marzano et al. additionally note that that competency itself has been defined as “an explicit, measurable, transferable learning objective that encompasses knowledge creation as well as skills and dispositions” (2017, p. 2).

Under BC’s New Curriculum and related to the concepts in IDEA, students in British Columbia are expected to gain competency in three categories: Communication, Thinking, and Personal and Social (Province of British Columbia, 2017, sec. Unpacking the three Core Competencies). Together, they are known as the Core Competencies and development of these competencies is embedded within every subject matter which is taught to students and are a foundation of education that is the equal to literacy and numeracy. In essence, it is then required for students within British Columbia to be demonstrate competency in not just “reading, writing, and arithmetic” but also critical

thinking, caring about themselves and others, and making themselves understood by the people around them (2017, sec. Unpacking the three Core Competencies, paras. 1–3). However, gaining competency in these categories can be very controversial for some families because of how those parents, guardians, and caregivers view their role as co-educators of their children.

3.6 The Parental Role in Public Education

Alongside strategic planning and educational reforms, the role of parents, guardians, and caregivers in their children’s education similarly experienced a change. According to Owram (1996), it began in 1952 with the post-war baby boomers and their approximately 370,000 five and six year olds attending schools in the Canadian suburbs for the very first time (p. 111). He stated:

Postwar affluence, long-term tendencies towards increased education, and more regular school attendance meant that the baby boom was more affected by the Canadian school system than any previous generation had been. School encompassed not just childhood but adolescence and, as discussed later, often the young adult years as well. Parents saw school as vital to the success of their children and put tremendous demands upon it. (Owram, 1996, p. 115)

However, due to this increase in the amount of time a child spent in school with their agetates and being instructed by people who were not directly related to them, the parents, guardians, and caregivers of these children found themselves in conflict with a government institution with which they had little previous extensive contact:

This domestic generation was aware that yet another family function was increasingly being removed from the home, at least in part. This made the role of schools all the more crucial in the minds of the parents, and heightened their demands. (Owram, 1996, p. 115)

In essence, while relying on the education system to teach their children the skills they needed to enter the workforce and become contributing members of society, parents, guardians, and caregivers became wary of educational reforms which sought to teach students about topics and subjects which may not have been part of their traditional family values. Owram noted that thanks to education philosopher Dewey, education began to become more child-centred and collaborative with children as opposed to adversarial and/or authoritative over them (1996, p. 124). He also noted that topics in textbooks used across the provinces included such progressive attitudes as family equality (1996, p. 130), encouraging women to join the workforce (while maintaining an impeccable house for her eventual husband) (1996, pp. 130–131), and tolerance and inclusion for children who held different social identities than their peers (1996, p. 132).

In the 21st century, pressure from parents, guardians, and caregivers on the British Columbia public education system around what their children are learning has not eased, even if the types and flavour of pressure has changed. Near the beginning of the century, acrimony garnered by the BCME’s changes in 2001 to labour legislation created a contentious legal challenge which made it all the way to the Supreme Court of

Canada. The refusal of the B.C. Teachers' Federation (BCTF) to encourage its members to engage with the administration with strategic planning (BCTF, 2022, sec. Decade 9, para. 20) and its disdain for the misuse of provincially gathered statistics from the Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA) by the Fraser Institute (Poole et al., 2021, p. 61) has placed parents, guardians, and caregivers squarely in the middle of lingering tensions between their children's teachers and the school's administration. As recently as last year, the 2022 municipal elections in British Columbia revealed that a major hot-button issue in several races for the office of school board trustees in the three school districts located in the Greater Victoria Area was the teaching of age-appropriate material about SOGI in public schools (Rushowy & Javed, 2022; Hughes, 2022) and other aspects of IDEA concepts. Finally, throughout, there are concerns both within the education discipline and the public administration disciplines regarding how to improve student educational success through parental involvement and engagement.

For example, Ishimaru (2019) revealed that utilizing collective approaches to parental engagement and/or involvement in their students' education can "seek to open possibilities for building more equitable parent-family-school collaboration[s]" (p. 491). In her paper, Ishimaru encouraged educational leaders such as principals to "play a key role in setting the tone for parent-school relations" (2019, p. 491) rather than seeing them as potential usurpers of power, as some have characterized the relationship in the past (Crow, 1998; Gold et al., 2002; as cited by Ishimaru, 2019, p. 491). She also decried as purely symbolic gestures of relationship-building, such as "open door policies", as they do not allow for the building of "deep relationships" that will bind the family tighter within the community (2019, p. 492).

By itself, effective communication strategies between school officials and laypersons (including parents, guardians, and caregivers) have been the subject of reports, studies, and books. For example, a second report about the efficacy of a competency-based approach to curriculum and instruction written for the Québec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport in 2008 was issued after the minister stated that the first report did not completely satisfy "concerns expressed by some about the competency-based approach and the level of knowledge acquired by students" (Ibrahim et al., 2008, p. 1). The report also noted that "the issue of communicating student results and the nature of parents' need for information should be the object of particular focus" (2008, p. 2). Other studies have looked at ways that family communications educators can "make an important contribution toward improving race relations...by teaching about how family interaction at home...can improve relationships across the racial divide outside the home" (Socha & Beigle, 1999, pp. 221–222), while an entire book aimed at teachers provides insight into the common types of difficult interactions a teacher may have with a student's parents, guardians, and/or caregivers and how to resolve any issues (McEwan-Adkins, 2022).


Thus, an important factor for public school district leadership to consider when implementing their strategic and operational plans is how they will communicate about their strategic efforts in a way that does not harm the relationship that parents, guardians, and caregivers have with their children.

3.7 Analytic Framework

During the penultimate SD62 Board meeting of the 2020-2021 school year, the strategic plan was discussed with members of the Education Committee of the Whole; a summary of the feedback was provided in the meeting agenda for the last meeting. A specific piece of feedback stated that the committee, the other trustees, and the partner groups wanted to see the overall narrative for the plan reflected in the finished product (SD62, 2021, pp. 78–79).

Based on the literature on how incorporating IDEA into education became a concern for the BCMEC, Bryson’s own conceptual framework for strategic planning efforts likens the process of strategic planning to a “drama that must have the correct setting; themes; plots and subplots; actors; scenes; beginning, middle, and ending; and interpretation” (Bryant, 2015; as cited by Bryson 2018, p. 93). Therefore, the analytic framework of this capstone project about how SD62’s IDEA initiatives were chosen to fit into their forthcoming strategic and operational plans and how their outcomes can be

Figure 2: Musical Theatre Production Playbill as Metaphor for the Analytic Framework for this Report



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 ProducerUniversity of Victoria
School of Public Administration

DirectorT. L. Renken-Sebastian
Master’s of Community Development Graduate Student

OrchestraSooke Schools District 62 (SD62)

ConductorScott Stinson
Superintendent of Schools

ConcertmasterRavi Parmar
Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Stage ManagerSue Grundy
Manager of Executive Operations

Book & LyricsLesson Plans

MusicB.C. Curriculum Requirements

Set DesignFramework for Enhancing Student Learning

Costume DesignSchool Newsletters

Lighting DesignSocial Media Platforms

Sound DesignHistorical, Sociological, and Cultural Attitudes

Hair & Makeup DesignPress Releases

ChoreographerCommunications Strategies


Dance CaptainCommunication Barriers

| Main Characters | Supporting Characters |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers | Teachers |
| District and School Administrators | Educational Assistants |
| Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers | 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 conflict(s); further interactions between characters and within systems are also uncovered; initial solutions and options are considered and further developed | Wherein the characters enact their plan to resolve any initial conflict(s), manage the ensuing conflicts, and work together proactively to deter 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'maht Education Council



SPEAC and Canadian Parents for French Immersion



SD62 District Student Council

Congratulations on a fantastic strategic plan!

Designed by ShicabluDesign * <https://shicabluDesign.myportfolio.com>
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conceptualized using the metaphor of a three-act musical play and the first two pages of its playbill as seen in Figure 2.

As indicated in the playbill example, the historical, societal, and cultural attitudes towards children's education influence how education is heard and received by the school community, while BC's New Curriculum and the lesson plans which are created to support it form the prose, lyrics, and music which comprise the information being conveyed through education and the improvements which are the objectives SD62's strategic plan. The seven key stakeholder groups in SD62 which also comprised part of the SPSG are prominently displayed in the same type of congratulatory advertisement which a theatre department would display in the playbill, while how information about the strategic plan and the educational success which has been achieved is conveyed to the audience are listed as other "below the line" contributors to the production. Finally, the main characters of this project are the parents, guardians, and caregivers; the Board of Trustees, and the district-and school-based administrators, with the remaining four remaining stakeholder groups acting as supporting characters in this capstone project-production.

3.8 Summary of Literature Review

In the review of the literature available regarding strategic planning, communication with laypersons, and public education, there are many themes which run throughout. First, strategic planning for education must be sensitive to emotion-based needs from not just the parents, guardians, and caregivers of the students, but also the teachers, staff, and administration who take care of the day-to-day operations. Unlike strategic planning in a for-profit organization, educational strategic planners are encouraged to regularly consult with stakeholders within the community who may be able to provide an innovative solution to overcoming the weaknesses and threats identified in a SWOT analysis. Community development concepts and tools such as systems thinking and the 12 leverage points for systemic change can also be deployed to achieve successful strategic plan implementation as well.

As Canada began to embrace the identity of a place where multiple cultures from all over the world could interact with each other to form a strong and empathetic populace, the human rights concepts of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) and the increasing importance of learning competencies were defined in an educational context. The role of parents, guardians, and caregivers in a student's education has also shifted over time to the point where the parental stakeholder group can play a significant role in the strategic direction of a public school district through direct action such as participating in feedback surveys and public board and committee meetings and indirect action such as voting in the election of school board trustees. Given this information, the next section will identify the analysis methods I have employed to obtain the findings which I will describe in Part II of this report.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

This project used a mixed methods approach which cycled between inductive and deductive reasoning to organize the data and clarify the themes. This focus on a how one specific Canadian public school district can improve how it communicates with its community benefited from a mixed methodology because the project involved two or more disciplines, thus encouraging me to pull data from a multitude of resources (Yin, 2009; as cited by Lo et al., 2019, p. 4).

Additionally, O’Leary (2021) believes that a mixed methods approach can help a social science researcher “overcome the shortcomings and biases inherent in each individual approach” as well as convey an “openness to various ontologies and epistemologies” in the process of data gathering and analysis (2021, p. 173). As this project focuses on the efficacy of a strategic plan’s success from the perspective of both the persons who created the plan as well as stakeholders who may not have the same in-depth knowledge about strategic planning, a method which encouraged the removal of my unstated internal biases was crucial.

Qualitative and some quantitative data was retrieved through a literature review, public Board meeting observations, an online survey, knowledge-sharing sessions (focus groups; KSS’s) which were held online and in person, and a jurisdictional scan. Due to working with people for some of the data collection activities and SD62’s policy for research projects performed with district participants that have not been initiated by the Board of Trustees, I applied for and was granted approval to proceed with my research from the University of Victoria HREB (Human Research Ethics Board; #22-0136) on 16 December 2022 and from the SD62 superintendent of schools on 11 January 2023 (See Appendix A).

In the following sub-sections, I will provide details about the methodology and research methods I utilized and then provide information about the limitations of the project.

4.1 Methods of Analysis

As noted above, more than one method of analysis was employed throughout this project. **Narrative inquiry** is a form of qualitative research which focuses on the collaborative relationship formed between a researcher and their participants. It is a method which examines not just what happens during a process but also looks at how the participants are changed as a result of the research process (Caine et al., 2020). Because it is also situated in connection to specific locations and/or populations (Yanow, 2014, p. 135), I also used **interpretive analysis**—through listening to and understanding for myself the viewpoints presented—to synthesise the findings from my research tasks with Community-Informed Research (CIR) principles to address my research questions.

While there is extensive information regarding the nature of the dynamic amongst parents, guardians, and caregivers; school board trustees; and district-based and individual school-based administrators regarding children’s education about IDEA, I

chose to guide the research through CIR by whatever insights I gained by speaking to and working with relevant members of three of the SD62 stakeholder groups (Yanow, 2014, p. 143) described in Table 5.

Table 5: Characteristics of Three of the Key Stakeholders in SD62

| Name of Stakeholder Group | Definition | Type of Research Participation |
|---|---|--|
| Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers (Group 1) | Individuals who provide care for students within a specific geographic region | Survey (Phase 1) Knowledge-Sharing Sessions (Phase 2) |
| School Board of Trustees (Group 2) | Individuals who are elected by the public to advocate for education within a specific geographic region (B.C. School Trustees Association, 2023) | Knowledge-Sharing Sessions (Phase 2) |
| District-Based and Individual School-Based Administrators (Group 3) | Individuals who are appointed by the Board of Trustees to oversee the administration of all staff, services, and programs within the district as well as supervise the requirements within the provincial <i>School Act</i> (B.C. Principals and Vice-Principals, 2023) | Knowledge-Sharing Sessions (Phase 2) |

As a result, cycling between inductive and deductive reasoning was a rational choice for this project, as I did not have any preconceived notions regarding the status of the relationship between parents, guardians, and caregivers and school district leadership. Thus, any data I gathered through my literature review and meeting observations could be deductively confirmed by the survey and KSS's, which could then further deepen the jurisdictional scan through inductive analysis (O'Leary, 2021, p. 301).

The result of these cycles was a **thematic analysis** using an inexpensive qualitative data analysis method described by evaluation analyst Seth Tucker (American University Professional Studies, 2023). *In vivo* codes were used to summarize sentences and sometimes whole paragraphs from audio transcripts composed through Microsoft Word which were then arranged alphabetically and from which I developed a list of themes. These were then analyzed in Microsoft Excel using the pivot table function to determine the frequency at which certain themes arose from the KSS's; these themes, in turn, helped to further identify the relevant data to gather for the jurisdictional scan.

4.2 Literature Review

As part of the creation of my project proposal and the approvals process for Non-Board Initiated Research projects conducted with members of the SD62 community, I conducted a preliminary literature review using the method described below. After

permission was granted and as part of the cyclical nature of the inductive and deductive reasoning process, the literature review was then expanded and was included as Section 3.0 of this report.

Keyword searches included the following terms, their variants, and other associated terms: strategic planning, change strategies, strategic communication, communication barriers, inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, competency, multiculturalism, pluralism, parental involvement and engagement, education policy and reform, performance management, the 2017 redesign of the British Columbia curriculum for public education. Databases searched included Academic Search Complete and ERIC (EBSCO) as well as others which are currently accessible through the University of Victoria.

With regards to current academic research, dates were restricted to scholarly articles and dissertations published between 2010 and 2023; the publishing dates for books was unlimited. Preference was given to open-access journals and e-Book versions of texts to ensure that verification and replication could be performed by any interested researcher who may not have access to paid journal subscriptions.

4.3 Meeting Observations

I observed 16 online meetings and one in-person meeting of the SD62 Board of Trustees and its two committees which were open to the public between June 2021 and September 2022. After gaining permission from the president, I also observed five meetings of the Sooke Parents' Education Advisory Council (SPEAC) and was invited to present at one meeting of a school Parents' Advisory Council (PAC) during the same period. Prior to each meeting, I downloaded the meeting agendas and used these to guide me through the flow of the meetings. Video and audio recordings were made via a local installation of Debut from NCH Software, and I took notes during the meetings either in a separate Word document or on the meeting agendas themselves using a local installation of Microsoft Edge. In addition to providing me with additional background information, the data I gained through these observations helped to inform the design of the data collection instruments and process for the online survey and KSS's.

4.4 Survey for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers (Phase 1)

The questions for the online survey to which 26 parents, guardians, and/or caregivers responded was rooted in the information I uncovered from the literature review, the SPEAC meetings I observed, and the question-and-answer sessions from the SPEAC meeting and individual PAC meeting in April and May 2022 where I gave my first presentations about my research project. They were also developed out of conversations I had between June 2022 and August 2022 with representatives from three community service organizations who serve the families of Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) students in SD62 and education coordinators from one First Nation which is acknowledged by the district and one upon whose land some of the

SD62 schools reside. A first draft of the survey hosted on a University of Victoria instance of SurveyMonkey was tested by one friend in the United States who has children in the public school system and one acquaintance whose children attend SD62 schools; that person was made ineligible to participate in the survey or any KSS's due to a conflict of interest.

During the recruitment phase of data collection for this project, I worked with the SPEAC president to give presentations about my research and put out a call to action at their March 2023 meeting. A filmed version of the presentation was also made available to view on the project website as well as in social media posts on LinkedIn and Facebook. These posts were available for anyone to view and/or share with the individual school-based PACs who had created invite-only Facebook groups for their members. In addition to giving a presentation at the March 2023 SPEAC meeting, I also sent emails to the presidents of most of the individual school PACs when the contact information was freely available on the school website as well as to some community-based service organizations which had responded well to my initial calls for background information. I arranged with the education coordinator from one of the First Nations which are acknowledged by the district to attend their weekly community lunches during which I could speak with prospective participants to invite them to participate in the survey. To encourage participation, I announced that I would hold a drawing to give away two \$25.00 CDN gift cards to the retail store of their choice or the equivalent amount of cash to Group 1 participants who chose to submit their name and contact information for a drawing.

In response to a question asked during the March 2023 SPEAC meeting, I was able to have the Survey recruitment flyer and letter for parents translated by machine and then proofread by a professional translator into Japanese. The translator affirmed that she knows at least 10 Japanese families who send their children to SD62 schools. She also stated that in her experience, parents would not be likely to fill out the Survey if the recruitment materials were not also provided in Japanese (Y. Peerless, personal communication, 23 January 2023). The translated recruitment flyer was placed as an advertisement in the translator's e-Newsletter to her clients on 15 March 2023, to which approximately 130 people are subscribed. I also mentioned during my presentation that if any SPEAC member present knew of any parents, guardians, or caregivers who mostly spoke a non-English language and might be interested in participating in the survey, I would be happy to facilitate having my survey instrument, recruitment, and consent letter translated into their language.

The survey was initially going to be open for respondents for 30 calendar days beginning on 15 March 2023; however, the deadline to submit a Survey was extended to 30 April 2023 due to the low number of responses. I was also invited by the presidents of two elementary school-based PACs to speak to its members during their April 2023 meetings to introduce them to my research project and inform them of the extension of the Survey deadline. Unfortunately, I was only able to attend one of the meetings due to missing an email that was sent to my alternate email address. I also subsequently gave a similar presentation and summary of data collection efforts at the

SPEAC meeting in April 2023; this was also recapped in a post on the project's website as well as in a data collection update e-Newsletter.

4.5 Knowledge-Sharing Sessions with Trustees and Administrators (Phase 2)

The questions for the 11 KSS participants who were either Trustees or district- and school-based administrators were developed from the information I gathered for the literature review and the Board and SPEAC meetings I observed. These questions were reviewed by my supervisor in lieu of KSS question testing.

Email invitations to individual or group KSS's were sent to the district-based administrators as well as all the individual school-based administrators whose email addresses were readily available on the school website. To encourage participation, each Trustee or administrator who participated could opt-in to receiving a \$25.00 CDN gift card to the grocery store of their choice or a donation of a gift card or its cash equivalent in the service of supporting the implementation of IDEA principles in their school.

Once the scheduled interview time was confirmed, I provided the participants with the list of questions, following up with an email reminder either the day before or the morning of the interview. Online sessions were conducted via instances of Zoom and MS Teams provided through the University of Victoria and recorded via Debut; in-person sessions were recorded via a local installation of Audacity. Transcripts from the audio recordings were processed first via a local installation of Dragon Professional Individual by Nuance (T1 and SA2 only), then by the transcription function for audio files present in the University of Victoria-hosted instance of Microsoft Word.

4.6 Knowledge-Sharing Sessions with Parents, Guardians & Caregivers (Phase 2)

Utilizing a less involved method of engagement, two parents participated in a KSS. Towards the end of the time when the survey for Group 1 participants was live, I gave a presentation at the April 2023 SPEAC meeting to update them on the data collection process, reminding them that I needed volunteers for individual or group KSS's. Through the presentation and a 2-page newsletter and accompanying post on the research project's website which was promoted in the SPEAC e-Newsletter social media channels such as Facebook and LinkedIn, members of Group 1 were invited to participate in either individual or group KSS's by completing a form using the University of Victoria instance of SurveyMonkey. I also attempted to recruit at least one participant for a KSS who identified as a members of one of the First Nations which are acknowledged by the district. To encourage participation, each person who participated in whole or in part received a \$25.00 CDN gift card to the grocery store of their choice or the equivalent amount of cash.

Scheduling, the provision of the list of questions, the KSS's and the transcription and analysis thereof was performed in the same method as for the participants from Groups 2 and 3.

4.7 Jurisdictional Scan

Prior to the beginning of Phase 1, I searched for and retrieved a list of the following documents from the public-facing website for SD62: the current and previous Strategic Plans, the current and previous Operational Plans, meeting agendas and minutes for public meetings of the SD62 Board of Trustees and Education-Policy Committee [June 2021, September 2021, June 2022, September 2022], district policies and regulations which are rooted in IDEA principles, and a list of the official forms of communication controlled by the Manager of Strategic Communications.

During the Question & Answer (Q&A) period of a public Board meeting, the following B.C. school districts were mentioned as being the most like SD62 when it came to the challenges of managing growth: Abbotsford (SD34), Central Okanagan (SD23), Chilliwack (SD33), Cowichan Valley (SD79), Nanaimo Ladysmith (SD68), and Surrey (SD36) (S. Stinson et al., personal communication, 28 September 2021). The Board also indicated that they would collaborate with the leaders from the Greater Victoria (SD61) and Saanich (SD63) districts when it came to sharing information and resources about their strategic plan from a budgetary perspective (R. Parmar, personal communication, 28 September, 2021).

A review of the vital statistics for the districts based on the information submitted to and produced by the BCMEC indicated that four of the eight districts mentioned would be appropriate to submit to a full jurisdictional scan and analysis. The documents were gathered and the data examined using the findings from the Phase 1 and Phase 2 data collection activities as sign points.

4.8 Limitations

The regulations regarding Non-Board Initiated Research performed in SD62 created some limitations for the data collection phases of this project which dealt with human participants. Because these regulations state that the district is not obliged to assist independent researchers with disseminating information about the approved research project (SD62, 2021h), I was solely responsible for informing the various participants about the research project. Coupled with being a newcomer to the community, I do not think that I was able to achieve the same kind of outreach as a project that was initiated and conducted with full support of the district as a Project Client.

Within the online survey for Group 1 participants, several people elected not to make choices in some areas but did choose to respond in others. An example of this was when participants were asked if they had read the current strategic plan for SD62. Seven people did not provide an answer for this and several other questions which were pertinent to the survey's purpose. Out of those seven people, five of them did provide details regarding their level of involvement with their oldest student's PAC. It is because of the fulsome response to the open-ended question that I can consider their entire survey submissions to be valid and did not remove those responses from the survey response pool.

In the case of the two participants who submitted a survey but did not provide clarifying details regarding their level of involvement with the PAC at their oldest student's school and whether they had read the current strategic plan and/or any other strategic planning updates or reports, their responses will only be included the section of the report focused describing the demographics of participants who responded to the survey and/or their oldest children.

Recruitment from Groups 2 and 3 began at/around February 2023 and continued through April 2023; this period coincided simultaneously with the two-week Spring Break for the district and school administrators. As a result, many prospective participants declined to participate, citing either medical reasons (including the influx of colds that occur at schools during that time of the year) and/or increased school activity leading up to and trailing from Spring Break.

Four people from Group 1 indicated their interest in participating in a KSS either in person or by filling out a form that was hosted on a University of Victoria instance of SurveyMonkey. Earnest scheduling began in at the end of April 2023, and I was only able to confirm and conduct KSS's with two participants.

4.9 Summary of Methodology

Employing the mixed methods approach to conducting the research for this capstone project was a great asset as it allowed me to be freed any unstated internal biases I hold due to not being raised in the Canadian public education system. A combination of inductive and deductive reasoning formed the blueprint by which I chose my data-gathering methods and processes for this multidisciplinary research. Care was taken to ensure that the methodology I chose would be equitable to members of all three of the stakeholder groups in the community whom I wished to invite to be project participants. The findings I uncovered through my data-collection process can be read next in Part II.

Part II

Section 5: Findings: Meeting Observations

Section 6: Findings: Survey for Parents, Guardians, Caregivers

Section 7: Findings: Knowledge-Sharing Sessions for Parents, Guardians, Caregivers

Section 8: Knowledge-Sharing Sessions for Trustees and Administrators

Section 9: Jurisdictional Scan

“In my career, I feel like schools have become more and more about social-emotional learning, which is absolutely important. However, as you and I know, our mandate on paper and in the Strategic Plan is that we're going to create informed, literate citizens. There's tons of research on it, like someone's ability to be able to read will carry them through life. Yet to have a conversation, to engage people in a meaningful way about a topic like reading, I find it's so challenging. I can't make it sexy enough.”

–Anonymous participant in a Knowledge-Sharing Session

5.0 FINDINGS—MEETING OBSERVATIONS

After the initial discussion with the SD62 manager of executive operations about the research project, she recommended attendance at the last two meetings of the 2020-2021 school year, as they would be discussing the near-final draft of *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* during an Education Committee of the Whole. Observations began with first the public Board meetings and later, some of the Education-Policy Committee (EPC) meetings and the SPEAC meetings as well. The observation period began on 15 June 2021 and concluded on 28 September 2022, two days before the date by which SD62 was required to submit the approved 2021-2022 FESL report to the BCMEC.

The meeting observations are included as findings for this report because as a newcomer to Canada whose most recent educational experience prior to my move was within a different country, my observations could approximate those of a parent, guardian, or caregiver whose family had never lived within SD62 before. Meeting attendance was approached by borrowing the perspective of a newcomer parent, guardian, or caregiver with the goal of uncovering how the Board of Trustees makes decisions regarding the district's strategic priorities, learning how SD62 conducts their Board meetings, and providing insight into the nature of the relationships between the Board of Trustees and the stakeholder groups who are invited to give reports at Board meetings.

Based on notes which were backed up by audio recordings, 21 meetings were observed in a total of two categories: Board and EPC Meetings (16) and SPEAC meetings (5). These categories helped provide understanding towards further investigation about the concerns brought up in my research questions.

5.1 Board and EPC Meetings

Except for the meeting from June 2022, all my observations were performed by accessing the livestream of the meetings conducted through MS Teams and using screen-recording software to make a copy of the stream for the purpose of my research project. The three most impactful observations follow in the next sub-sections.

Dueling Strategic Plan Objectives

One of the first challenges to the declared IDEA-related strategic plan objectives arose as early as the regular business section of the combined Board and Education Committee of the Whole (ECOW) meeting held on 15 June 2021. A motion which was passed forward from a previous Resources Committee meeting requested that the Board of Trustees approve "*in principle* (emphasis mine) the acquisition of electric buses out of the financial reserve" until the B.C. government could commit to fully funding the purchase (SD62, 2021a, p. 5). The argument in favour of the motion stated that the Board voicing this principled stance would be an action which would advance a non-IDEA-related Growth objective. An argument against the motion stated that if the Board was going to take a stand on spending any funds out of the financial reserve, it should not be done to advance the non-IDEA related Growth objective in favour of an IDEA-

related Learning objective that was related to increasing the availability of mental health supports for students (“Ensure our learning environments are safe, accessible, and welcoming.”).

For the duration of my time spent observing the public meetings, this tension surrounding the use of financial resources to create additional mental health supports for children rather than any other activity which might support different strategic plan goals and objectives remained a constant concern. This concern was most directly expressed closer to the deadline by which the following school year’s operating budget was due to the BCMEC.

Proper Versus Informal Meeting Procedures

As with many nonprofit and/or public administration organizations, Board and committee meetings for SD62 are governed by *Robert’s Rules of Order* (SD62, 2021a), and the *Robert’s Rules* guidance for committee meetings is less formal than those for Board meetings. Throughout the observation period, I noted that there was at least one instance where following the proper procedure for a meeting may have resulted in the breakdown of a relationship while an informal procedure may have strengthened it.

For example, during the 26 April 2022 meeting, one out of three motions proposed by a Trustee (T3) which had been included in the agenda package was defeated while a different motion which was spontaneously composed by a different Trustee (T4) after the defeat was carried, despite the intentions behind both motions being the same. I observed that the argument against the originally proposed motion was that they felt that how it was phrased would not achieve the effect which T3 wished to achieve; however, T4 chose not to move for an amendment to T3’s proposed motion which would satisfy the remaining Trustees’ concerns over phrasing.

At the same time, I also noted an instance where an informal change was made to how SD62 conducts some committee meetings resulted in a positive interaction between the Board and its stakeholder groups. At the 1 February 2022 Education-Policy Committee meeting, it was announced that the representatives from the standing delegations would have a chance to respond to presentations prior to the Trustee committee members being able to ask questions or make comments about the presentation. According to the committee report, “This change supports and honours the equitable values held by SD62 and promotes healthy dialogue and feedback from our partners and stakeholders that further supports Trustees in practicing informed decision-making” (SD62, 2022c, p. 1). This was also affirmed by the chair of the Resources committee later during the Board meeting of March 2022 (B. Beckett, personal communication, 2021).

This change to how Education-Policy Committee meetings are conducted was realized during the meeting on 5 April 2022, where I observed that during a discussion about policy and regulation revisions which had been brought back to the committee, one of the standing delegation representatives expressed their appreciation for the ability to provide feedback at the meeting prior to moving on to the next item on the agenda.

I decided that the contrast in the two types of interactions between stakeholders was sufficient to warrant further investigation through the crafting of Knowledge-Sharing Session questions which might provide context for these types of interactions.

Lack of Context for Stakeholder Delegation Reports

One of the best practices that is often mentioned regarding meeting minutes is that care must be taken to faithfully record the context for the information that was presented and discussed and the decisions that were made while ensuring that too much information is not recorded which could potentially damage or harm individual Board members if repeated out of context. As reported by Lattin and Lam (2017), a panel of governance experts at a conference in Australia concurred that “the minutes [should] record the context around the board’s discussion about the item, rather than simply noting that the item was discussed” (2017, p. 331).

The same exhortation does not seem to apply to the summary of the 5-minute reports that are given by the representatives from the standing delegations during my period of meeting observations. One example is from the 22 June 2021 meeting where the Sooke Teachers’ Association (STA) president was recorded in the minutes as “[discussing] the recent decision concerning the secondary school configuration [for] 2021” (SD62, 2021h, p. 2). However, my observations note that the context for the decision they referenced included an action taken by the district which the STA felt violated the terms of the collective agreement.

The inclusion of this type of context confers an entirely different tone to the relationship which exists between district leadership and the STA than what has been put into the record. Rather than the supportive atmosphere under which the district would be able to perform the implementation activities which could lead to the achievement of strategic plan objectives, the lack of context may highlight a fatal flaw in the district’s stakeholder consultation process.

Another example where additional context provided in Board meeting minutes may help parents, guardians, and caregivers make informed decisions about their children’s education is centred around student participation in the Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA) standardized tests. At the end of the first Board meeting of the 2021-2022 school year, the finalized *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* was rolled out to the public for the first time. The agenda for that meeting included a presentation of the 2021 Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (FESL) report, which stated that participation in the FSA has been “historically low” within SD62, with a mention that the district would “[generate] locally developed data sets to provide the additional evidence of student success in the district” (SD62, 2021e, p. 57). The same type of verbiage appears in the 2022 FESL report that was submitted to the BCMEC, while only the Information Note in the agenda package mentions that some compromises have been made regarding the inclusion of new data sets, such as the “locally developed Equity Surveys” and “the incorporation of student report card and attendance data” (2022b, p. 255).

While the minutes from the September 2022 meeting indicate that the STA “believes [the FSA] places additional stress on the teaching staff” (2022e, p. 3), they do not provide the additional context mentioned during their delegation’s report by the STA representative for the continued resistance actions being undertaken by the BCTF towards discouraging participation in the assessment. Oddly, the Information Note in the 7 December 2021 Education-Policy Committee meeting about the first strategic plan quarterly report does mention that there is a “sustained BCTF campaign in opposition to the FSAs” (SD62, 2021g, p. 109), but lacks any context or details for how the district is attempting to overcome the resistance and/or work with the BCTF or even just the STA to develop alternative sources of information which could provide the evidence needed for the FESL and annual strategic planning progress reports.

Without this context, the parents, guardians, and caregivers in families who may be new to the district and/or are not regularly engaged in political issues are not provided with the information they would need to make the decision on whether their children should participate in the assessment.

5.2 SPEAC Meetings

Observations at the SPEAC meetings did not begin until November 2021. Because SPEAC meetings are held less than one week prior to the Board meetings, there are some instances where the observations in this section revolve around the interactions that took place between district leadership and parents, guardians, and caregivers during the time between the two meetings.

Unlike the Board and EPC meetings, I briefly conversed with the SPEAC president before and after the meetings so that I could update them on the status of my research proposal’s progress through the Non-Board Initiated Research application process; information from these conversations will not be included in the impactful observations that follow.

Greater Details from Standing Delegation Reports

A significant difference from how Board meetings are conducted is that after each report from the stakeholder groups (aka partner groups), there is a brief amount of time allotted for SPEAC meeting participants to ask questions of the standing delegation representatives. These questions and their responses are summarized in the SPEAC meeting minutes and sometimes closely follow the delegation representative’s remarks, up to and including exact wording and phrases, such as the Trustee representative’s report at the 17 November 2021 meeting (SPEAC, 2021, p. 2). I also observed that during the same meeting, the PAC representatives in attendance were able to interrupt the representatives if they had questions relating to specific slides, such as when the district principal for Capital Planning was giving a presentation about the upcoming catchment changes, deadlines for school registration periods, and the implications for students who may have to change schools due to the catchment boundary changes.

I also noted that the formatting and level of detail in these minutes was not consistent from a month-to-month basis. Unlike the minutes from the November 2021 meeting, the minutes from the 16 February 2022 meeting did not include exact verbiage and did not break out the responses to the SPEAC president's question during the report from the district leader representative (SPEAC, 2022). This lack of consistency has the potential to cause confusion for SPEAC member who may have missed a meeting and wishes to remain current on a specific topic of interest.

Communication Errors between the District and Key Stakeholders

Another observation I made is that information received by parents, guardians, and caregivers about current events was sometimes incomplete and/or caused unnecessary and unwarranted alarm. One example came from the SPEAC representative's report from the 26 April 2022 Board meeting where they noted that many parents, guardians, and caregivers of SD62 Grade 5 students had heard rumours of the upcoming elimination of a music-focused program for Grade 6 students, adding that SPEAC felt that not enough consultation regarding the change had been performed with their stakeholder group. Another example came from the 18 May 2022 SPEAC meeting centred around an email that was sent and bore the email signature of the partner group representative who was present at the meeting regarding the enforcement of school policies for students enrolled in private extracurricular activities being pulled from their classes by their parents, guardians, and caregivers.

I observed that the response from district leadership was appropriately conciliatory and the representative who was at the May 2022 SPEAC meeting apologized for the miscommunication directly. However, the SPEAC representative mentioning that they do not feel that enough consultation is being performed and/or that parents, guardians, and caregivers are not aware of certain issues that are ongoing in the district was concerning to me and had an influence on how I composed my data collection materials that would be sent to the Group 1 members.

5.3 Summary of Meeting Observations

Observing the SD62 Board meetings, committee meetings, and the SPEAC meetings I attended from June 2021 to September 2022 helped me gain a lot of insight into how the district is governed and what issues generate a lot of discussion within the community. I learned that sometimes there are conflicts between individual Trustees over how to support two different strategic plan initiatives whose finite financial resources are pulled from the same source of revenue. I also learned that when a motion regarding sources of financing is defeated, there is no further discussion in the public's eye over how the Board or the district leadership plans to remedy the reasons why individual Trustees could not support the motion which was defeated.

A more hopeful piece of information I uncovered is that district leadership is very open and willing to make changes to formalized procedures and processes to ensure that they have properly consulted and spoken with representatives from the stakeholder groups

within the district. Conversely, I also learned that there is a deeply seated well of hurt and mistrust that exists between the district and the STA. As indicated in Section 3.0, this mistrust is the result of a historical divide between the BCTF and the BCMEC over many issues, including the implication of FSA results, and it is actively affecting the mechanisms by which the district can determine if their strategic planning efforts are effective.

Information I learned from my observation of the SPEAC meetings was that though the effort is inconsistent, they do make a conscious effort of including as much detail in their meeting minutes about the partner group reports as appropriate. I also observed that the communication efforts surrounding decisions made at the district level were a bit lacking and not as thoroughly considered as they could be.

With the background information from the literature review in Section 3.0 as well as these meeting observations and the community consultations I mentioned in Sections 4.4 to 4.6, I was able to craft my data collection instruments for the surveys I will mention in the next three sections of Part II.

6.0 FINDINGS—SURVEY: PARENTS, GUARDIANS, AND CAREGIVERS

The findings in this section are based on Phase 1 of data collection which took place between 15 March 2023 and 30 April 2023, via an online survey which was conducted on an instance of SurveyMonkey which is licensed to the University of Victoria. The data collection instrument is in Appendix A. The description of these findings will include a summary of the numerical results as well as a paraphrase of the themes present in the findings; some descriptions will include a selection of pertinent quotes.

6.1 Survey Participant Demographics

Twenty-six participants submitted a survey, all but one submitted online; the last participant sat down with me to complete the survey at their request. Participants could skip questions if they did not want to indicate their preference or opinion. Therefore, each response to a question must be considered separately from the others. In other words, the findings in this report from the survey cannot be correlated in a simplistic manner (e.g., the three people who have undergraduate degrees may not be the same as three of the people who said that they were born in Canada).

In addition to their roles as parents, guardians, or caregivers, one participant noted that they were employed as a teacher within SD62 and three others indicated that they were support staff, and two noted they were eligible to vote in their 2022 municipal election for the SD62 Board of Education. There was also a wide variety in their level of education among the participants who volunteered this information with three having a degree, certificate, or apprenticeship in the trades, two with post-secondary certificates or diplomas, three with Bachelor's degrees, three with Master's degrees, and one each having or currently completing continuing education classes or a secondary school diploma.

Out of the 13 participants who chose to provide the information, 11 indicated they were female, two were male, and one declined to provide the information. The same number of people provided their age range; this was divided with six people being between the ages of 35 and 44 (aka Generations X³ and Y), six people being between the ages of 45 and 54 (Generation X and Baby Boomers), and one person preferring not to state their age range.

All participants were more open when describing their daytime occupation. When asked what they do when their child(ren) are in school, 19 people said they were employed full-time (73.1%), while five worked part-time (19.2%), one is a caregiver (3.8%), and one is a part-time employee and a student (3.8%). Tables which provide a more thorough breakdown of participant demographics can be found in Appendix B.

³ These generational definitions are based on those used by Statistics Canada as of the most recent census (2022a).

The remainder of the questions were devised to get a basic understanding of what an average parent, guardian, or caregiver for an SD62 student knows about the current strategic plan and its purpose. There were also questions regarding their perspective on how well the district is performing when it comes to the strategic plan objectives related to the concepts of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) and whether they felt the district was already achieving some of the intended outcomes. Finally, participants were asked about their social identities and that of their oldest student.

6.2 Familiarity with *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* and Its Update Reports

Participants were asked about their general knowledge of *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*, how it was created, how update reports are distributed, and their previous experience with strategic planning. Of the participants, 19 chose to respond to the first question. The results are in Table 6.

Table 6: Participant Familiarity with *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*

| Have you read SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)? | Participants | Percentage |
|--|--------------|------------|
| No, I did not read the document | 7 | 36.8% |
| No, I was not aware that SD62 has a current strategic plan | 5 | 26.3% |
| Yes, I read some of the document | 5 | 26.3% |
| Yes, I read the entire document | 2 | 10.5% |

Most of the participants were either not aware that there was a strategic plan or stated they did not read the document (12 people, or 63.2%). The remaining seven people (or 36 percent) either read some or all the plan. Participants were also asked if they had reviewed the *SD62 Strategic Plan (2018-2021)*; 18 participants chose to respond and one person declined to provide a response to this question but had responded to the previous question. For most participants, their level of familiarity was echoed with a few choosing to respond differently where 68.4 percent of the participants (or 13 people) who expressed the same level of familiarity with both strategic plans. The breakdown of the remaining six people (31.6%) who expressed a different level of familiarity with both strategic plans is in Table 7.

Table 7: Difference in Strategic Plan Familiarity For Group 1 Stakeholders in SD621

| Have you read the current Strategic Plan? | Have you read the previous Strategic Plan? | Difference in Familiarity |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| Yes, I read the entire document | Yes, I read some of the document | -1 |
| Yes, I read some of the document | No, I did not read the document | -1 |
| No, I was not aware that SD62 has a current strategic plan | No, I did not read the document | +1 |
| No, I did not read the document | No, I was not aware that SD62 had a previous strategic plan | -1 |
| Yes, I read the entire document | Yes, I read some of the document | -1 |
| Yes, I read some of the document | Declined to provide information | N/A |

The number of participants who remembered engaging with the April 2021 strategic planning survey was very low compared to those who did not participate or who did not recall participating. Out of the 19 people who responded, eight participants (42.1%) did not engage with the survey, seven do not recall their level of participation (36.8%), and four recalled participating in the survey (21.1%). Similarly, four out of 18 participants (22.2%) stated that they had previous experience with the process of creating a strategic plan; the other 14 participants (77.7%) said they did not or were unsure if their prior experiences included the process of strategic planning.

As part of the strategic planning process, SD62 conducted an in-depth review of all the programs and services offered by the school district; this review informed the creation of *SD62 Operational Plan (2021-2022)* which has its own objectives and outcomes that are separate from the strategic plan's objectives and outcomes. Of the 18 people who responded to the question, six people or 33.3 percent were not aware that such an operational plan existed whereas only one person claimed to have read some of the document. The remaining 11 people (61.1%) stated that they did not read the document; this statement does not state definitively whether they read the entire document or just a portion of it. In comparison, Group 1 knowledge about the *SD62 Strategic Plan Annual Report (2021-2022)* slightly increased. Of the 18 people who responded, four of them (22.2%) noted that they either read some or the entire report while six people (or 33.3 %) were not aware that a Year 1 report had been issued.

Later in the survey, participants were asked if they recall being given an opportunity to provide feedback to the school district regarding the final version of the strategic plan objectives. Of the 14 participants who responded, 10 people stated that they had not been given the chance to provide feedback on the strategic plan priorities (71.4%) while four of them said that they did (28.6%). When asked to provide additional commentary regarding their response, one parent said that they regularly try to participate in engagement surveys from the school district but did not exactly recall participating in this specific survey, while another parent said that they felt they would participate if they were “more in the know.”

They were also asked to whom they would reach out if they had concerns about what their oldest student was learning in school about IDEA. Four participants (30.8%) said they would speak directly to the student’s teacher, two other participants said they would speak to either the school’s principal, vice principal or the district superintendent or associate superintendents, and one participant said they would either speak with SPEAC or a member of the Board of Trustees.

Of the three people who had a different response, one person said they would either contact the teacher or the school principal and one person said they would submit an anonymous comment. A third person stated that they felt that discussion about the strategic plan priorities regarding IDEA concepts should be an open topic, clarifying:

Your job in the schools is to educate the kids on the important aspects of education to assist them later in their lives EDUCATION WISE...math, science, literature, geography, etc...They don’t need to focus on anything “socially” related, other than “treat everyone identically”.

When compared to some of the open-ended responses quoted in the summary of the findings for the district’s April 2021 strategic planning survey (SD62, 2021c, pp. 18–19), this way this response appears to question the purpose of this research project is sufficiently representative of people in the SD62 community.

6.3 General Knowledge about Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA)

The next part of the survey asked participants about their general knowledge as a parent, guardian, or caregiver about what their children are learning in their SD62 school about the concepts of *inclusion*, *diversity*, *equity*, and *accessibility*. Adapted from existing material from the BCMEC and the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal, the survey presented the following definitions of the terms to the participant and asked if they agreed or disagreed with the provided definitions:

Inclusion: Everyone is able to participate in society and gain the benefits of being part of society.

Diversity: There are many different types of people in the world and it is beneficial for multiple different types of people to interact with each other in society.

Equity: Every person is treated fairly according to their needs; it is possible for some people to need more supports than other people in order to receive the same societal benefits.

Accessibility: Everyone with every level of ability can receive the benefits of belonging to society through the removal of barriers which prevent people from reaching their full potential.

Seventeen people responded to this question, with the overwhelming majority stating that they agreed with the definitions as they were presented (82.4 percent, or 14 people). The remaining three participants who responded offered very different reasons why they did not accept the definitions. One participant objected to the concept of *accessibility* being extended to places such as bathrooms within the school, stating "The female bathroom door is a barrier to keep boys/men from entering their safe space. If you remove that barrier then our daughters are not safe." Another participant stated that they partially agreed with the definition for *equity*, but objected to its application to some students, stating that "some children may need some extra care and attention that can't be provided while in a class with other children." The third person disagreed with the use of the word "different" in the definition of *diversity* and suggested that it be replaced by the word "multiple."

When asked if they felt their oldest student understood what these concepts mean, 18 participants chose to respond. Nine participants believed that their oldest student understands the concepts very well while five more believed their oldest student understands the concepts "a little"; this means that 82.4 percent or 14 participants felt their oldest children some level of understanding of the concepts of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. The remaining four participants were divided between being unsure if their eldest student had a complete or a partial understanding of the concepts or if their student understands the concepts at all with one participant objecting to the phrasing of the concept of *accessibility*.

6.4 Communicating with SD62 about Strategic Plan Initiatives

The next part of the survey asked parents, guardians, and caregivers about their perspective on the amount of communication they receive from SD62 regarding the specific strategic plan objectives and anticipated learning outcomes which deal with the concepts of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility, presented in Figure 3.

They were reminded that SD62 utilises many official forms of communication to convey information about their policies, regulations, and procedures to parents and guardians and that changes or updates to policies, regulations, and procedures may contribute to achieving the anticipated outcomes of the IDEA objectives in *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*.

Figure 3: IDEA-Related Strategic Plan Objectives as Presented in the Survey

| |
|---|
| <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> |
|---|

Participants were asked to choose up to three forms of communication which are currently used by SD62 where they would prefer to learn about policies, regulations, and procedures that are new or have been updated to align with the specific strategic plan objectives. Fourteen participants responded to the question with five people making one selection, one person making two selections, and eight people making three selections. The total number of selections was 32 and is represented in Table 8.

Table 8: Preferred Avenue of Communications for Group 1 Survey Participants

| Answer Choices | Responses | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| One-on-One Conversations and/or Text Communication with my student(s) Teachers, Vice Principal(s), and/or Principal(s) (Including Email, Letters, and/or Text Messages) | 8 | 25.0% |
| SD62 and/or Individual School Website | 5 | 15.6% |
| SD62 Facebook Page | 4 | 12.5% |
| Individual School Newspapers, Newsletters, and/or Blogs | 3 | 9.4% |
| Sooke Parents Education Advisory Council (SPEAC) and/or my student’s school Parents’ Advisory Council (PAC) meetings/newsletters | 3 | 9.4% |
| I don't like any of these choices. | 2 | 6.3% |
| Public School Board and Committee Meetings | 2 | 6.3% |

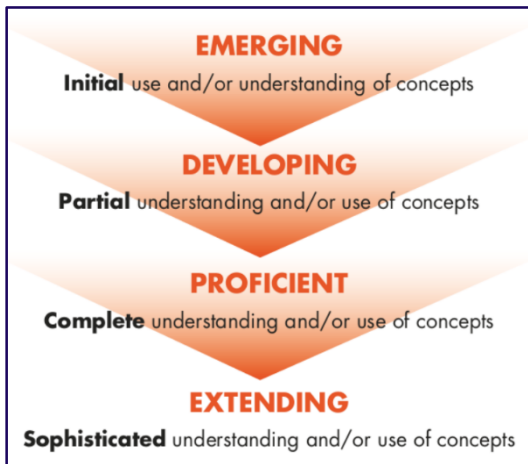
| Answer Choices | Responses | Percentage |
|--|-----------|---------------|
| SD62 YouTube Channel | 2 | 6.3% |
| I have a different response to this question | 1 | 3.1% |
| Press Releases and/or Newspapers and/or Broadcast News | 1 | 3.1% |
| SD62 Twitter Account | 1 | 3.1% |
| Total | 32 | 100.0% |

Regarding the three most preferred selections, one on one communications like emails and letters were preferred, followed by the individual school or district website, and then the district’s official Facebook page on social media. Of the two participants who noted that they did not like any of the choices, one of them chose not to elaborate and the other person commented that the district should focus on “delivering on what is in the plan” and “put those words to action...not another report that sits on a shelf”.

Participants were also asked to elaborate on what they liked about receiving this kind of information from the school district this way. Of the people who chose to reply to the open-ended question, one-on-one conversations was preferred by one person because they found it easier to reach out if they had a question and another stated that they always opened any email that had to do with their child’s education. A third participant further elaborated that they would welcome more town hall-style conversations that were more conveniently located, as they lived a considerable distance from their child’s school. Both the school district website and the district’s Facebook page were also mentioned as being easy to access and use, with the Facebook page praised for its “concise presentation”.

6.5 Assessing SD62 Strategic Plan Success

Figure 4: Assessment Rubric for *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* (SD62, 2021, p. 23)



SD62’s success in achieving its strategic plan objectives follows the same four-category rubric by which student proficiency with the British Columbia school curriculum is assessed. The four categories and how their definitions were presented in the strategic plan in Figure 4.

Parents, guardians, and caregivers were asked to provide their perspective of their oldest student’s learning environment within SD62 during Year 1 of the strategic plan, given the objectives in Figure 3. The students of two participants did not attend an SD62 school in the 2021-2022 school

year and those responses will not be counted in this section of the findings.

Of the remaining 11 participants who self-reported, all of them gave the same grade to all four of the objectives. The number of responses per objective is in Table 9.

Participants were also asked to elaborate on their choices, and of the people who selected the Proficient response, none of them chose to elaborate.

For the participants who characterized the district as having an *Emerging* level of achievement of these objectives, one person expressed a lack of understanding of how the district prioritizes its objectives, stating, “I do not understand how schools identify and prioritize student support needs, nor satisfy them, given lack of resources and staffing. I do not know how the district seeks to ensure that learning environments are safe.” Another expressed concern over how the district helps children understand more about diversity, stating that it is “more than [celebrating or mentioning] cultural holidays”.

At the *Developing* level of achievement, participants were more direct in their critiques. One participant was concerned about students in the middle grades, stating, “I feel middle school is not up to where it needs to be with the environment feeling safe and welcoming. It is a very hard time for kids and needs more support.” Another participant said, “I care more about the district and the Ministry [of Education and Childcare] actually removing barriers and providing an inclusive environment where all children can learn equitably.” A third participant stated, “[My] child isn’t getting the education I think she and her friends deserve.”

Table 9: Strategic Plan Objectives and Self-Reported Participant Assessment

| | Emerging | Developing | Proficient | Extending |
|--|----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| L1. The district will provide opportunities for learners to understand, respect, and appreciate diversity and inclusion. | 3 | 5 | 3 | 0 |
| L3. The district will ensure our learning environments are safe, accessible, and welcoming. | 3 | 5 | 3 | 0 |
| E1. The district will develop, expand, and implement inclusive and collaborative practices and processes. | 3 | 5 | 3 | 0 |

| | Emerging | Developing | Proficient | Extending |
|---|----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| G1. The district will strengthen organizational practices to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion. | 3 | 5 | 3 | 0 |

Participants were also asked to review the anticipated outcomes from the achievement of these objectives and provide their perspective on how whether the anticipated outcomes are present in their children’s learning environment (Table 10). These responses differed slightly from their perspective of the objectives with more people assessing their student’s learning environment as *Developing* or *Proficient*.

Table 10: Anticipated Outcomes and Self-Reported Participant Assessment

| | Emerging | Developing | Proficient | Extending |
|--|----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| L1. Students and staff are conscious of variances in diversity and understand inclusion. | 1 | 6 | 4 | 0 |
| L3. Students, families, and staff feel safe (intellectually, physically, emotionally) [and] that they belong and are valued. | 1 | 6 | 4 | 0 |
| E1. The district operates with specific practices and processes that enhance collaboration and inclusivity. | 1 | 6 | 4 | 0 |
| G1. The district has practices and standards that support the diverse population that it serves. | 1 | 6 | 4 | 0 |

One participant who felt the district was at the level of *Emerging* regarding the anticipated outcomes felt that there was some inconsistency with how the district enacts best practices. They said, “For example, one school regularly reviewing non-violent crisis intervention while another inappropriately grabs students in crisis.” A participant who chose the *Developing* level of achievement felt that more effort was being put into the generation of strategic planning documents rather than providing the financial resources and human capital needed to support their children’s educational success.

Despite selecting *Proficient* as their response, participants were likewise varied in their satisfaction about their selection. One person was concerned about the supports for some students, saying, “I see limited resource availability to meet the needs of diverse learners, including but not limited to insufficient access to Education Assistants, ELL

(English Language Learner) support, and psycho/emotional support.” Another participant felt that inclusivity should not be taught regarding people who are transgender, while a third person felt that education should focus solely on literacy and numeracy. As noted in Section 6.1, these responses are also representative of the SD62 community.

6.6 Demographic Information of SD62 Students

Finally, participants were asked to volunteer some of the demographics and social identities of the student(s) they care for in their household because an important aspect of this research project is uncovering how many and what type(s) of different social identities exist amongst SD62 students, as their demographic information may be different from their parents', guardians', or caregivers'. Thirteen participants chose to provide this information either in whole or in part.

Participants responded the most to the questions about their child's citizenship, grade level of their oldest student as well as their gender identity. All 13 participants stated that their oldest children were born in Canada. There are five students who are elementary school aged, two who are in middle school, and three who are in secondary school. In addition, nine of the oldest students are female, three are male, and one participant chose not to reveal their child's gender identity.

There is much less information regarding the students' ancestral background and social identities. Two participants revealed that their oldest children have the same ancestral background they do, one said it was different, and one person chose to specify that their child was African and South Asian. Two participants volunteered that their oldest child identifies as a person with disabilities, one said their child is neurodiverse, and one said that their child is a gender and/or sexually diverse person. Tables which provide a more thorough breakdown of the reported student demographics and how they may correspond to the findings in Sections 6.2 to 6.5 can be found in Appendix B.

6.7 Summary of Findings

Of the people who chose to fully complete the survey, some participants also worked in the district as either a teacher or as staff. Many had completed some form of post-secondary education with about as many having completed a vocational degree or post-secondary diploma or certificate as having completed a bachelor's or higher academic degree. Most of the respondents were female; about half of the respondents were between the ages of 35 to 44 years while the rest were between 45 to 54 years in age. Almost all were employed either full-time or part-time.

Most of the people surveyed had little or some knowledge of the current strategic plan and less knew that there had been a previous strategic plan. Most were unaware of how strategic plans are created and almost the same number do not recall having an opportunity to provide input into the direction of the strategic plan. Most people knew to whom they would direct their concerns about what their children were learning about IDEA concepts and one person was very resistant to the current emphasis on ensuring that their children's education included experiencing IDEA at school.

Most of the participants agreed with how the definitions of *inclusion, diversity, equity,* and *accessibility* were presented in the survey; however, there were some significant exceptions. Most of these parents, guardians, and caregivers also felt confident in their oldest children's ability to understand these concepts as defined in the survey.

Regarding their perspective on how well the district is performing at achieving their strategic plan's objectives and how much their children are experiencing the anticipated outcomes, few participants would agree with the lowest level of assessment on the rubric with the remainder agreeing with the district's reported assessment of their level of success.

Finally, of the participants who chose to respond, there were a few who disclosed that their children were either a visible minority, presented with a disability, were neurodiverse, and/or was sexually or gender diverse.

Because of the wide variety in number of participant responses per question (as seen in this section and in Appendix B), the sample size is not statistically significant enough to make any firm conclusions about the parent, guardian, and caregiver population of SD62 and how engaged they are with the district strategic plan. However, there are enough responses to conclude that participants were largely unaware of the overall goals and the rationale behind creating a strategic plan that has a focus on improving how IDEA is experienced by students in a public school district. The next two sections will take a deeper look at these questions and more from the perspective of two specific parents, two Trustees, and some of those who are in an administrative role within SD62.

7.0 FINDINGS—KNOWLEDGE-SHARING SESSIONS: PARENTS, GUARDIANS, AND CAREGIVERS

In this section, I will detail the findings from the Knowledge-Sharing Sessions I conducted with two people from Group 1 who are either a parent, guardian, and/or a caregiver for an SD62 student. The list of questions is in Appendix C, organized into two categories: questions that were unique to Group 1 and questions which were shared between all three groups. Further, within each category, these responses are grouped into themes.

With regards to demographics, P1 is a female parent of a single student who is currently in Grade 7 as of the 2021-2022 school year. P2 is a female parent of six students whose grade levels range from Kindergarten to Grade 11 in the 2021-2022 school year. P2 also volunteered the information that she is a secondary school teacher in a local area public school district; as a result, I asked some follow-up questions with the aim of comparing her perspective as a parent in SD62 to her perspective as a teacher working in a different district.

7.1 Responses to Unique Questions by Theme

There were three questions which were only asked of Group 1 participants that were related specifically to their role as a parent, guardian, and/or a caregiver of SD62 students. The responses helped provide much needed context regarding the participants' concern regarding what their children are learning about IDEA concepts as well as their perceptions of their interactions with district leadership.

Education Effectiveness

Regarding the effectiveness of their children's education in general in SD62, both parents expressed that there were skills they wanted to ensure that their children were well-versed which they were not learning during their time at school. P1 stressed that her child needed a better understanding of the rules and grammar of the English language while P2 stated she felt that the school district could do more to support learning practical skills such as budgeting, financial planning, maintaining good mental and physical health, and housekeeping skills such as cooking.

However, P2 also stated that her oldest student's enrollment in the AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) program helped the student establish a strong work ethic, gain organizational and study skills, participate in debate and argument, and demonstrate critical thinking and reasoning. This was a program of which the parent was made aware in her role as a teacher in another Greater Victoria Area school district; it was because she was familiar with the program from the other school district that she was able to join with her child's teacher in communicating the benefits of program enrollment.

Lack of Information

A lack of information from the district on certain issues was something that both parents expressed. P1 interpreted a lack of emails from the school as a sign that there were no problems with her child's behaviour or their schoolwork; however, she also indicated that she could neither remember when she would be receiving her child's next report card nor how to interpret the assessment contained within. Both parents reported that when asked, their children responded that they did not receive any homework or that there was very little homework which had been assigned.

This same lack of information could be extended to how inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) was taught and demonstrated to their children. P1 stated that she had a concern about how accessibility manifests regarding how her child gets to school as well as knowledge of the different Indigenous groups within British Columbia. The parent also stated that while she did not address it with anyone at her child's school, she was aware that the transportation situation had been addressed and that plans have been approved by the district to alleviate the situation. P2 stated that "multiple times" her children have come home from school with questions about what they were taught that day, especially if it conflicted with the family's traditions and values. She added that she approached the teachers in question "once or twice" regarding the lessons but not the principal or vice principal because as a teacher in a local area district, she is aware of the amount of autonomy teachers have in designing their lesson plans.

7.2 Responses to Questions Shared with Trustees and Administrators

The themes for the remaining questions can be grouped by how they relate to the primary and secondary research questions. Due to time constraints, not every question was asked uniformly of each participant.

Ensuring Engagement with IDEA-Related Strategic Plan Objectives

The participants were reminded that the district had conducted a survey in April 2021, asking members of the SD62 community what they wanted to see the district focus on for its second strategic plan. They were also informed that because of the results of the survey, the district decided to place an emphasis on including goals and objectives that were related to ensuring that all learners experienced the benefits of IDEA concepts as a part of their education. After that preamble, the participants were asked how much that aligns with what they want to see for their children's education for the next three to four years.

P1 stated that while she wanted her child to understand more about how to use technology and better forms of communication, she also wanted him to become more aware of the diversity in First Nations groups within British Columbia, "that there are different Nations out there, and not everybody's the same." She elaborated:

That's the kind of knowledge that every child should know, especially when you're in [a REDACTED] community like this. I believe that all children, Native or non-Native, should know that other Nations have different values.

After rephrasing the question, P2 stated that while she does agree that learning about IDEA concepts is important, she would rather first know how the district defines terms such as *inclusion*, *diversity*, *equity*, and *accessibility*. She further clarified that she did not think that there was a lack of sensitivity to IDEA principles in SD62, explaining:

[We] don't exclude cultures already, so I don't see an absence of inclusivity already. I also don't see any real absence of inclusivity across the board, except for as it pertains to children being asked to behave and perform and live their day in ways that their bodies and brains are not prepared or designed for. I don't see an absence of inclusion in really any other ways, whether it's referring to gender ideology or whether it's referring to gender identity or all of these other things that we think of when we think of identity. It's never been a concern for me that we need to increase diversity and inclusivity because I didn't see it as being lacking except for when it comes to the behavior and the lessons and the daily activities of children.

Given P2's profession as teacher in a different school district, it is reasonable to presume that she is aware that *inclusion* can also refer to the practice of ensuring that students with special educational needs can be appropriately educated alongside students without that classification.

Understanding the IDEA Concepts

After listening to the definitions which had been provided in the survey, P1 confirmed her understanding of the IDEA concepts enough to articulate that she had concerns about what her child was learning about regarding diversity and accessibility and how it manifested at school. P2 explained that while she agreed that IDEA principles should be applied in the public education system, she would prefer that it be explained and taught via "particularly informed presenters and administration-invited experts" and that there were clear definitions which were being used within the district. She added, "I don't think it should be relegated entirely to the classroom because it puts a lot of strain on teachers to deliver content in an appropriate manner, of which they may not be well-informed themselves" noting that there had been some instances where one or more of her children had concerns about what they were learning in school about IDEA which did not coincide with they had been taught in their family. In a follow-up question, P2 also stated that she felt students were "more open-minded, accepting, and well-aware of diversity" now than they were under the B.C. curriculum prior to 2017.

Stakeholder Group Communication around Strategic Plan Objectives

Three KSS questions were formulated with the goal of understanding the methods by which SD62 informs parents, guardians, and caregivers about changes in policy, regulations, and procedures that focus on IDEA principles and have been proposed

and/or implemented due to the progression of the related Strategic Plan objectives listed in Figure 3 of the previous section. As before, these questions were not uniformly asked of all the participants.

One question asked the participants if they had read *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*, the Year 1 and Year 2 Operational Plans, any update reports, and/or the Year 1 *Strategic Plan Annual Report*, and if so, what about the documents made them difficult to understand and what made them easy to understand. P1 stated that she had not seen the strategic plan in a while and did not express any familiarity with the other documents. P2 did not recall being given an opportunity to provide feedback about the strategic plan after it was officially presented in September 2021. When asked in a follow-up question to compare her knowledge of SD62's current strategic plan to the one for the local district where she works as a teacher, P2 said that though she was aware it is something that she can view on the district website and it would have been mentioned, her understanding of her work district's strategic planning documents would also be "pretty limited."

The next two questions asked the participants how they would counsel new families in the district regarding communicating successfully with their children's school and district leadership as well as if they had any recommendations or suggestions towards improving communication between the district and the SD62 community.

P1 said that she would recommend that new family members connect with the same knowledgeable third party who is helping the other parents, guardians, and caregivers in her community because "[REDACTED] knows the people more than I know them. [They] directly communicate with the school district." P2 stated that she would advise the parents of a new family to "be relaxed and to realize that administrator and that teacher is there to help their child grow and learn and to help them help their child to grow and learn."

They also offered up suggestions on how to improve communications between the school district and the parents, guardians, and caregivers in their local community. P1 stated that she would like for there to be more engagement from district leadership, particularly regarding what she could do to help her child prepare for secondary school all the way up to Grade 12. She encouraged the distribution of physical resources as well as electronic resources due to different people having "different visions of learning." While P2 appreciated that her family received weekly newsletters via email from the schools her multiple children attended, she would prefer for the information to be limited:

[If] it was a really well-crafted, to the point e-mail with hyperlinks, I feel like that would probably get me more into it because when I see that personal e-mail come in from Principal Smith and it's got very concrete things to look at, then I'm more alerted to the necessities rather than receiving a newsletter that might be congratulating a sports team that my kids have nothing to do with, or bringing up events that my kids aren't involved with.

She also expressed that the quality of the information on the various school websites was inconsistent, and while she acknowledged that the cost of sending physical copies of secondary school report cards home with students was prohibitive, P2 would prefer for there to be a method that involved fewer steps to accessing her secondary students' report cards:

I would love it if I was sent directly either a link to the report card or something, whereas like, "Here it is, [REDACTED's] report card, here's the link, click here and you'll go through to MyEd BC and see it" rather than, "Oh, they've been posted this week," or "They're being posted tomorrow." Maybe your kid will tell you, maybe they won't. Maybe you'll go into MyEd BC. Maybe you'll find your way there and maybe you won't. We're not putting [them] on paper anymore.

Participant Impression of Strategic Plan Assessment

As previously mentioned, the format for how SD62 is assessing their progression on their strategic plan goals and objectives follows the same style of rubric as the one that is being used for all students in British Columbia from Kindergarten to Grade 9 (Figure 4 in the previous section). In the KSS's, participants were asked whether they agreed with the district's assessments which were presented in *SD62 Strategic Plan Annual Report (2021-2022)* as *Proficient* for the Learning goal and *Developing* for the Engagement and Growth goals. Due to time constraints, this question was not uniformly asked of all the participants.

While P1 stated that she did not recall seeing the Annual Report nor did she have an opinion regarding whether she agreed with the overall assessment, P2's response was more fulsome. She stated that she agreed with the overall assessment, and offered some recommendations on what she thinks the district could do to increase the assessment by one level, based on her perspective of how the district is doing.

P2 said that knowing more information about students' passage through post-secondary education, the dropout rate, and the success of the alternative education programs would improve the mark on the Learning goal from *Proficient* to *Extending*. For the *Engagement* goal, P2 would like to see a stronger connection to the community in the form of being able to access school resources outside of school hours:

Probably a stronger sense of community where students' families had regular access to the school community, not just for classes but for extracurricular and outside of class events and seeing more of them. Recently, particularly this week, there's board game nights at the school, so if there was more frequent access to the school and the school community outside of the academic schooling hours for parents and administrators.

For the Growth goal, P2 would like to see "adequate", "stable", and "informed" staffing levels increase, particularly with Educational Assistants and the teachers and staff who support English Language Learners (ELLs), because she believes that what the district can provide may not be sufficient:

Occasionally you hear of students being provided a simple iPad that will help them to translate information for them in the classroom where they're in a foreign language to them. Yet there's no particular class or tutoring or lessons provided for those new English Language Learners to get grounded in the language, and to feel like they can be at ease. It scares me to think they're spending an entire day in a foreign language which is absolutely exhausting, provided a simple electronic tool, and not a human being or a human group or community to bring them in and help them to find success.

She also believes that as the number of students enrolled in SD62 schools increases, there also needs to be an increased awareness of the "food security and poverty issues and basic family needs for learners of lower incomes, and who are new to the country, new to the community" and raise the assessment from *Developing* to *Proficient*.

7.3 Summary of Findings

The participants from Group 1 were engaged with the educational success of their children but were concerned that they were not learning some of the skills they would need when they reached adulthood. The parents were knowledgeable about the concepts about IDEA which they wished for their children to learn about through the public school system, and one parent found that a specific program offered at SD62 did help their child learn other valuable skills that would help them as an adult. The other parent was knowledgeable about the efforts that the district was attempting to alleviate an accessibility situation that her child was facing.

While one participant was concerned about the lack of diversity in the information her child was learning about the different First Nations on Vancouver Island, the other parent did not feel as if there was a current lack of diversity of culture or inclusion in SD62 because it had not been a concern for her family. In addition to wanting to know more about the district defines the terms with the IDEA acronym, she would also prefer that information about IDEA be provided by experts retained by the administration and not individual teachers who may not be current with their stacks of knowledge.

Both participants expressed a lack of familiarity with the strategic planning updates and reports and for one participant, this extended to a lack of familiarity with the strategic plan for the district where she is employed as a teacher. Regarding communication with SD62 around their children's education, one participant would like to know more about resources she could use to help prepare her child for secondary school while the other parent would prefer to have information provided via in a way that was clear, succinct, and pared down to what she needed to know to support her child's success.

Despite there only being two participants in the KSS data collection for Group 1, the perspectives were varied enough to provide an understanding of how closely engaged an average parent, guardian, or caregiver for an SD62 student is with their children's learning about IDEA and how it is presented at school. The next section will detail the responses to many of these same questions from the perspectives of SD62 leadership.

8.0 FINDINGS— TRUSTEES AND ADMINISTRATORS: KNOWLEDGE-SHARING SESSIONS

In this section, I will detail the findings from the Knowledge-Sharing Sessions conducted with two Trustees from Group 2 and 9 people from Group 3 who are either a district-based administrator or an individual school-based administrator. The relevant participant information can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11: Breakdown of Knowledge-Sharing Session Participant Details for Groups 2 and 3

| ID | Group | Gender | Title/Role | Years of District Administration Experience |
|-----------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| T1 | 2 | Redacted ⁴ | Trustee | Less than 1 |
| T2 | 2 | Redacted | Trustee | 5 to 10 years |
| DA1 | 3 | Female | District Administrator | N/A ⁵ |
| DA2 | 3 | Female | District Administrator | N/A |
| DA3 | 3 | Female | District Administrator | N/A |
| DA4 | 3 | Male | District Administrator | N/A |
| DA5 | 3 | Male | District Administrator | 16 to 20 years |
| SA1 | 3 | Female | School Administrator ⁶ | 16 to 20 years |

⁴ Due to the small number of Trustees for SD62, the participants' gender cannot be disclosed for reasons of anonymity. Exact years of experience for all participants cannot be disclosed for the same reason.

⁵ "N/A" indicates that the participant did not volunteer this information and/or it was not explicitly asked as a follow-up question in the KSS.

| ID | Group | Gender | Title/Role | Years of District Administration Experience |
|-----|-------|--------|----------------------|---|
| SA2 | 3 | Female | School Administrator | N/A |
| SA3 | 3 | Female | School Administrator | Over 21 years |
| SA4 | 3 | Female | School Administrator | 5 to 10 years |

The list of questions is in Appendix D, organized into two categories: questions that were unique to Groups 2 and 3 and questions which were shared between all three groups. Due to time constraints, not all questions were asked uniformly of all participants.

Each session began with an ice breaker question with the purpose of learning a little bit about each participant’s attitude towards their own experiences with their education. All the participants were able to easily articulate what they enjoyed about their favourite subject in school, with approximately equal amounts of interest in sciences, the humanities, and physical education. Additionally, four people independently and without prompting provided their own land acknowledgments when they introduced themselves.

8.1 Trustee Responses to Unique Questions by Theme

There were six questions which were asked of the two Trustees which were not asked of the Group 1 participants. Their responses helped provide much needed context for the responses, including but not limited to the participants’ knowledge about how strategic planning works and what they think that parents, guardians, and caregivers as well as the greater SD62 community should be aware of when they are evaluating how well the district is performing at achieving their strategic plan goals and objectives.

A major theme that emerged from their responses to these questions involved the knowledge they hold as insiders versus the information that other community stakeholders may not have because they have not yet experienced the process and result of a well-operated and maintained strategic plan.

T1 felt that their previous personal and professional experiences with organizations which had established strategic plans helped them have a greater understanding of the mechanisms behind the district strategic plan. Because of this prior knowledge, they were also able to identify areas where they felt that are improvements that could be made in advance of the next strategic planning cycle.

⁶ There was participation from every level of education (elementary, middle, and secondary) present in the district, but due to the low number of secondary and middle school administrators in the district, this detail cannot be disclosed for reasons of anonymity.

T1 noted that in their prior experience, the leadership reviewed and revised the parameters of not just their operational plans but also their strategic plan every year. They had been surprised to learn at the time of the KSS there was not a mechanism in place by which the strategic plan would be reviewed on a continual basis. T1 also noted that based on the current municipal election cycle, incoming Trustees would begin their four-year term midway through the current Strategic Plan, in essence forcing them to support strategic priorities they did not have a hand in creating.

Regarding their insider knowledge, T2 said that at first, they were unaware of how closely the strategic plan was tied to the community and appreciated that so many of the former and current Trustees were either a graduate of the district's educational system or had children who were currently students within it. They felt that the "common care" the former and current Trustees have for the district's work is manifested in how closely the decisions made at the Board of Trustees level are tied to the success of the district strategic plan. The example T2 gave was related to the discussions the Board has about the annual school budget:

For example, during budget season where if we have a discretionary budget [or] extra money that we can spend. We're communicating with our partner groups on you know where [they] would like to see us spend money. As part of their [budget] presentation, we have asked [the finance department] that they make a connection with this Strategic Plan.

T2 continued, saying that relying on input from the stakeholder groups during and between public Board and committee meetings has been crucial when Board deliberates on motions related to creating a budget that will support the strategic plan's goals and objectives:

Our partner groups include SPEAC, STA [Sooke Teachers' Association], CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees], PVP [Principals and Vice Principals], and we also [hold a] Student Forum as well. The last one we just had, our focus was around equity and diversity. A lot of the questions [students asked] were quite aligned with our Strategic Plan. Whether or not we can necessarily have every parent in our district know that there's this Strategic Plan [and] here's how [they] can advocate for [their] family...I think we do a very good job at always refocusing the "ask" or the work to the Strategic Plan. I've been really impressed by that.

T2 also revealed that during the creation of the previous strategic plan, the Board had made a conscious decision to refrain from being a member of any of the strategic planning working groups, acting only in an advisory capacity:

A lot of the Trustees felt that they wanted to see the work being done by our partner groups and by staff and just kind of everyone at all aspects of the District and stakeholder groups. Ultimately that's what ended up happening; there was a committee [that was] set up [and] Trustees were not on it.

The result of this non-interaction would be that the district-based leadership would have the sole responsibility of helping the district departments and individual schools craft operational plans which could have the best chance of success.

8.2 Trustee Responses to Questions Shared with Parents and Administrators

Responses that were related to the primary and secondary research questions were addressed in the remainder of the KSS; these questions were also asked of the participants in Groups 1 and 3. Their responses are being reported in here and in Section 8.4 due to the differences in the characteristics of each group. Due to time constraints, one of the questions was not asked of one of the Trustee participants.

Ensuring Engagement with IDEA-Related Strategic Plan Objectives

As an incoming Trustee for the 2022-2023 school year, T1 said that the timing of the municipal election was fortuitous because the retirement of some of the longer-termed Trustees encouraged newer candidates like them to run for election. They said that they have always supported the empowerment of diverse people; as such, the emphasis in *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* on strengthening IDEA concepts in public education greatly aligned with the goals they hold on their own. They elaborated, “I want to see my community grow and I want to see my school system [develop] for...all the kids in the community.” As a result, they feel personally invested in ensuring that by the end of the 2024-2025 school year, the district has made substantial progress with its goals and objectives to raise them from the level they are currently after Year 1.

Understanding the IDEA Concepts

While they were not asked to provide their own definitions, both Trustees were knowledgeable enough about the IDEA concepts to affirm that they felt that implementing IDEA-based initiatives should occur all throughout the public education system. T1 stated that she felt it was just as important to learn about IDEA not just for the students but for adult employees, adding:

[L]iving through the school system—whether you're an employee or a student—is completely different and you're not just there to learn. You're there to share and to grow and to learn about social life just as much as academic life and how those things intertwine.

T1 felt that it was specifically important for IDEA principles to be applied during the hiring process, saying, “Being able to recruit and retain people of diverse backgrounds...is of huge importance to me... [We]’re still growing and have some work to do.”

T2 felt that applying IDEA principles at the Board level was particularly important because of their role as Trustees, recalling a discussion about two recent motions regarding the implementation of professional development courses about IDEA for Trustees:

And my perspective [is that] our job is to implement [and] oversee policy and governance. That's our job, right? Our job is not to go into the classroom ourselves. My argument is that to have this training? We will, from here on forward once we have that training, [become] better informed on how to support [diverse] students in our [district].

By passing motions that would ensure that all Trustees had the same understanding of the definitions of the concepts within IDEA, it would help them make equitable choices for the community when carrying out their duties which include but not limited to making decisions around budgeting, lobbying the BCMEC for the funding they need for major capital projects, and leveraging the connection they have with the municipal governments within SD62 for their assistance with resources as well.

Stakeholder Group Communication around Strategic Plan Objectives

With the same questions that were asked of the Group 1 participants, the aim was to uncover what communication methods the Trustees think are effective when they communicate with their constituents about what the district is doing to advance its strategic plan goals.

Of the strategic planning documents and update reports, T1 stated that she read enough of them to understand her responsibilities as an incoming member of the Board of Trustees. T1 also noted that for those members of the public who would be interested in reading *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*, the public-facing document was "really great" because it created a "snapshot of what we want to achieve".

T1 also stated as an individual Trustee, it is very important for them to act as an advocate for the pieces which would fall under their personal interests:

It would be great if we can each start creating a level of comprehension around what those objectives really are because having just a one sentence objective? It doesn't quite share the whole picture. When you're in the work, it makes sense but when you're not, it might not. So, there is a bit of comprehension that can always support those goals and objectives to especially people are not agreeing with certain ones and we need to find out why and it could just be the case where they didn't know anything about it or didn't know that was a direction we are heading in and didn't know the background as to why we're headed in that direction.

T2 felt that the quarterly update reports were very helpful in their role of informing the public of the progress being made. However, they were more apprehensive about the efficacy of the accountability rubric, stating that though they have a lot of "faith and trust" in the team providing the reports, it was not their role to determine the format of how the strategic plan is assessed. More insight into the formulation of the accountability rubric will follow.

8.3 Administration Responses to Unique Questions

The same six questions which were asked of the Trustees were also asked of the Group 3 participants. In addition to the theme of insider versus outsider knowledge, two other themes emerged from the KSS's. Because I met with the first four district administrators as a group, some of their responses were made in response to what the other participants said. This type of interaction will be recounted in the findings if the interaction is deemed relevant to the project.

Insider Knowledge Versus Outsider Knowledge

Six participants (or 66 percent) in Group 3 at both levels had previous experiences with strategic planning, both within and without the education system. As a result of their insider knowledge, they were more informed about the faults which lie within SD62's current strategic plan. These faults may account for a lack of uptake and understanding by the parents, guardians, and caregivers within the community.

Upon receiving gentle encouragement by her colleagues during the group KSS, DA1 stated that she did not feel that there was enough alignment between the operational plans created by the different departments within the district and the overall strategic plan. To her, this was a result of a lack of confidence in the data sets regarding literacy and numeracy assessments for a significant population of students, stating, "I would argue that the other parts that we report on for our data sources for literacy and numeracy, our students and special populations that we are looking at, it's not explicit enough for me." Independently, DA5 echoed this assertion, stating:

The other thing is that we didn't really take into consideration—and this is my language—but we have hard data and then what I refer to as "street data", Shane Safir-kind of thinking. And we didn't have a place for both of those inputs, I think, which are incredibly important because one qualifies the other.

DA1 also commented that the method by which district principals in SD62 viewed both their strategic plans and departmental operational plans was different from what she was used to in her previous strategic planning experiences and in a different school district in Canada:

I created my own department operations plan before [Strategic Plan (2021-2025)] was created...based on what I know what school districts need to report to the ministry in those other reports. From previous information from schools [and] knowing that we need to report on literacy and numeracy, in French Immersion and [so forth], my operational plan [was] aligned as such. And then I found that my operational plan does not necessarily explicitly align at all with our strategic plan. [Laughter]

In the same group session, DA4's prior experiences with strategic planning allowed her to remark that she felt the deficiencies in the creation process for the current Strategic Plan came from the direction of its creation:

This one was maybe a little difficult, difficult to see where our role was. We were asked to come together and do some of the strategic plan, but it felt like we sort of started in the middle [of the process] and then we reached back up to the Board to say, "Is this what you want?" rather than [coming] from the bottom up and asking what people needed, and then building the Strat[egic] Plan up, it kind of felt like we'd taken the one that was there before and [asked ourselves] what do we need to change [and] what do we need to do.

While most of the participants were satisfied with the amount of consultation they performed with members of the school community on the direction of *Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*, those with prior strategic planning experience outside of the education system acknowledged that the mechanisms the district had for gathering the feedback may have been artificially limited, leading to an incomplete stakeholder analysis during the strategic planning process.

SA2 previously worked overseas for a nonprofit organization and recalled that part of the process for that organization involved meeting in-person with stakeholder groups all throughout that country; she knew that the same level of in-person contact with school community groups within the district was not possible due to the COVID-19 lockdown which began well before the SPSG held its first planning meeting in December 2020.

However, SA1's strategic planning experience had been with smaller, local nonprofits, and she observed that even with a smaller nonprofit, it is difficult to get productive feedback from a significant population of people served by the organization: "[I]t's so hard to get people to participate in something like a Strategic Plan. I think most people just hit delete [when they see emails about it]."

SA4 echoed this finding, adding:

I also think when you're looking at things like [the] Strategic Plan and getting input from people, it's sometimes you have to work a little harder to get the get input from the people who aren't the ones that put up their hand and say, "Hey, put me in a focus group" or "Yeah, sure, I read and understood your e-mail, and I'll take 15 minutes to do your survey and provide feedback". I think some of some of the voices that need to be heard maybe aren't because the family may not have the capacity or the desire to engage.

This lack of interest is tied into the theme detailed in the next section.

When the Personal Becomes Political

Three participants spoke about their confusion at the lack of engagement and interaction from some parents, guardians, and caregivers regarding decisions made or advice given in the service of the district strategic plan or their children's education. DA2 noted:

[For budget discussions, there is] very little input, very little impact, very little interest. We try and create the awareness and it just doesn't work, right?

But you know, if you...make the initial comment about [something that's] impacting their family, [like] changing a bus route for 5 minutes? It's huge. Like, I have people outside the board office lined up ready to talk about it. You know, [when] you shake \$3 million off the budget and it goes without notice, right? That's just a bit of a disconnect for me.

SA1 observed that while parents, guardians, and caregivers were interested in learning how to help their child become more engaged with their schoolwork, this interest was not evident in some group settings or during parent-teacher conferences:

As part of our school [operational] plan, my colleague has been doing a 5-minute [presentation] on how to read with your child, how to help your child read at home. She has a PowerPoint, [and] she's an interested and engaging speaker. She's really trying to pitch to the audience. It's silence on the PAC meeting call after; [there are no] questions, comments, anything. Parents as a whole seem hard to engage. We have a hard time getting parents out to parent-teacher conferences, but wow, we stuffed our gymnasium full of parents coming to the Neon Dance party.

The implication here is that because district administrators hear about parental concern about district actions only when it affects their family directly and not at other times, they can fall prey to the fallacy that parents as a stakeholder group do not have any concerns which need to be alleviated and/or they only want to interact with the school during entertainment events and not to have discussions with their children's teachers.

This is not to say that parents, guardians, and caregivers do not express their concerns about the efficacy and quality of their children's education. In response to parental concerns that there is less focus on "the three Rs [reading, writing, and arithmetic]", DA5 remarked that parents, guardians, and caregivers with those concerns would benefit from a greater understanding of the purpose of B.C.'s New Curriculum:

You often get [parents who say], "My kid went to school and did nothing that day." Well, let's talk about what that looked like. What did they learn or did not learn? A lot of our complaints that we might get from parents these days are around safety, around equity, around being included. What are we doing under the core competencies to support that? I don't think parents realize and I don't think our public realizes how much time we spend developing human beings. And we now have a systemic way to do that under the curriculum so it's not ad hoc.

This suggests that despite the B.C. curriculum change being enacted six years ago in 2017, there are some parents, guardians, and caregivers who are largely unaware of exactly how the emphasis on core competencies in addition to curricular competencies will help their children be prepared for adulthood and the wider world around them.

Beneficial Effects of the Strategic Planning Process

Three participants were able to recount specific examples where because of how *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* was formulated, they could more easily work towards achieving the objectives within the strategic plan.

DA1 specifically recounted a decision which was made by the Board of Trustees to allocate additional funds to a literacy initiative which saw marked improvements for some students, stating that without the financial backing of senior leaders who tied the decision back to the district's operational plans, they could not have achieved the same level of success. This kind of adherence to the promise of the strategic plan's ambitions is something about which she felt that the public should know more.

She also recalled an instance where due to the increased awareness of the issues of diversity and accessibility due to their being called out in the strategic plan, she and other members of her department were able to imagine how some Spirit Day celebrations at school could be unintentionally exclusionary to students who come from different cultures and traditions: "I think the more we get into these conversations and the more we explore things that come up and question and just be curious, I think, we'll be better." DA3 agreed with DA1, adding:

We may not have thought about it before, but we often are putting things through a little filter and saying, "Wait a second. What did we miss here?" Where we used to just run with [activities], and now we often are saying, "Wait, something's missing at this table."

SA3 affirmed that within her school's monthly staff meetings, there is a concerted effort to intentionally connect the school's operational plans to the overall Strategic Plan objectives and to conduct their meetings through that lens and framework. From her perspective, the result has been a more considered discussion about how to ensure that the principles of IDEA are upheld throughout the entire school year.

8.4 Administration Responses to Shared Questions

A unique characteristic of Group 3 is that at the district level, the participants were responsible for a large portion of the creation of the strategic plan and at the individual school level, the participants are responsible for ensuring that the teachers and staff who interact directly with students are carrying out the activities which arise from the operational plans. This influenced their responses to the KSS questions which were directly related to the primary and secondary research questions.

Ensuring Engagement with IDEA-Related Strategic Plan Objectives

At the district level, the participants felt closely aligned to the strategic plan objectives around IDEA in different ways. One of the administrators brought up an example of a conversation she might have with one of the other participants in the group session:

It's nice that the conversations we have are always aligned. [For example], I bring up to you [DA2 that] I'm wondering about [accommodations for] a field trip for a little girl. And then [DA2 says], "This is equity, we've got to look after this" and then we make it right." I never find that there's a budget constraint. If we believe it, it's in the strategic plan, and that means we're being supported by the Board, and that's always been an easy answer.

These and the other examples brought up later in this section helped to reinforce with the district administrators that they and their departments need to remain focused on carrying out the activities which would lead to the achievement of the strategic plan objectives.

However, one of the individual school-based administrators had a different perspective to offer. After receiving the mandate to create operational plans that would be reported to the BCMEC, SA1 noted that a conflict arose between school administration and members of the Sooke Teachers Association (STA):

We were asked to create school plans this year because of our responsibility to the Ministry of Education to do that. As you may or may not know, initially the teachers were involved in that process and then the teachers as a group, the Sooke Teachers Association, said they would not be involved.

One of the problems—and I think [I] indirectly answered your question—is that one of the current challenges to me in carrying out the goals of the strategic plan [is] that the teachers don't participate. So, we're creating plans without their input or buy-in, which is super difficult. It then feels like a compliance document [to them] rather than something that we're going to use as a guide.

Without the resolution of this conflict, it will remain a difficult challenge for some of the strategic plan objectives to be achieved.

Understanding the IDEA Concepts

In the group KSS, all four district administrators confirmed that they would like to see IDEA principles applied all throughout the public education system to ensure that everyone within SD62—from the students to the teachers, staff, district office workers, and administrators—is upholding those human rights principles.

DA1 noted that in her department, they have begun to be very intentional and proactive about confirming whether fellow colleagues had accessibility needs, while DA2 noted that demonstrating the principles and normalizing them were a key to having them be a part of the district culture. DA4 felt it is a foundational piece of education that should be woven throughout while DA3 added that they currently apply Universal Design for Learning principles when they are making changes to policies and procedures or considering needs within the district. In his individual KSS, DA5 even wondered out loud if IDEA should be its own category within the strategic plan rather than them being embedded within the *Learning, Engagement, and Growth* objectives.

During the individual KSS's for the school administrators, their focus was on ensuring that the employees and teachers at their schools were well-educated about IDEA principles so that it could be applied in a uniform way with all their students. SA2 noted that learning about IDEA should be embedded within the core subjects beginning in the early years, and SA4 stated that she often has "casual or on the spot" conversations about wise and best practices around IDEA that individual teachers can employ with students when those teachers' and administrators' own knowledge has been exhausted.

However, SA1 noted that while the district does provide opportunities for individual teachers to learn about how to apply IDEA principles in their classrooms, it is not mandatory for all the teachers in the district to attend the same training sessions. SA3 called the provision of this kind of uniform training "an ongoing obligation" so that "we continue to stay current with our own understandings and learning," adding that in her almost three decades of experience within the district, this type of training and education had not been previously provided by the district.

Stakeholder Group Communication around Strategic Plan Objectives

Additionally, one of the KSS questions about communication was asked to determine what district-based and school-based administrators felt were the toughest communication barriers to overcome when it comes to communicating with parents, guardians, and caregivers about the IDEA-related objectives in the strategic plan.

In the group KSS for the district-based administrators—many of whom were heavily involved in *Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*'s creation—one of the people who had prior experience with strategic planning found the resulting strategic planning documents to be "completely confusing" and difficult to understand. Further, DA1 said:

Maybe it is our data sets because what we are looking for and what we are measuring are often subjective. They are often narrative. They're not often [depicting] how we are doing, this is how we know, and what are our next steps. That clear kind of linear [description], I had to work to put it together.

The other three district administrators were understanding of DA1's critique of the strategic planning documents, especially DA2. He was quick to support the expression of her critical opinion in the group setting, and added that it was important for her to bring up the critique as learning about the process of strategic planning was not an integral part of their administrative skillset:

It's an evolving process and having this type of feedback is huge to make it better because again, we didn't go to school to be strategic planners. We didn't go to school to learn this stuff. We're doing this as experts in other area then being required to be [an] organizational leader, not necessarily educational leader or financial leader, but an organizational leader which takes different skillsets.

In his separate KSS, DA5 agreed that the quarterly reports were "most valuable" because they described how each different department in the district was working to progress both the district and school operational plans and the overall strategic plan.

“Each department takes the time to really share the details of what they're working on,” he said, adding that multidisciplinary projects are becoming more common, as is the sharing of resources and breaking down the barriers to collaboration between different departments.

However, DA5 was less complimentary about the operational plans themselves because they were less based in quantitative data than something like the provincially mandated annual FESL (Framework for Enhancing Student Learning) report. He also stated that while they did not yet have “coherence”, the “executive Operational Plan I think is getting better for 2023-2024.”

At the level of the school-based administrators, only one participant could say that they were familiar enough with all the documents to have an opinion about their efficacy in communicating progress updates to the public. SA4 said that as each document was produced and released, they were reviewed at the leadership team meetings she attended with other administrators and senior management; this increased her understanding of them. She felt that the assessment portion was the most difficult for her to understand because of how she interpreted the colours used for the rubric proficiency chart seen as Figure 5: “[The assessment indicator that showed] we’re doing well was in [a] gray [colour]. If you look at any professionally-produced graphic or schedule or calendar, [items in] gray [are] the part you're not even supposed to look at.”

Figure 5: Excerpt from the Accountability Rubric from the Year 1 Annual Report. SD62, 2021, p. 13.

| | | EMERGING | DEVELOPING | PROFICIENT | EXTENDING |
|---|---|----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| LEARNING GOAL Develop and support adaptable learners who are creative, critical and social thinkers with the capacity to be educated citizens | | | | | |
| TIME | 1 To provide opportunities for learners to understand, respect and appreciate diversity and inclusion To provide opportunities for learners to | | | | |

Another example of a report being misinterpreted concerned a significant portion of learners. At one point, terminology used within the district referred to the schools as located in an “inner zone” or an “outer zone” of the district. Currently, while schools have been groups into families which share the names of the secondary schools in the district, (“the Belmont family, the Edward Milne family, and the Royal Bay family”), SA4 noticed that it appeared that some learners in secondary school were not included:

The alternative, continuing education, and online [schools] were [depicted] in a little box off to the side and [coloured] in gray [and noted] they connect with all families. But you put them off to the side over here, and coloured them gray. I don't think [they are] there anymore.

The implication of these responses is that if school-based administrators are having difficulty reading and interpreting the strategic planning documents, they may not be able to champion their use as a framework for the teachers and staff they lead at their school who may be having a similar difficulty with interpreting the documents and figuring out how to use them to support their work.

The responses from the other school-based administrators indicated that prior to their KSS's, they were not very aware of some or all the documents. SA1 opined, "The short answer is I think the majority of us at the school-based level, myself (*sic*) included, did not read those documents." She added:

If the operational plans and the strategic plan are going to truly become living documents, I think we need more conversation between the district-level work and the school-based work to really be really explicit around what we do want to have happen and how do we want [staff, teachers, and administrators] to utilize these documents.

After reviewing them prior to her KSS, SA2 felt that the strategic plan was very "user-friendly" and "less wordy" than the operational plans, which had more detail. However, she added that she only became aware of the operational plans recently but not as part of her role's regular responsibilities:

I remember going for a walk last year with another colleague, a principal who had been a principal for 10 years in our district who was applying for a higher position, and [they] mentioned the operational plan because [they were] asking me questions about it related to middle school.

While she read the current strategic plan and the operational plan for the 2021-2022 school year, SA3 said she "probably skimmed" the following year's operational plan. She also mentioned her preference for the narrative aspects of the assessment and accountability portions of the documents:

I like the sense of stories, though, like when you hear anecdotes [about strategic and/or operational plan successes]. And yeah, just some more qualitative information of the stories that we hear from people. I think those are the things that stick with me.

In addition to the density of the strategic planning documents, there were other areas where the district and school administrators felt they could improve communication. However, they were not able to provide insight as to whether the innovations they want to see would be effective or even possible to implement successfully.

DA1 spoke of an Intranet tool called *Engage* which she knows teachers can use to provide resources to parents, guardians, and caregivers whose children need additional help understanding the material they are learning in school. She said that the site is so "glitchy" that it is creating an accessibility issue for those students, recounting how when she mentions the resources to teachers, their response is to send an email reply stating that they cannot find the information on the Intranet. However, DA3 was quick to point out to DA1 that the COVID-19 lockdown interrupted the plans which the

Information Technology department made to improve access to those digital materials, and that other digital tools such as Microsoft Teams provided access to supports in a different way.

In DA4's department, they produce a monthly bulletin which is archived on the district website about matters such as how to support students' mental health, but they just held a meeting regarding whether they should still produce the bulletin if it appears that parents, guardians, and caregivers are not making use of the information:

It's costly having it put together [with] the graphics, et cetera, that go into it. And our constant question is: "Is anybody reading this? Is this worth the time, the energy, and the money?" I mean, there's never any one right way [to communicate to the community] that hits everyone, right? You have to do a little bit of this [and] a little bit of that because you're going to get your people that are super savvy and look through every method and you're going to get [people] that make it almost impossible to connect with them [who] say the school district doesn't communicate.

The communication barrier DA5 would like to remove the most is the one between the Trustees and community members who have an interest in Board proceedings. He believes that by holding the question-and-answer session at the end of the meeting, the representatives from the stakeholder groups (STA, CUPE, PVP, SPEAC, and Canadian Parents for French Immersion), families, and other members of the public who are affected by the agenda items are unable to have their input and insight heard by the Trustees before they vote on a motion. He continued:

We got to make the time more accessible. Like who...is going to stick around at 9:30 or 10:00 at night to ask a question and then not have it answered? The other side is at the front end. I think that that if someone comes in, they're fresh. They have an opportunity. The trustees are fresh. We're all fresh. We get that personal connection and engagement. That's going to build trust, that's going to build relationships, that's going to build the opportunity for dialogue, and so I think changing that structure [would help].

Building relationships between school-based administrators, teachers, and staff was also something which one of the school-based administrators believed would help surmount a communication barrier. Using the example of attempting to find a reasonable time to hold informational and educational sessions for incoming parents, guardians, and caregivers, SA1 felt that the district should do more to find out from families their preferred methods of communication and availability to work with their children's teachers to reinforce at home what they are learning in school:

I think we need to dig deeper and think about who is our demographic (sic), particularly. We've just gone up exponentially in the newcomer [families category]. In terms of just diversity and equity there, every newcomer has a different story; some are coming in and they're affluent professionals; some are coming in and they're refugees working [class]. It's all very different.

Ultimately, SA3 noted that with the vast number of communication avenues which are used by the district, it could be difficult for someone to say that they were not aware of any information regarding changes due to strategic planning initiatives that is communicated from the district or from senior leadership. "It's just a matter of siphoning through it all," she said.

Participant Impression of Strategic Plan Assessment

One of the school-based administrators who participated in a KSS expressed some confusion regarding how the district came to determine those levels of assessment for *SD62 Strategic Plan Annual Report (2021-2022)*. SA1 stated:

When I think of the four [point] scale continuum, I don't recall evaluating that at the school-based level. I might have missed it, but I don't think I did. And even if I missed it, someone should have looped back; there should have been a mechanism of data collection, I'm not sure how as a district, if we didn't collect information from [every district school] in the field, I don't know how we got at that.

When asked in a follow-up question if the district did this kind of data collection near the beginning of her time in the district, SA1 said:

[We've] grown so much that our conversation as a district—and it just happened again the other day at the leadership meeting—our conversations continuously go back to growth. New schools: how are we going to fund them? Our conversations are so heavily weighted towards managing growth at the existing schools and getting funding to build new schools. We've moved away from conversations around curriculum [and] instructional leadership. In my first years in the school district and my first 8 to 10 years [as a teacher], we had a much greater emphasis on our instructional leadership roles. I miss those days.

SA3 noted that the rate at which SD62 has been growing could be a factor in how the *Developing* grade was reached for the *Engagement* and *Growth* goals, saying, "When there's so much growth, there's just that many more people. That makes it harder for people to engage within, so I agree with that one." In her view, she said she would put the assessment of achieving the Learning goal as *Developing* rather than *Proficient* because she had noticed that several students had difficulties becoming re-engaged after the COVID-19 lockdown ended and students could return to in-person schooling again.

She also noted that she was unsure what evidence was being used to determine the assessment of the *Learning* goal:

This came up at one of the meetings that I was a part of because we said, "What's the data that we're using to know how our kids are doing?" And I think we identified that maybe that there's a gap there or more data [is] needed to really get a sense of how well our learners are doing. I think I would say that we would still be *Developing* on that one.

SA3 also revealed that recent leadership meetings revolved around attempting to find other ways to gather quantitative data other than using the results from the provincially mandated annual Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA) due to how other entities have attached political motivations towards analyzing the FSA results:

Certainly, we had a better participation rate this year than we did the previous year. That will help, I think, because in the previous year when the participation rate was so low, we thought well, how can we even, how can we even use this as being reliable. We've talked about what other kinds of data can we collect at the school level [that] would be a standard across the district, and then how? Because [the FSA became] a political tool, how do we continue to support the notion that collecting what we know about kids [in the public education system] is a good thing, and helps us inform not only what we teach, but how well our kids are doing in the in the bigger system and not to make it as scary [and] weighted entity as it's become. [I don't have] many answers, but just the understanding that we need to do more, to do better [at that].

When asked a follow-up question about the introduction of the more narrative-based accountability rubric in the current strategic plan, DA5 expounded upon the decision to move away from the quantitative measures depicted in *SD62 Strategic Plan (2018-2021)* as in Figure 6 to the rubric measures shown as Figure 4 in Section 6.0:

Figure 6: Depiction of Quantitative Assessment Measurements from *SD62 Strategic Plan (2018-2021)*. SD62, 2018, p. 13.

| MEASURES | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Staff Satisfaction Rate | – | Baseline | – | +5% |
| Stakeholder Satisfaction Rate | – | Baseline | – | +5% |
| Staff Attendance Levels | – | Baseline | +2% | +5% |
| # of schools implementation annual Na'tsa'maht Agreement goals | – | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Employee Turnover Rates | – | Baseline | -5% | -7.5% |

How KPIs [key performance indicators] in my opinion fail to service is that we're not producing widgets. If we were making widgets like your iPhone or my iPhone then we could probably measure product, quality, all of those kind of pieces would be simple [to track], but we're not. We are developing human beings.

Still, this more subjective assessment scale was not easy for members of the district executive to assess while they were developing the Annual Report. DA5 stated when the district leadership was crafting the annual report, he was perhaps the harshest as he had graded their progress on all the objectives as *Emerging* rather than *Developing* or *Proficient*. According to DA5, this resulted in a less data-driven overall assessment being presented in the Annual Report:

We found we were tough to ourselves, so in the end we ended up scaling all of our scores and slid them up. Part of that was we're learning how to set the criteria and gauge ourselves. Part of it was also, boy, what's the public going to say if this is all Emerging, what does that say for organization if we have the leaders of the systems that suggesting we don't have confidence in the system? There was (sic) some concerns about how that might play out. And not just to cover our [selves]-type thing in the room. That it was truly like, is this going to help the school district move forward if we come out with something that suggests that we're [not doing well]?

DA5 added that for the next strategic plan, he would like to see a return to using more quantitative methods of assessment.

8.5 Summary of Findings

Due to their different roles within the public education system, the participants in Groups 2 and 3 had differing views regarding how effective the district has been at progressing the strategic plan goals and objectives related to IDEA concepts, then continuing to keep parents, caregivers, guardians and the greater SD62 community informed and engaged with their progress.

From the Trustees' perspective, they have felt very confident in the efficacy of the operational activities which arise from the implementation of *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* because the updates they receive from the district have provided them with information about the activities the district has accomplished. Because of how the document was created and how aligned they can be with the goals expressed within the participants feel they are able to refer back to it when they are faced with decisions made and actions taken at the Board level. The Trustee participants also feel confident that they can use the information they receive in the strategic planning update and progress reports to continue to advocate for public education in the communities they serve. At the same time, though, there could be a stronger amount of evidence that the anticipated outcomes are being achieved, but the Trustees are aware that it is not their role to dictate the format in which strategic plan assessment takes place.

In the viewpoint of the district-based and school-based administrators, they generally feel the district can achieve the goals and objectives in the strategic plan and complete the tasks they set out for their individual departments in their operational plans. There are administrators who have experience with the strategic planning process and the wise practices associated with effective strategic planning activities. Simultaneously, there are still some improvements they feel need to be made in gathering evidence of the achievement of the anticipated outcomes through a district-wide assessment, collaborating with some of the district stakeholders who work the most closely with students on implementing activities aimed at furthering the IDEA-related objectives, and communicating to parents, guardians, and caregivers about actions families can take to improve their students' educational success.

Using the findings from Sections 5-8, the next section of this report will contain a jurisdictional scan of not just SD62 but of the B.C. public school districts which are the most comparable to SD62 with an eye to determine how well each district is performing in achieving their own IDEA-related strategic plan goals and objectives, if any.

9.0 FINDINGS—JURISDICTIONAL SCAN

The jurisdictional scan for this project was informed by the findings from the previous data collection activities. It synthesizes the observations from the SD62 Board, committee, and SPEAC meetings with the observations from the survey respondents and the three groups of participants in the KSS's, and then determines their application in pre-determined districts in British Columbia. The observation period began on 10 August 2023 and ended on 20 September 2023.

9.1 Elements under Examination

For this jurisdictional scan, the following elements from the school district's website were reviewed:

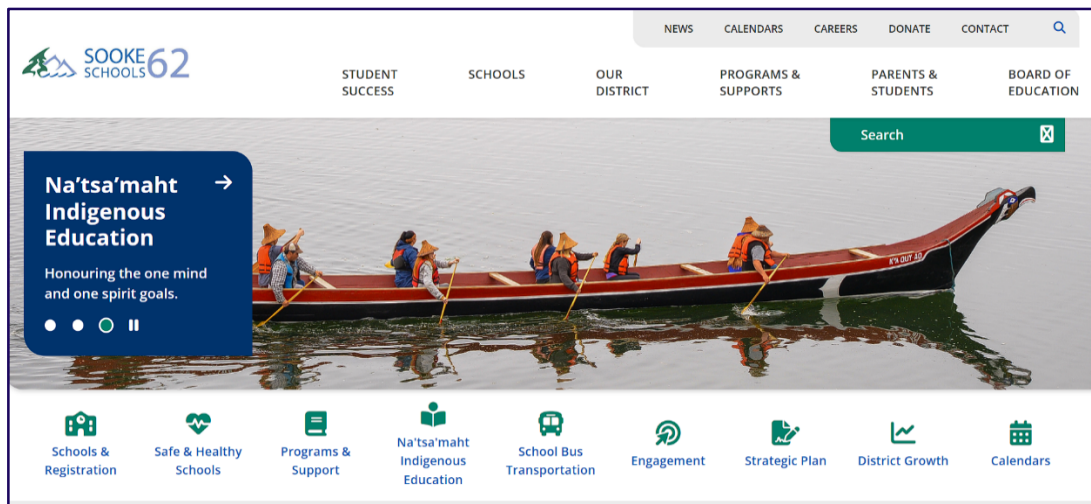
- Descriptions of the strategic plan and/or operational plan implementation process and the ease with which the documents could be found;
- The location and ease with which information about school district policies, regulations, and/or procedures regarding IDEA-related concepts could be found;
- How the school district conducts its public Board and committee meetings, how to discover what decisions are made, and how the public can participate in a Board or committee meeting;
- Information about recent media releases related to strategic and operational planning and/or how IDEA-related concepts are experienced by students; and
- The methods by which the district communicates with the school community and the ease with which the public can meaningfully interact with information released by the school.

The next sections will describe these elements by first identifying their location and efficacy within SD62 and subsequently, using it as a benchmark to make comparisons with select public school districts in British Columbia. In addition, links to the relevant sections and/or documents will be live in the original Word and PDF versions of this project.

9.2 Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62)

On the front page of the SD62 website, the section of the site which includes the information about the strategic plan is in a prominent position as the third icon from the right underneath the rotating slideshow image gallery as seen on the next page in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Screenshot of the SD62 Website (<https://www.sd62.bc.ca>)



The [current strategic plan](#) is embedded into an interactive widget which allows the reader to zoom in and out for easier readability; it is also linked directly to this page of the website [as a PDF](#). The previous strategic plan and its final report should be linked to this page of the website as well; however, as of this writing, only the link for [the final summary report](#) directs to the correct document. There were initial plans for the current strategic plan to be fully interactive, but being able to click on the links within the strategic plan for more information is only possible on the PDF version. The quality of the links is uneven, too, as when it comes to learning what measures the district will use to determine the efficacy of their strategic plan initiatives, a tautology is created because the link in the PDF of the current strategic plan will return the reader to the page marked Strategic Plan and not to the [strategic plan assessment rubric](#) (which is also [linked as a PDF document](#)). The yearly executive operational plan for the district and the ones for the individual schools are found in two different sections of the website: Board of Education ([district operational plans](#) and quarterly update reports) and Student Success ([individual school operational plans](#)). As of 1 September, 2022 as per the *Accessible BC Act*, they [added a webpage](#) which includes a link to the [district Accessibility Plan](#) as well as a link to a feedback tool which community members can use to [report accessibility barriers](#) they are encountering. An improvement over the strategic and operational plans is that the SD62 accessibility plan includes a section where the types of barriers to accessibility are described alongside words such as *impairment* and *disability* (SD62, 2023b, pp. 6–7).

The whole Board and its two standing committees (Education-Policy and Resources) meet once a month during the regular school year. Information on the dates and times of current meetings is viewable from the [Public Meetings](#) webpage. Meeting minutes and agendas are maintained directly on the website, and the archive of past documents goes back to September 2019 for everything but the SPEAC meetings. In addition to attending Board and committee meetings in person, the public can attend via

livestreaming through MS Teams, but Board members and standing delegation representatives are highly encouraged to attend in person as the district believes that offering meeting attendance via livestreaming to the public is in accordance with the precepts of the strategic plan (SD62, 2023b, para. 3). However, if someone from CUPE or SPEAC cannot attend in person and they also can't find someone to attend on their behalf, they need to send in a formal request to attend virtually (2023g, para. 4).

There are no breaks during the meetings which can last for approximately 2 hours. For the public Board meetings, the Q&A section is at the end, and those questions and their responses are not recorded in the minutes. As noted in Section 5.1, the procedure is more informal at the committee meetings where standing delegation members and members of the public can also ask questions after presentations, but before the Trustee committee members speak. If a member of the live streaming audience at a public Board meeting wishes to ask a question, they can submit their questions using the moderated live chat function, and the question will be read out loud (in whole or in summary) by the Board chair. There is no guarantee that the entirety of a question will be asked nor is there a guarantee that there will be a response.

[Policies and regulations](#) have their own webpage within the Board of Education section and are linked individually by PDF. Document numbers are grouped by theme such that policy A-110 in the Foundations and Governance category ("Board-Staff Communications") is different and separate from policy E-110 in the Human Resources category ("Job Descriptions"). The user interface (UI) further breaks down the documents into by-laws, internal audits, policy, procedural regulations, and regulations. It is searchable by simple keyword and looks for exact spellings of words.

[Press releases](#) are mostly current for the most recent school year and/or for pertinent releases that occurred in previous years. For example, there is a news release for SD62's board [approving the capital plan submission](#) which took place in the 2020-2021 school year. It is also unknown as to the criteria by which the communications department will issue a press release. For example, there is a news release which mentions the [incoming Trustees from the 2022 municipal elections](#), but there is not a press release about highlights from [Strategic Plan Annual Report \(2021-2022\)](#).

[Community engagement opportunities](#) via the ThoughtExchange platform are often promoted with a news release and through the regular communication channels while the reports generated by ThoughtExchange are usually included in meeting agendas without any modification. Currently, it is unclear as to how one can interpret the results provided by the ThoughtExchange engagement reports.

The official forms of communication utilized by the district other than one-to-one conversations with teachers and staff are: Board, committee, and SPEAC meetings; district and individual school websites; district department newsletters; individual school blogs and/or newsletters; press releases; and social media ([Facebook](#); [X](#) [originally

known as Twitter⁷], [YouTube](#)). None of the social media accounts have widgets embedded on the front page of the website, and only the Facebook and Twitter icons are featured in the footer of every webpage. Comments are disabled on YouTube videos by default, members of the public cannot comment on posts made or shared on the Facebook page, but they can share an original post from the Facebook feed and add their own commentary. There are currently no restrictions regarding public commentary on Twitter posts. Additionally, though there is a clerical support worker at the district office who can help the newcomer parents, guardians, and caregivers of international students and English Language Learner students with their school paperwork (SD62, 2022d, p. 59), a widget such as Google Translate in the header of each webpage that can perform machine-translation into non-English languages was not present during the observation period for this jurisdictional scan.

9.3 Comparison to Targeted B.C. School Districts

Out of the eight school districts referenced in Section 4.7 as being like SD62 with regards to its historic growth and/or budgetary planning, four were chosen as the comparators for the jurisdictional scan. The statistics used to choose which districts to examine can be seen in tables for the named districts located on Vancouver Island (Table 12) and on the British Columbia mainland (Table 13, next page).

The data in these tables includes the number of the students marked as FTE for the purposes of financial allocation from the BCMEC, the operating budget allocated for the 2020-2021 school year, and the amount allocated per FTE student. From the district websites, I also gathered information on the number and types of schools supported by the school district.

Table 12: Vital Statistics for SD62 and Three Select Districts on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. Adapted from Province of British Columbia, 2023b.

| | Select Vancouver Island School Districts | | | |
|--|--|--------|-------|--------|
| | SD61 | SD62 | SD63 | SD68 |
| Student Enrolment for 2020-2021 School Year (FTE) | 19,429 | 11,452 | 7,778 | 14,742 |
| # of Elementary Schools⁸ | 28 | 19 | 8 | 28 |

⁷ For ease of reference, the social media platform currently known as X will be referred to as Twitter for the remainder of this project.

⁸ The data for the number of each type of school was gathered from each public school district's website as of 12 August 2023 and/or its strategic plan which includes the 2020-2021 school year. The individual locations of each school district website and/or strategic plan can be determined from the References section.

| | Select Vancouver Island School Districts | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | SD61 | SD62 | SD63 | SD68 |
| # of Middle Schools | 10 | 5 | 3 | 0 |
| # of Secondary Schools | 8 | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| # of Adult/Continuing/ Alternate Education Schools | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Annual Budget (2020-2021) | \$182.2 million | \$107.8 million | \$72.9 million | \$133.6 million |
| Funding Per FTE Student (2020-2021) | \$9,377 | \$9,416 | \$9,372 | \$9,177 |

Table 13: Vital Statistics for Four Select Districts in Mainland British Columbia. Adapted from Province of British Columbia, 2023b.

| | Select Mainland British Columbia School Districts | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | SD23 | SD34 | SD36 | SD79 |
| Student Enrolment for 2020-2021 School Year (FTE) | 23,357 | 19,790 | 73,611 | 8,224 |
| # of Elementary Schools | 31 ⁹ | 31 | 104 | 17 |
| # of Middle Schools | 8 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| # of Secondary Schools | 5 | 6 | 21 | 5 |
| # of Adult/Continuing/ Alternate Education Schools | 2 | 2 | 8 | 2 |
| Annual Budget (2020-2021) | \$220.4 million | \$181.8 million | \$691.2 million | \$82.3 million |
| Funding Per FTE Student (2020-2021) | \$9,333 | \$9,189 | \$9,376 | \$10,006 |

⁹ As per the FESL (Framework for Enhancing Student Learning) 2022 report for SD23, this number does not include the two elementary schools which were scheduled to open/re-open in September 2022.

Based on the size of the student populations and the budgets not being too much larger than SD62's, I will be reporting on the analysis of the documents available for SD23, SD34, SD61, and SD68.

Central Okanagan School District (SD23)

On the Central Okanagan School District (SD23) website, the strategic plan isn't directly linked onto the front page of the website, as seen in Figure 8, nor is it located in the [District Strategic Direction](#) (DSD) section of the website, found when the mouse cursor is hovering over the Board of Education title in the middle of the navigation bar near the top of the page.

Figure 8: Screenshot of SD23 Website ([https://www.sd23.bc.ca/Pages/default.aspx#/="](https://www.sd23.bc.ca/Pages/default.aspx#/=))



The DSD page does list the current vision, mission, values, and one goal and notes that they are current as of June 2021; however, it does not describe the strategic objectives the district wants to achieve nor if there are any outcomes they are anticipating.

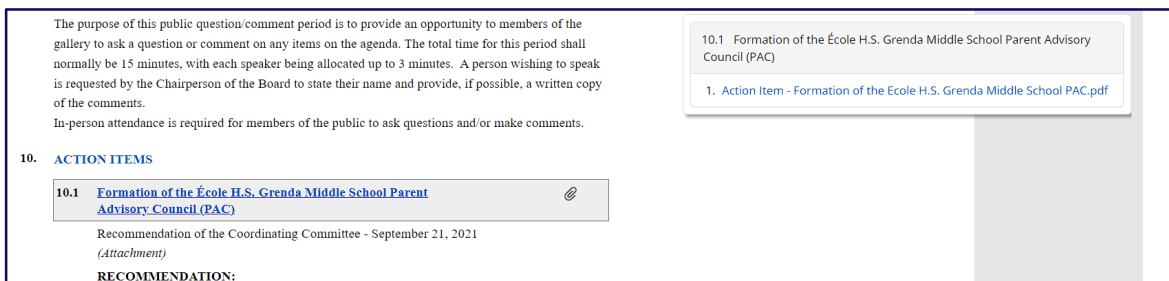
Instead, all the strategic planning and operational planning documents are linked to the [Enhancing Student Learning](#) webpage which is accessible through the District Info link in the navigation bar which is third from the right in Figure 8. As with the SD62 website, the [seven-page PDF](#) can be accessed by clicking on text or an image of the first page of the strategic plan; a second version of the strategic plan is available in the form of a [24-page presentation](#). Neither PDF offers any interactivity.

In addition, the latter PDF from SD23 is more visually interesting than the former PDF in that the latter only contains one infographic; however, both PDFs include a glossary of commonly used terms towards the end of the document something which the SD62

strategic plan lacks. In contrast, the SD23 strategic plan does not indicate how the district will assess they are doing well in achieving their strategic plan’s objectives; the data reported in the FESL reports is aimed more at assessing the district through the province’s criteria for educational success and any links to the objectives and strategies within the strategic plan are not explicitly stated. The district’s operational plan covering the 2021-2022 school year is noted as being “Incamera” (*sic*) with no explanation that the phrase means that it is considered confidential information (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). There is mention elsewhere on the district website that [a previous strategic plan](#) was in effect from 2018 to 2021, and it can be accessed by performing a website search. As per the Accessibility BC Act, they have not just their district Accessibility Plan [linked to a webpage](#), but they also have embedded YouTube videos featuring a sign language interpreter and subtitles which explain the webpage information.

The Board and five standing committees (Finance and Audit, Education and Student Services, General Affairs, Planning and Facilities, Policy) meet no more than twice a month, and the meeting agendas are maintained through an online portal connected to an enterprise system called [eScribe](#). A beneficial feature of the eScribe system is that the agenda can be presented in HTML so that when a person clicks on the paper clip next to an agenda item which has an attachment, a pop-up window appears showing the title of the document that is a part of the agenda package, as seen in Figure 9. From there, a person could click on that link to have the document open in a new tab.

Figure 9: Screenshot of eScribe Functionality as Used by SD23



In this way, following along with the HTML version of the agenda could be seen as a better method than the method one must use for viewing the PDF’s for SD62’s meeting agendas because the audience member would not have to scroll back and forth within one PDF between the outline of the agenda and the agenda items being discussed.

[Meeting minutes](#) are maintained in a separate area directly connected to the district website as well as in the meeting agendas for the following meeting within the eScribe portal. Additionally, there is a separate area of the website for documents called [Board Meeting Highlights](#); these documents are archived as PDFs which go back to September 2011. The information they carry is mostly a duplicate of the information from the meeting minutes, except it omits the information and content of which people in the audience spoke during the Q&A portions of the meetings. It is unclear for which audience the Board Highlights documents are written. [Correspondence to the Board](#) began to be accessible to the public in a separate sub-section of the district website in

the 2022-2023 school year as of January 2023. For some parts of the duration of the data collection period, there was a PDF linked to each meeting record which details how, when, and in what format and the public can ask questions during an in-person meeting; members of the media are supposed to submit their questions in advance. There is also a web page that describes [current meeting protocol](#).

At one point, the public could make a comment and/or ask questions related to agenda items twice per meeting. Each public comment section was 15 minutes long; one was after Item 6 (Staff Presentations and 5-minute Recess) and the other was after Item 9 (Action Items and 5-minute Recess). However, as of 9 March 2023, the Board suspended the second public comment/question period due to "recent discriminatory comments made by the public at board meetings and on social media" (SD23, 2023, para. 1). The suspension will be reviewed and may be rescinded when the Policy Committee performs its regular review of the relevant policy.

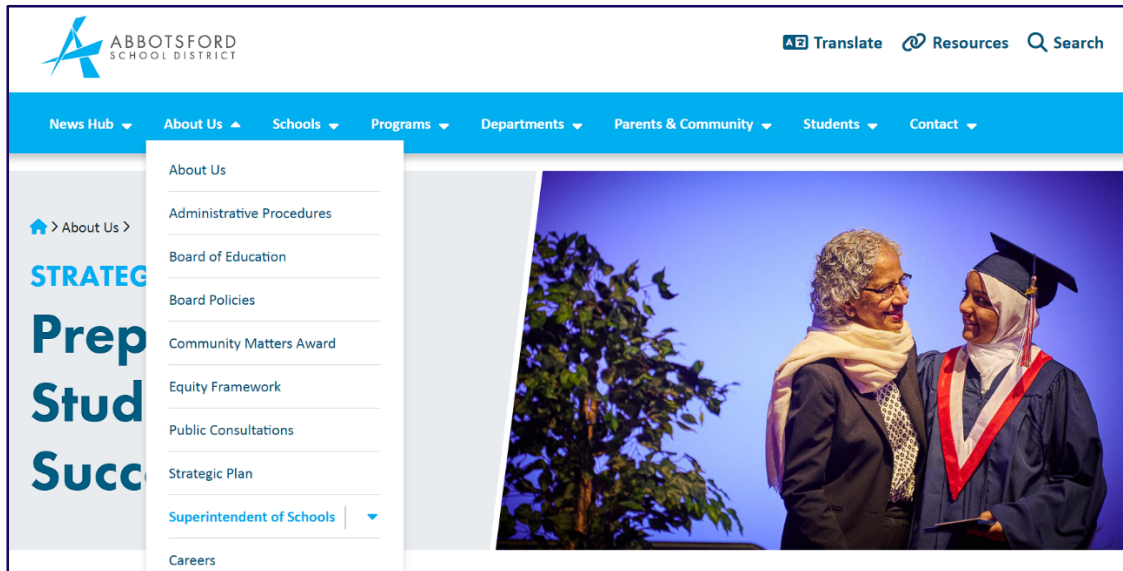
Press releases do have a separate area that is dedicated to them towards the bottom of the home page; however, upon [clicking the View All button](#), the most recent press release displayed is one from 30 May 2018 about registration for bus transportation. There is also a sub-section of the District Info called [News Releases](#) and the only way one can tell in what order the releases are listed are by clicking on the header at the top of the Release Date column to sort them by chronological or reverse chronological order.

SD23 also promotes five forms of communication with the district through a widget that appears on the right side of each page of the website as well as widgets or links at the bottom of the website's front page: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Flickr](#), [YouTube](#), and Email. Members of the public can comment on most social media posts, and it is not currently known to what extent comments made by the public are moderated on some of the YouTube videos where the commenting function has not been disabled as there are currently no visible regulations about social media usage by the communications staff. Parents can also use the SchoolMessenger app or an online website in addition to calling the school to report absences.

Abbotsford School District (SD34)

The Strategic Plan section of the Abbotsford School District (SD34) website can be reached by clicking on the About Us title in the navigation bar at the top of the home page, as seen in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Screenshot of the SD34 Website (<https://www.abbyschools.ca>)



The [current strategic plan](#) is available only in the HTML format and not linked as a PDF. While it does list goals in four “key pillars”, it does not list any specific objectives that they hope to achieve nor how they will know when an operational activity has been successful. There is [a PDF of their annual update report](#), along with a copy of the report [in video format](#), embedded from their YouTube channel. A previous strategic plan for 2016 to 2020 was discussed when the current strategic plan was presented to the Board for approval at the 16 June 2020 meeting (Godden & Velestuk, 2020, p. 1), but it is not currently linked to the Strategic Plan section of the website.

Even though it is mentioned in some other strategic planning and budgeting documents, it is unclear exactly where on the website one can locate and view the district-wide operational plan. Operational plans for individual schools are easier to find, as they are visible through a search on the district website or linked to the Our School section of the individual school website. The format of presentation has been standardized, but the amount of information provided is under the school administration’s discretion. Some choose to leave the details vague, and others use a template provided by the district which provides details on the implementation activities and the resources needed to achieve the operational plan goals. As with the SD23 annual report, the achievements mentioned and the data provided in the SD34 annual report are not explicitly linked to the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. Instead of having a separate section for

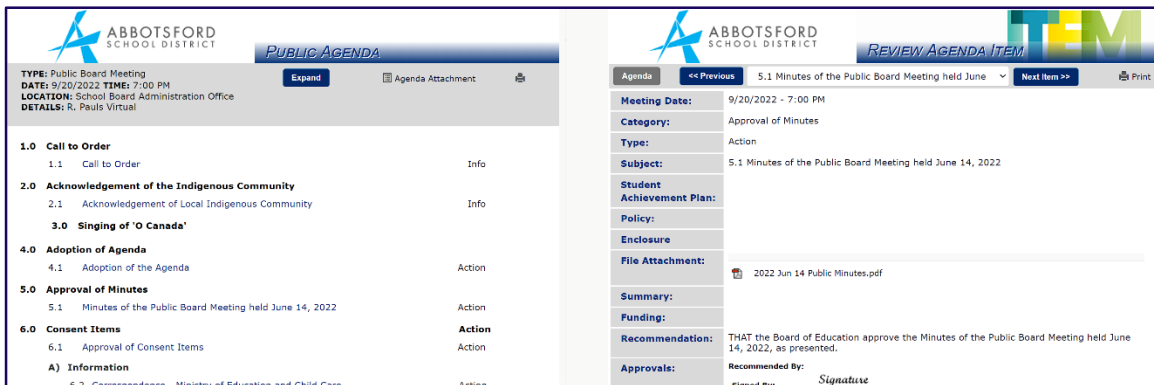
the district’s Accessibility Plan as a webpage linked as a sub-section within the categories of information in the navigation tab, it is currently [linked as an Announcement](#) in the News Hub section.

Like SD23, the Board and three committees (Audit, Finance & Facilities, and Education) meet no more than twice a month. Unlike SD23 and SD62, the meeting agendas and minutes are maintained through an online portal connected to an enterprise system called [ic-BOARD Paperless Meetings](#). The public may attend these meetings in person or by viewing the livestream; some of these meetings have been archived on the district’s YouTube channel, and under the Board policies and administrative procedures, the archive is supposed to maintain the most recent 5 years of meetings. The Abbotsford District PAC (DPAC) also holds their meetings in-person at the district office, and [their meeting minutes](#) are stored on the district website with documents linked as far back as September 2021, but meetings listed as far back as January 2020.

An interesting feature of the ic-BOARD Paperless Meetings system which is slightly different from how eScribe presents HTML versions of agendas is that when the reader clicks on the hyperlink to the Agenda item, such as Item 5.1 in Figure 11, the reader will then go to a separate webpage which contains just the information for that Agenda Item. Clicking on the Agenda button in the upper left corner will return the reader to the full Agenda page for that specific meeting. The difference between this system and the one used by SD23 is that there is one less webpage to open when the Agenda is viewed in HTML format.

Members of the public who wish to ask questions or make comments related to the items on the agenda at Board meetings must attend in person; there is no mechanism by which a member of the livestream audience can ask a question. While the minutes for the DPAC can include an addendum which summarizes the questions that was asked and answered during the public comment/question period, the minutes of the public Board and committee meetings do not. The archive of minutes for the Board and committee meetings goes back to September 2007.

Figure 11: Side-by-side Comparison of the Whole Agenda and an Individual Agenda via the ic-BOARD Paperless Meetings System



Unlike SD62 and SD68, [there are only 21 Board policies](#) and there is no way to perform a search within just the policy documents to determine which policy would govern a specific type of situation about which a new parent, guardian, or caregiver may have questions or concerns. However, each policy document begins with an overview of the policy and the specific regulations follow the general overview. The implication of this is that when a person wants to read a specific policy or regulation, they only need to click the PDF link once instead of clicking on one link for the policy and one for the regulation.

At the same time, there is a section of the website called [Administrative Procedures](#) (AP), which is separate from the Policy section of the website. It appears that these APs for SD34 function in the same role as the Regulations do for SD62. Each AP is rendered in HTML format which can be printed and saved as a PDF. The creation, implementation, and management of these comes under the direction of the Superintendent of Schools, and APs can be turned into policies at the Board's discretion.

Of special note is webpage called [Communicating with Your School](#) which details the preferred steps that parents, guardians, and caregivers can take when they wish to speak to someone about their child's education, along with a PDF brochure as well. The PDF brochure also provides tips which parents, guardians, and caregivers and staff can use to ensure that the communication between the parties remains focused on the child's educational success and growth.

Another useful webpage is in the About Us section called [Equity Framework](#) where it defines what the district means when it speaks about *equity* as well as introducing the lenses and framework by which the district, its staff, and its teachers approach ensuring equity in the daily lives of students. As with SD23, the top of the website features a Google Translate widget which can perform a machine translation of website information from English into one of 12 languages: Arabic, Chinese (Simplified, Traditional), French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Punjabi, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

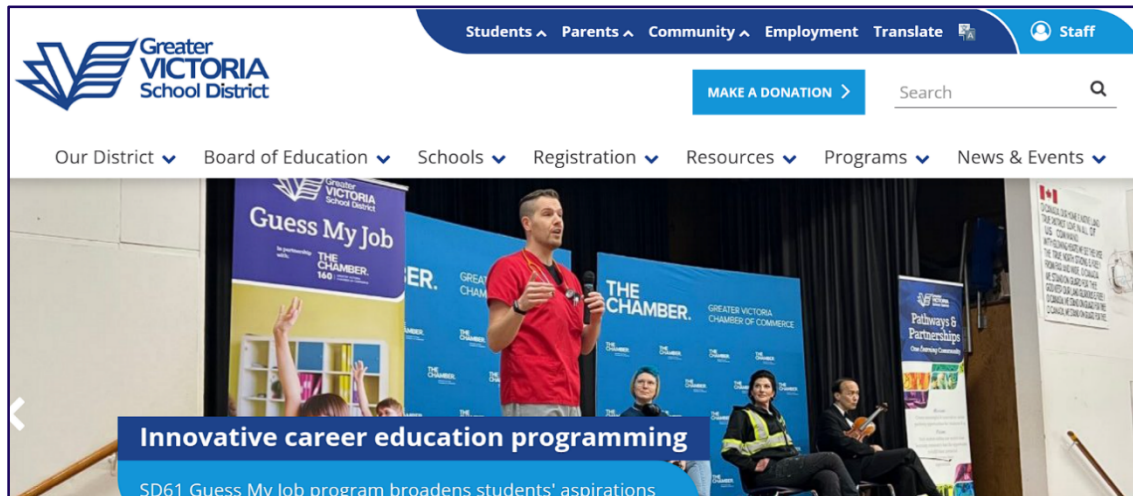
[Community engagement](#) is found under the Public Consultations webpage and it is handled through a separate portal powered by a U.S. company called Granicus. It archives past engagement opportunities so that people can see the list of previous projects on which the district sought community feedback; however, if they would like to the engagement results they might be more likely to find them by performing a search in the Board meeting minutes. Like SD62, one of the public engagement tools SD34 uses is the ThoughtExchange platform; like SD62, there is not a mechanism that explains how to read the automatically generated reports.

Notifications about emergencies are distributed through the Abby Schools app, [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#) as well as the SchoolMessenger app. Linked icons for the latter three social media apps as well as for [LinkedIn](#) and the [YouTube](#) channel are visible at the bottom of every page of the district website. The public can comment on original posts to Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, but the YouTube channel comments sections are disabled by default.

Greater Victoria School District (SD61)

The Greater Victoria School District (SD61)'s section for their current strategic plan is located under the Our District title in the navigation bar in Figure 12, which can be accessed if you hover over with a mouse cursor or click the title.

Figure 12: Screenshot of the SD61 website (<https://www.sd61.bc.ca>)



Unlike SD62, the [combined SD61 strategic plan and operational plan PDF document](#) consists of only one page each; however, it does contain a list of strategies they will employ. There is no information in the two-pager on what sources of evidence they will employ to assess the efficacy of their implementation activities and strategies. The [previous strategic plan that spanned 2015 to 2019](#) consisted of 6 pages which detailed their strategic objectives as well as their strategies, but similarly did not outline how the district planned to assess their strategic plan's success. Other former strategic and operational planning documents are also linked to the [Strategic Plan](#) webpage; unlike SD62, it also features a link to the [strategic communications plan from 2017](#). More information about the successes which have been achieved are found within SD61's [FESL reports](#); however, unlike the SD62 quarterly update and annual reports, there is not an explicit link between the SD61 goals and strategies from the strategic plan and the data provided in their FESL report.

Though they do not currently have a district Accessibility Plan, [there is a webpage](#) about their progress towards drafting it. Located within the Our District category in the navigation bar, in addition to linking their feedback form, the webpage also includes links to the full and plain-language summaries of the *Accessible BC Act* and a form which community members can use to [apply be on the district's accessibility advisory group](#) (until 30 September 2023) to help create the accessibility plan.

Figure 13: Screenshot of SD61's Embedded eScribe Installation



The Board and two standing committees (Education Policy and Directions, Operations Policy and Planning) meet at least once a month during the regular school year and can meet as early as August as recommended by the Superintendent and Secretary-Treasurer. Meeting minutes and agendas are maintained using eScribe, but the implementation is different from how SD23 uses the system in that [it is embedded within the district's webpage](#) instead of being hosted elsewhere. An improvement over SD23's implementation is that presentations can also be viewed on their own, separated from the agenda package as in Figure 13.

The archive of meeting minutes and agendas goes back to September 2011. There is also an [archive of approved motions](#) that goes back to the 2014-

2015 school year, and the district began [livestreaming and archiving](#) their Board meetings on their YouTube channel in April 2020. As of this writing, SD61 has not yet returned to holding in-person Board meetings.

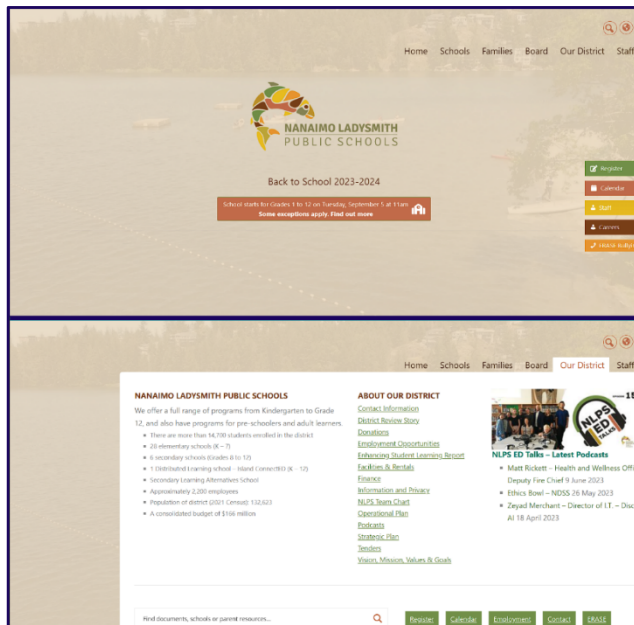
The district maintains a section on their website which details the [social media guidelines](#) for members of the SD61 school community including parents, guardians, and caregivers, and in the linked document, it states that the district's official social media platforms are: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#). There also approved hashtags that can be used by SD61 district staff to communicate with community members. Currently, only the YouTube channel has comments disabled by default.

There is a link to the Google Translate widget at the top of every webpage, and there is a [Glossary of Terms](#) webpage which provides a definition for all the terms in IDEA, save *equity*. The [media release archive](#) goes as far back as February 2013. Like SD62, the [bylaws, policies, and regulations](#) for SD61 are all linked on the same section of the website and are searchable by performing a simple keyword search; unlike SD62, the relevant texts are available in HTML and PDF format.

Nanaimo Ladysmith School District (SD68)

Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District (SD68)'s website is instantly distinct from all the other websites in this jurisdictional scan because the background on the top portion of the website consists of a sepia-toned image and the navigation bar is right-justified rather than being centred. It is also unique in that when you click on a title in the navigation bar, a subsequent menu with additional information opens and remains open, allowing for easier navigation when a reader is trying to decide which link to select, as seen in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Screenshot of Two Menus from the SD68 Website (<https://www.sd68.bc.ca>)



Another thing which makes SD68's website unique is that it includes a text-to-speech (TTS) function when words are selected for highlighting with the mouse cursor on pages other than the home page, including the menu items under each title in the navigation bar. This function has been turned on by default and there is currently no way of turning it off without muting the entire tab on standard browsers. This may have the unintended effect of interfering with the screen reading capabilities for some parents, guardians, and caregivers who regularly use that kind of assistive technology and/or other community members with auditory issues who are not comfortable enough with technology to know how to mute just one tab in their web browser.

Upon clicking the [Strategic Plan](#) link at the top of its webpage, a new tab opens and displays an Adobe InDesign document; the PDF can also be downloaded from the same tab by clicking on the download icon in the bottom right of the window. The InDesign document features interactivity where if links are present, they can be clicked to open the relevant webpages in a new tab; this interactivity is missing from the PDF, which is the opposite of how it appears with SD62's strategic plan. The document does include an infographic which is very helpful when it comes to revealing which level of administration is responsible for specific aspects of the strategic and operational plan. The strategic plan document also clearly outlines what the goals and objectives are; however, there is no information about how the district will assess how well they are performing when it comes to achieving the goals and objectives.

The [district Operational Plan](#) has its own webpage in the Our District section where a PDF is embedded and can be downloaded as well. However, upon performing a keyword search for the words "operational plan" in the Search box in the upper right corner, a different webpage about the district operational plan was found. The text of the URL for the webpage seems to indicate that it was meant to be a landing page for the current operational plan (<https://www.sd68.bc.ca/operational-plan/#>) as does the section which speaks of the goals and provides a drop-down menu which reveals what the district considers the indicators of success to be and whether or not they have been completed, seen on the next page in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Excerpt of Details from SD68’s Operational Plan

GOAL 1

Continuous improvement in Special Needs, Indigenous and overall student population on student achievement

Strategies and Indicators of Success

Click on the plus sign below for more details.

1. Build system capacity with respect to supportive post-pandemic instructional approaches. —

| Strategy

Build system capacity with respect to supportive post-pandemic instructional approaches

| Indicators of Success

- Implementation of the NLPS Reading Assessment as a formative data source to guide instruction will occur for every student in Grades 1 to 9 for September 2021. *complete
- Monitoring and analyzing attendance and registration patterns during the Spring for September 2021 start-up to ensure schools are “flagging”

Other than through SD62’s quarterly district operational plan reports, this is perhaps the clearest indicator of how successful a district has been at making progress towards its strategic plan’s goals and objectives. This kind of clarity is also present on their webpage about the district’s Accessibility Plan, shown as an individual button on every webpage. In addition to [linking to the plan](#) and their feedback form, the same style of fulsome exploration about the types of disabilities and functional limitations is present, with expandable links which include the definitions as text and an audio file as well including best practices when it comes to how to interact with people who have those disabilities, seen as Figure 16.

Figure 16: Excerpt from the SD68 Accessibility Webpage

Types of Disability and Functional Limitations

Visual Disability —

Play Audio

Visual disabilities reduce one’s ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Some have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Impaired vision can restrict a person’s ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a visual disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with visual disabilities:

- Identify yourself when you approach the person and speak directly to them. Speak normally and clearly.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- Unless it is an emergency, only touch the person if you have been given permission.
- If you offer assistance, wait until you receive permission.
- Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times.

The Board and two standing committees (Business and Education) meet at least once a month; committee meetings occur online and the Board meetings are in person and may be conducted online. [Meeting agendas and minutes](#) are maintained through eScribe, using the same implementation as in SD23. The archive of meeting agendas and minutes goes as far back as December 2010. The YouTube archive of livestreamed Board and committee meetings goes as far back as April 2018.

As in SD34, the Administrative Procedures (APs) for SD68 describe how the superintendent creates and implements processes used within the school district to conduct business and provide public education

while Board policies detail the governance of the school district. [Both types of documents](#) can be found in the Board section, each broken down into categories. Within

each category, a search bar is located at the top which does not limit its keyword search results to that specific section of the website but searches the entire website. In that way, keyword searches may return documents which are neither policies nor APs.

It is a little difficult to find press releases within the news archive for SD68, which is only linked to the front page and not linked within one of the categories in the navigation bar (shown previously in Figure 16). Posts made about news items can be found towards the bottom of the front page, just before the website's footer. When the View All News button is clicked, the readers is taken to a page called [Latest News & Information](#) which appears as a grid-style feed of all the posts created for the SD68 website which are tagged with the News category; however, further distinction of the sub-categories is not readily apparent. This lack of sub-categorization within the post feed makes it difficult to determine which post is part of an ongoing series, such the announcement of a public Board or committee meeting or a link to the [weekly news roundup](#) (linked as an Adobe-created website) and which is about current events, such as [this one about a vaccine mandate](#) from January 2022.

Other than email, postal mail, and phone calls, the district can connect with the community on four social media platforms whose icons appear in the footer of the website: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#). Comments are disabled on YouTube, and members of the public comment on and share original posts from the Facebook page. There are currently no restrictions regarding public commentary on Twitter posts, and there is a policy which governs social media usage by students, staff, teachers, and administration.

In addition, the district produces a podcast called "[NPLS ED Talks](#)", likely a play on the lecture and presentation series called "TED Talks", published on the YouTube channel. The first episode aired in November 2018 and it functions as a talk show/interview show where featuring guests such as current and former students, teachers, staff, members of the district and individual school administration, and regional and provincial politicians. There is also a quarterly magazine called [ConnectED](#) which is currently formatted and published similarly to the strategic plan. Archives go back to 2018, when it was published via Flipbook. An implementation of the Google Translate widget is meant to connect to the globe icon next to the Search's magnifying glass icon in the header of the website; however, just as in SD61, it does not appear to function at all.

Comparisons Summarized

The jurisdictional scan of the websites for SD62 and four other school districts in British Columbia as very illuminating regarding what is possible when it comes to effective communication of success of a public-school district's strategic plans and its efforts to ensure that children understand the concepts contained within IDEA. The chart in Table 14 summarizes the key findings from this scan.

Table 14: Summary of Key Findings from Jurisdictional Scan

| B.C. School District | Current Strategic Plan | Linked directly to Strategic Plan Section? | Is there Strategic Plan assessment criteria? | Ease of Finding Specific Policies, Regulations, or Procedures | Is there a website translation widget? |
|----------------------|------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| SD23 | 2021-2026 | No | Not labeled as such | Very easy | Yes |
| SD34 | 2020-2024 | No | Not labeled as such | Somewhat easy | Yes |
| SD61 | 2020-2025 | Yes | Not labeled as such | Very easy | Yes |
| SD62 | 2021-2025 | Yes | Yes | Somewhat easy | No ¹⁰ |
| SD68 | 2019-2023 | Yes | Not labeled as such | Somewhat easy | No |

Even though the student and family populations within SD62 and each of these school districts are different from each other, there are conclusions that can be drawn from how information is presented on the school district websites.

The overarching goals and direction for a school district within the strategic plan must be able to be directly connected to planned operational activities within the district and within each school. When parents, guardians, caregivers, and other people in the school community can look at an operational update report and make a direct correlation between an action taken or performed by district leadership and the intentions of the strategic plan, it becomes more difficult to claim that district leadership is not putting in the effort to help students achieve educational success. Out of all five district websites examined, only SD62 and SD68's documents, reports, and webpages were designed and compiled in a way that could directly correlate the operational plan activities with the overall strategic plan goals.

When a parent, guardian, and/or caregiver for a student needs to find information about the school district's policies, procedures, and regulations, the documents must be easily retrievable by using a simple keyword search. Though this function was present in all the district websites, the documents for SD23 required the fewest number of clicks to

¹⁰ At some point after 20 September 2023, a website translation widget was added to the website for SD62. This table reflects the data which was present during the observation dates.

reach because of how the policy documents themselves are formatted as well as how the Policies page displays all the policies on one page. The addition of a [Glossary](#) document on the Policies page for SD23 is also an advantage that district's website has over SD62. Along the same line of thinking, SD34's [Equity Framework](#) webpage is also highly effective with regards to explaining how the district views the implementation of equity within the school community and especially as a part of engaging students with the B.C. curricular and core competencies, while SD68's webpage on [Accessibility](#) is the most useful for those community members who want to educate themselves on the best practices to use with students who have disabilities.

When an interested parent, guardian, and/or caregiver wants to find out more information about decisions made at a recent Board meeting and/or learn about which issues will be discussed and voted upon in an upcoming Board meeting, the method of retrieving such information should be as pain-free as possible. Out of the five district websites, SD62 is the only one where meeting minutes and agendas are self-hosted rather than managed through an enterprise vendor (either ic-BOARD Paperless Meetings or eScribe). All five districts studied in this jurisdictional scan, however, made it easy to retrieve past minutes and agendas.

With regards to the content of public Board and committee meetings and how they are conducted, it was encouraging to learn that both SD23 and SD34—two school districts which are not much larger than SD62—held two public Q&A sessions within the duration of a public Board meeting between June 2021 and September 2022 whereas SD62 has only one public comment session and it is towards the end of the meeting, long after the Trustees have voted on any motions. At the same time, it was disappointing to learn that the second Q&A session was suspended later in SD23 due to the rise in uncivil discourse around inclusion for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals within the school community in March 2023 (2023, para. 4). It was also encouraging to learn that the other four school districts have published unedited the videos of the Board meeting livestreams; this is another area in which SD62 is lagging the other four districts because any recordings that are made of the livestreams are not in a publicly accessible archive. Finally, out of all the districts studied, only SD23 has a webpage dedicated to explaining meeting protocol.

With regards to the issuance of media releases about district strategic and operational planning and/or changes into how IDEA-related concepts are implemented and/or taught to students within the school district, there was a wide variety of results from all five districts. For example, SD34 created a press release about the Board meeting presentation [on SD34's annual report for 2023](#), but it appeared as if no other school district created a press release around the releases of their annual FESL or other reports. There were also some instances where the objectives of the strategic plan were mentioned indirectly in releases about current events, such as in the news release about the name of a new elementary school in SD62 (2023b, para. 5), SD23 student reactions to a collaboration with an art gallery exhibit (2022, para. 4), or the opening of a centre for families of refugee and immigrant students who seek to place their child in an SD61 school (2022, para. 4).

Interactions with the school districts over social media were typical. For the school districts which allowed unrestricted responses to posts via their official accounts, it did not appear that there were times where comments needed to be removed and the amount of brief interactions such as “liking” or “favouring” posts were consistent with the type of content posted. Though there are examples of posts where negative comments have been allowed to remain, the content of the posts and the tone of the public responses varied, such as an announcement about the public consultation period for the SD34 2023-2024 strategic plan and budget consultation (Munro, 2023) or a condensed training program for educational assistants (Allison-Barrera, 2023).

9.4 Conclusion of Jurisdictional Scan

Based on this jurisdictional scan and analysis of the websites for SD62 and four other public school districts in British Columbia as well as the previous findings reported in Sections 5.0 to 8.0, it can be concluded that in order to satisfy any amount of communication improvements, additional attention must be paid to the functionality of the SD62 website and what it can offer to all members of the SD62 school community. In Part III of this report, I will discuss the themes I have uncovered which proved effective when it came to deciding on the recommendations and the design of the performance measurement plan.

Part III Sections 10-12

Section 10: Thematic Analysis

Section 11: Moving Forward: Options to Consider

Section 12: Conclusions and Future Research Opportunities

“We want all of our students and staff to have positive, enriching experiences within SD62 regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or ability.”

–Amanda Dowhy, Chair of the SD62 Board of Trustees in the strategic plan annual report for 2022-2023

10.0 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Referring to Bryson's conceptual framework of a Western three-act play, we have now reached a plateau in the narrative of the implementation of *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* which has been informed by the themes described in this section. Through discussion and analysis of these themes, we will be able to uncover a solution to the problem of ensuring that students in the SD62 school district are developing skills and gaining competency related to the concepts of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA).

10.1 Summary of Findings

Part II of this report detailed the findings gathered during the data collecting period of my capstone project. They included a preliminary literature review, observations from the public Board and committee meetings of SD62 school leadership and the district PAC meetings, response to survey questions and KSS questions, and a jurisdictional scan of publicly available documents from select school district websites in British Columbia.

Literature Review

Strategic planning for education must be sensitive to emotion-based needs from not just the parents, guardians, and caregivers of the students, but also the teachers, staff, and administration who take care of the day-to-day operations. Educational strategic planners are encouraged to regularly consult with stakeholders within the community who may be able to provide an innovative solution to overcoming the weaknesses and threats identified in a formal strategic planning process; this is supported by other community development concepts such as systems thinking and strategically applying leverage within a system to enact social change. Human rights concepts of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) were defined in an educational context to provide guidance on how these concepts could be introduced to a person beginning from a young age, and an overview of the role parents currently play in the strategic direction of a public school district revealed that parents currently participate in direct action such as feedback surveys and public board and committee meetings and indirect action such as voting in the election of school board trustees.

Meeting Observations

Within the observation period from June 2021 to September 2022, conflicts were observed between individual Trustees in SD62 over how to support two different strategic plan initiatives whose finite financial resources were pulled from the same source of revenue. When a motion regarding sources of financing was defeated, there was no further discussion in the public's eye over how the Board or the district leadership planned to remedy the reasons why individual Trustees could not support motions. In addition, the reliance on the format prescribed by colonialist systems such as *Roberts' Rules of Order* does not allow for alternate methods of consensus-building during public Board and committee meetings held by the district.

However, district leadership in SD62 is very open and willing to make changes to formalized procedures and processes to ensure that they have properly consulted and spoken with representatives from the stakeholder groups within the district. They have acknowledged in part that there is a deeply seated well of hurt and mistrust that exists between the district and the Sooke Teachers' Association (STA), the local branch of the B.C. Teachers' Federation (BCTF). This divide is actively affecting some of the mechanisms by which SD62 can determine if their strategic planning efforts are effective. Similarly, SPEAC (Sooke Parents' Education Advisory Council) makes a conscious effort of including as much detail in their meeting minutes about partner group reports as appropriate and it was revealed through their questions to the partner group representatives that communication efforts surrounding decisions made at the district level were lacking and not as thoroughly considered as they could be.

Survey for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers (Phase 1)

Out of 26 survey participants who are parents, guardians, or caregivers of SD62 students, it was uncovered that some worked in the district as either a teacher or as staff. Many completed some form of post-secondary education, split between achieving the trades/vocational certificates and diplomas and Bachelors/Masters degrees. Most of the respondents were female and about most were in the Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y age cohorts. Almost all the participants were employed either full-time or part-time. However, despite their overall characterization as a group of well-informed, well-situated, and well-educated individuals, the survey participants were largely unaware of the overall goals and the rationale behind creating a strategic plan that has a focus on improving how inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility is experienced by students in a public school district.

Knowledge-Sharing Sessions: Parents, Guardians, Caregivers (Phase 2)

Two women participated in Knowledge-Sharing Sessions (KSS's) for parents, guardians, and the findings which were uncovered were slightly different than from the survey, likely due to the interview format allowing for more time to listen to the participants' responses as well as the participant being able to ask clarifying questions of the interviewer. In the KSS's, the participants revealed that they were engaged with the educational success of their children but were concerned that they were not learning some of the skills they would need when they reached adulthood. They were knowledgeable about the concepts about IDEA which they wished for their children to learn about through the public school system, and they were also aware that the district was actively working to alleviate problems related to inclusion and accessibility. However, both participants also expressed a lack of familiarity with the strategic planning updates and reports provided by SD62.

Knowledge-Sharing Sessions: Trustees and Administrators (Phase 2)

From two Trustees' perspectives, they have felt very confident in the efficacy of the district's operational activities under *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* because the

updates they receive from the district have provided them with information about the activities the district has accomplished. Trustees have used the reports to help inform decisions they make as a Board and to drum up support for the education system in the communities they serve. While the Trustees are aware that it is not their role to dictate the format in which strategic plan assessment takes place, they believe that there could be a stronger amount of evidence that the anticipated outcomes are being achieved.

From the advantage point of the nine district- and school-based administrators, they generally feel the district can achieve the goals and objectives in the strategic plan and complete the tasks they set out for their individual departments in their operational plans. The district has benefitted from the knowledge that some of them hold about practice of strategic planning and the wise practices associated with effective strategic planning activities. Simultaneously, there are still some improvements they feel need to be made in gathering evidence of the achievement of the anticipated outcomes through a district-wide assessment, collaborating with some of the district stakeholders who work the most closely with students on implementing activities aimed at furthering the IDEA-related objectives, and communicating to parents, guardians, and caregivers about actions families can take to improve their students' educational success.

Jurisdictional Scan

To understand what information is available from a British Columbia public school district about their strategic plans, the SD62 website and that of four similarly-sized school districts in British Columbia were examined and compared. Though there were some areas where SD62's website performed favourably, there were many areas where the other school district websites featured innovations and details that were not available or were difficult for the average parent, guardian, and/or caregiver to access and understand.

10.2 Recurring Themes

With these findings and considering the primary and secondary research questions for this project, a few themes have become very clear. First, SD62's focus on ensuring that the children raised within its school district are competent in the areas of IDEA is entirely appropriate considering that it is the fastest growing school district in British Columbia whose demographics are becoming more increasingly diverse. Second, the degree to which the flow of information between parents, guardians, and caregivers; the school-based and district-based administrators; and the Trustees is unequal is actively hampering its strategic planning efforts. Finally, there must be a greater effort from the school district leadership with regards to combatting the ongoing resistance to change within the school district.

The Influence of Changing Demographics

Just as economic conditions and instability spurred strategic change and a move towards multiculturalism in Canada during the 1960s, the current state of the economy

may have influenced similar change in the demographics of families in the municipalities and First Nations territories which comprise SD62.

During their KSS, one of the school-based administrators with more than 15 years of experience working in the district recalled that there were fewer students of visible minorities at their school when they first began than there are today:

[Like] 7 or 8 years ago, we might have had one, you know, Asian-Canadian family in the school and like 2 Black students in the school, like African-Canadians or Afro-Caribbean Canadians. So, that has changed dramatically.... [We]’re very aware I think [as] a school district of how what we do or don’t do can help others have a more equitable access.

Similarly, administrators made note that the increase in student population has resulted in not just a change in how they make decisions and collaborate with their colleagues in other departments, but also in the accommodations which can be provided departments such as the Inclusive Education department. This has even extended to the Trustees’ willingness to find the funds for accessibility accommodations because of how much the 2021-2025 strategic plan has placed an emphasis on ensuring that all students have access to a comprehensive education. Administrators are similarly attempting to embed a strong IDEA-based work culture with their teachers and support staff; however, anecdotes from some of the survey participants and one of the KSS participants reveals that teacher and staff competency is not always consistent or equitable.

At the same time, the two parents who were interviewed expressed concern regarding how students were being taught about IDEA principles and were very supportive of any measures to improve how ELL (English Language Learner) students and their parents received information from the school district. It is also noteworthy that other parents, guardians, and caregivers who were surveyed felt that not enough emphasis was being placed on learning academic skills such as “the three Rs” or life skills such as how to balance a household budget, the latter being a skill that used to be taught in the home by parental units. Considering that almost all the parents surveyed were between the ages of 35 to 54, this represents an interesting cross-section of generational attitudes (Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y) towards multiculturalism, neurodiversity, and gender and sexual diversity and its place in public education.

In short, the findings suggest that even though there may be conflict over the notion of learning about IDEA principles, what the stakeholder group of parents, guardians, and caregivers want for their children and what school district administrators and Trustees want for their students are very much aligned. All the KSS participants indicated that they wished for everyone within the school district community to have some amount of competency regarding IDEA concepts, which Trustees and administrators felt should be embedded at every level of stakeholder group. As suggested by some of the KSS participants and indicated by the websites of other school districts in British Columbia, this could be achieved by the dissemination of a concrete and unified definition of the terms within IDEA and how SD62 seeks to instill competency around these terms within its students, teachers, and staff.

Information Flow Between Stakeholders

The finding that the parents, guardians, and caregivers who were surveyed were not entirely knowledgeable about the contents of the strategic planning documents and ensuing update reports could indicate that there is a lack of interest from that stakeholder group into what the district is doing to help improve IDEA-related educational outcomes for students in the district. However, the findings from the KSS interviews with the two parents would refute that speculation.

While one parent stated that she wanted her child to become more knowledgeable about the First Nations people outside of the SD62 district boundaries, the other parent was open to having her children learn about IDEA, provided that the information was conveyed through knowledgeable experts who would be brought in by the administration rather than efforts by individual teachers, not all of whom might have the same understanding or knowledge about the topics. Regarding other information about their child's performance in school, they both expressed a lack of knowledge regarding whether their children had been assigned homework on a regular basis, with one parent specifying that it was good that she did not often receive emails from the school because communication with the school meant to her that there was a problem. They also stated that they generally felt their oldest children did understand how the concepts in IDEA applied to their lives; this same finding applied to some of the survey participants as well.

The KSS interviews with the Trustees and administrators also revealed some insights into what they have discovered parents, guardians, and caregivers want to know about strategic planning in the district. They largely agreed that parents want to know that there is a plan which is being followed and that any changes to how the district achieves their objectives is being performed in a careful and considerate way. The KSS participants also noted that for them to be able to convey that information to the parental stakeholder group, they wanted to be able to more clearly connect the statistical data which provides evidence that the implementation activities are being conducted correctly to the anticipated outcomes from the strategic plan.

The inclusion of a quantitative assessment that some of the administrators and one of the parents would also wish to return to rather than relying mostly on the qualitative, narrative, and anecdotal evidence which had been touted as an improvement from in the second strategic plan over the first one. As per the observations during the June 2021 Education Committee of the Whole meeting where the strategic plan was approved, couching the assessment of the strategic plan in an accountability framework and rubric was initially seen to be a positive improvement; it was also noted by a Trustee that whether the parents, guardians, and caregivers of students in SD62 could understand how to read and interpret the documents would be the "real litmus test." The resulting finding that not only did some parents, guardians, and caregivers not recall any information about the strategic plan—including participating in the April 2021 stakeholder survey supporting the plan's creation—but they were unaware of the

progress the district has made in achieving its objectives indicates that there needs to be a greater emphasis on promoting strategic plan successes by the school district.

From the Trustees and administrators' perspectives, they have strong opinions on where the district can make improvements regarding the flow of information between parents, guardians, and caregivers and the district. Such improvements include making changes to the order of the agenda for Board and committee meetings by moving the public question and answer period from the end of meetings closer to the beginning, restarting the gathering of digital educational resources that teachers can provide to interested parents, revamping the community engagement tools used by the district, and building stronger relationships with families by encouraging teachers to contact parents when their children have performed well in school. Systemically, it also is evident that the mistrust between the SD62 leadership and the STA (Sooke Teachers' Association) regarding strategic planning and the administration of the FSA (Foundational Skills Assessment) must be bridged for the district to be able to properly track student achievement in objectives related to strategic plan initiatives.

These improvements and others can be combined with the procedures and methods that have already been employed by the Trustees and the administrators to communicate with each other about the progress being made by following the strategic plan. Though the strategic plan quarterly updates and 2021-2022 annual report were not memorable enough for some of the survey and KSS participants who are parents, guardians, and caregivers to recall, they have been highly effective for the Trustees who refer to them as perform their roles as advocates for the district when it comes to receiving necessary funds from the province and/or speaking with members of the public. At the Trustee and administrator level, they are also benefitted by the fact that some of them have prior experiences with creating, implementing, and monitoring strategic plans beyond the experience with creating the first one for SD62. It is the experiences of these people as well as the innovations which can be developed by stakeholder representatives who do not have a pre-conceived notion about strategic planning which could help improve the flow of information to parents, guardians, and caregivers.

Overcoming Resistance to Further Change

Continuing from the previous section, Steps 9 and 10 of Bryson's Strategy Change Cycle include the need to build capacity within the organization to successfully implement and refine the strategic plan process. For SD62, a large part of the effort for the remaining years of their strategic plan will involve continuing to overcome the resistance to change which exists within the school district.

As noted in the literature review and supported by meeting observations and the KSS interviews with administrators, there is a historical resistance from the BCTF (and by extension, the STA) to participating in strategic planning as well as using data from the FSA to provide evidence for educational successes. Many objections against being involved in administrative work such as strategic planning, implementation, and

assessment is that it takes away from the little amount of preparation time teachers have for their daily lessons; many of the arguments regarding the objections to the FSA include the fact that results had been used by a non-governmental thinktank to create a ranking list for schools and school districts which prior provincial governments used to propel legislation which did not favour teachers. Both sets of objectives are perfectly valid, and yet because of the mistrust between SD62 and the STA, the tone of the updates provided at public Board and committee meetings by STA delegation representatives can be interpreted as less than amiable.

Another time where the relationship between stakeholder groups appeared to be strained was observed during budget discussions at public Board meetings and during the standing delegation portion of SPEAC meetings. In both instances, it appeared that the faults occurred because stakeholder communication was either lacking in cohesion and/or consultation was not adequately performed. Furthermore, some of the parents, guardians, and caregivers who participated in the community engagement survey conducted by the district in April 2021 and one parent each from the survey participant and KSS interview participant groups expressed a marked aversion to placing an emphasis on IDEA-related instruction to students, especially regarding SOGI. Though a deeper discussion about this topic is outside the scope for this project, it was clear from the findings that those participants felt that the school district was invalidating their right to introduce information about SOGI to their children that was more in line with their family's values and traditions.

With these reasons for resistance in mind, several courses of action must be undertaken before the district can successfully implement the annual operational plans and move closer to achieving the IDEA-related anticipated outcomes of the overall strategic plan before the plan's expiration at the end of the 2024-2025 school year. These actions may necessarily include "outside-the-box" options and recommendations which—although they may run contrary to the current practices of strategic planners and educational administrators—would be entirely appropriate for the community of SD62 stakeholders at this specific point in time due to the amount of extensive stakeholder consultation.

10.3 Recent Developments

As with any community development research project of a long duration, the options and recommendations that will be presented in Section 11 have been influenced by events which occurred after the end of the data collection periods surrounding the composition of the SD62 Board of Trustees and district administrators.

The first major change occurred in April 2023 when the SD62 Board chair who had been elected as a Trustee in 2014 before the first strategic plan was formulated announced his intention to take a leave of absence from the Board to run for the local MLA seat which had been recently vacated. After the former chair was elected in June 2023, the interim Board chair became the permanent chair and the district quickly called for an election where a new Trustee for the Belmont Zone was sworn into office in September 2023. Simultaneously, the district announced in May 2023 that the current

superintendent of schools who had been hired towards the end of the district's first strategic plan in 2018 would be retiring as of the end of the calendar year and that a current district vice principal would become the new superintendent as of January 2024.

Another new development was the reveal at a city council meeting in May 2023 of the City of Langford's first-ever strategic plan which would hopefully begin in 2023 and end in 2027. At that meeting, a member of the public who was a former SD62 Trustee expressed disappointment that community input was not being sought until late in their strategic planning process, citing the SD62 Board's experience with ushering two strategic plans into fruition where there was an extensive stakeholder consultation process prior to Board approval. A second Trustee added their opinion during the public comment period of the council meeting of 23 October 2023 where several other concerned members of the public likewise expressed frustration with the limited amount of public consultation being performed prior calling for the motion to approve the strategic plan. Consequently, the Langford city council decided to delay the approval of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan due to the need to collate and distribute to council members the numerous responses to the open-ended questions in the engagement survey which had been live for 25 days starting on 21 September 2023.

The result of these new developments and implications for the options which are available for SD62 are:

- There may be an opportunity to enact improvements to strategic planning implementation sooner than the expiration of the strategic plan in June 2025 and the commencement of planning SD62's third strategic plan.
- Once the Langford strategic plan is approved, it would mean that for the first time, all the municipalities within SD62 would have strategic plans in place. This could lead to a future where strategic plans implemented by the district will be supported by municipal strategic planning and vice versa.

The knowledge that these opportunities exist and their implications may help key stakeholders in the district begin to create the foundation for work to be performed which can lead to increased public support for strategic planning in the region.

10.4 Summary of Thematic Analysis

The primary and secondary questions for this research project are focused on understanding how strategic plan objectives are conveyed to the parents, guardians, and caregivers of students attending a Canadian public school district. As discussed in this section and in Section 3.0, the role parents play in a student's education has changed over time and because of the changing demographics in the area, 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 changed over time as well. In addition to letters sent home by teachers and phone calls, parents can communicate with their children's teachers, principals, and vice principals by text

messages and through social media; they can easily reference school policies and learn about recent decisions made by the Board of Trustees by navigating to the school district's website. However, even as the rationale for the district's strategic plan's focus on improving how IDEA is experienced within the district can be easily discovered, the language and how the rhetoric is formed may not be as accessible to a lay audience such as parents, guardians, and caregivers.

Additionally, part of the reason why it can be hard for managers (administrators) to garner full support for a strategic plan has historically been rooted in managerial attempts to implement change without understanding the realities faced by frontline workers (stakeholders such as the STA and parents, guardians, and caregivers). Sometimes this resistance can be based on misconceptions from managers due to inadequate consultation with the workers; other times, it can be based on more personal fears expressed by individual workers that may not be applicable to a majority of the worker population. Acknowledging that blockage and overcoming the resistance then can become an essential component of a successful Bryson-style Strategy Change Cycle.

In the penultimate section of this report—the denouement of the three-act structure in the narrative of SD62's second strategic plan—I will discuss the options which are available to SD62 Trustees and administrators which they can employ to create a more cohesive understanding of the efficacy of the SD62 district in teaching students how to successfully gain competence in understanding how the concepts of IDEA apply to themselves and the world around them.

11.0 MOVING FORWARD: OPTIONS TO RECONSIDER

When the new superintendent of schools begins their term in January 2024, SD62 will be midway through the third year of its four-year strategic plan. If the district is on the same schedule that is printed in the 2023-2024 Operational Plan, the district executive team and district principals will be working on determining what implementation activities will be needed to “make progress on the proficiency rubric towards the strategic plan goals” (SD62, 2023c, p. 6). Based on the thematic analysis provided in this report and the trajectory of the district’s previous Operational Plans which correspond to the IDEA-related strategic plan objectives (Figure 5), I would like to describe the options and make recommendations for the following types of activities which can become a part of the forthcoming SD62 2024-2025 Operational Plan and thus help resolve the primary and secondary questions underpinning this research project.

11.1 Clarity of Communication in Documents and Language

Out of the four IDEA-related strategic plan objectives that have been identified in *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*, two are centred around the development of inclusive and collaborative practices and processes which aim to increase the school district's commitment to serving a diverse school community. In SD62, such practices and processes can be codified in regulations which are often drafted by administrators through consultation with personnel from the relevant departments, key stakeholders, and community partners. Often they are accompanied by policies which state the overall philosophy behind the practices and processes, or sometimes there may be policies which exist that do not also have a corresponding regulations document. These and all the strategic planning documents and update reports are easily accessible from the SD62 website or requested from the superintendent’s executive assistant. They are also the on-record authority regarding how the district operates; therefore, ensuring that these documents are easily understandable by both a subject-matter audience and a layperson audience is essential to the successful implementation of a strategic plan.

Create documents which define the concepts within IDEA for the district

In the literature review and on the websites of two of the other public school districts examined in the jurisdictional scan, definitions for the concepts of *inclusion*, *diversity*, *equity*, *accessibility*, and *competency* have been created to apply to specific educational contexts. However, based on the findings from the survey and KSS participants, uniform definitions have not been provided which speak about how SD62 identifies when members of the school community are not fully comprehending or experiencing IDEA and why it is beneficial to become competent with it.

Building upon the effort in SD62’s Operational Plan 2023-2024 to “provide opportunities for learners to understand, respect, and appreciate diversity and inclusion” (aka Learning Objective 1; 2023d, p. 7), it would make sense that the following year’s Operational Plan would include a document and/or separate part of the SD62 website that provides definitions and examples of how the district will ensure that all students

gain the benefits of becoming competent when navigating issues related to IDEA. Additionally, workshops and professional development opportunities to create a shared understanding of how SD62 experiences and implements IDEA could help by ensuring that members of all the key stakeholder groups in the district have the same level of understanding.

Incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing into organizational practices

The findings from observing the SD62 Board and committee meetings revealed that the way that meetings are currently run can lend an air of confusion around the procedures surrounding voting upon motions. As an example, out of two motions which were introduced at the April 2022 Board meeting which sought to increase mental health supports for children in the district—some of whom are neurodiverse—only one passed; the reason stated was that the defeated motion was not written in a way that would allow the supports to occur. This was the direct result of the application of Robert's Rules of Order, a parliamentary procedure which originated in the United States and has been governing Western board meetings since it was introduced in 1876. However, the findings also suggest that SD62 is open to moving away from formalized parliamentary procedures such as Robert's Rules when those procedures do not allow for fulsome and open discussion in their policy committee meetings. Simultaneously, the district is looking to ensure that the school community is introduced to Indigenous ways of knowing such as teaching students how to say phrases like "Thank you" in the languages of the First Nations which the district acknowledges.

As an improvement to how SD62 runs their Board and committee meetings and part of Growth Objective 1 ("to strengthen organizational practices to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion" 2023d, p. 11), it could help to learn from T'Sou-ke First Nation and Sc'ianew First Nation and Nuu-chah-nulth: Pacheedaht Nation the words and language that they use to describe the concepts that align with basic parliamentary procedures to devise a new parliamentary procedure which is wholly unique and specific to the people who live within SD62. This is work that could begin prior to the release of the third SD62 strategic plan with a discussion with the Na'tsa'maht Education Council and incorporate consultation and feedback from other groups of parents in the district.

Rewrite documents to Grade 12 or lower readability standards

The findings from this report indicate that the initial sets of strategic planning documents were not memorable enough for some of the survey participants and some of the administrators were not able to easily comprehend how the assessment of objective completion presented in the quarterly update reports correlated to evidence-based reasoning. The district has made a lot of progress towards sophistication in document readability as proven by the formatting and clarity of the Year 2 strategic plan annual report versus the Year 1 strategic plan annual report; however, there is always more improvements that can be made.

The use of plain language summaries preceding the legalese within end-user license agreements and/or privacy policies for online services that can be accessed by children aged 13 years or older has been a common standard; it stands to reason that similar types of language and summaries could be included in policy, regulation, and strategic planning documents. Though it was not previously identified as a strategic plan objective which is related to the concepts within IDEA, the activities SD62 has undertaken to further Engagement Objective 3 (“to develop, expand, and implement respectful, effective, clear, and transparent communications” 2023d, p. 10) are connected to the efforts to ensure that communication between the district and key stakeholders remains equitable in that anyone who is a student of the public education system in SD62 will be able to understand how to rear their own children within it. Additionally, this is work that could be performed by stakeholder groups such as the District Student Council—already currently included as representatives to the SPSG—as a way of ensuring that the students of SD62 can understand and comprehend the policies and regulations which govern their schools.

11.2 Improving Community Engagement with Parental Groups

Improving engagement with parental groups was mentioned by both administrators and parents, guardians, and caregivers in their KSS’s as being a priority for them. Based on the findings from this project, here are some options that the district could consider regarding improving community engagement with parents, guardians, and caregivers.

Create opportunities for open engagement with SD62 Trustees and administrators

Trustees have the responsibility of advocating for public education with their constituents and have found success in using information from the strategic plan update reports to speak with parents, guardians, caregivers, and members of the community. Administrators are responsible for the creation and implementation of the annual operational plans. Yet, it was found that there are some parents, guardians, and caregivers who have not had contact with the Trustee for their zone either individually or through participation in Board and committee meetings.

As part of Engagement Objective 3, one strategic activity could be the creation of opportunities for regular in-person and online town hall style meetings where Trustees and administrators could both update parents, guardians, and caregivers of the strategic plan and operational plan efforts which are being implemented and hear feedback from them regarding the strategic plan initiatives to date. These could also be facilitated by community and family service organizations who serve specific types of student populations (such as those with diverse educational needs or students of colour) within the community who can directly assist parents and children with finding and acquiring the resources they need.

Meet with Indigenous Families in their communities

A major area for improvement in SD62 surrounds engagement with Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) parents, guardians, and caregivers to support improved rates

of graduation for Indigenous students. A key component to the 2020-2021 operational plan involved renewing the Na'tsa'maht Enhancement Agreement (NEA) for 2022-2027 with the three First Nations whose traditional lands are wholly within the SD62 district boundaries and with Métis Nation of Greater Victoria. The agreement renewal was a major achievement for the district and during the last Board meeting of the 2020-2021 school year, a chief from one of the First Nations spoke at the beginning of the meeting saying that the relationship between the First Nations and Métis and the school district has been steadily improving. However, as per the most recent annual report on the NEA, the 6-year graduation rate for Indigenous students was 75% versus the rate of 93% for non-Indigenous students during the 2021-2022 school year (SD62, 2023a, p. 6). Additional movement has also not been made with regards to some of the other objectives from the NEA, all of which will support all four of the IDEA-related strategic plan objectives.

Coupled with the optional operational activity mentioned in the previous sub-section, in addition to the regular meetings held by the Na'tsa'maht Education Council (NEC), there should also be regular opportunities for SD62 Trustees and the administrators of the schools located closest to T'Sou-ke First Nation and Sc'ianew First Nation and Nuuchahnulth: Pacheedaht Nation to meet on the traditional territories with Indigenous parents, guardians, and caregivers in a town hall-style meeting, speak with them directly about the progress in achieving NEA objectives, and learn from them what they would need to support their children's educational success. The reason why this option is listed separately from the previous one is that such visits by the Trustees and administrators are a natural follow-up in the course of implementing the NEA as part of Engagement Objective 1 ("to develop, expand, and implement inclusive and collaborative practices and processes" 2021I, p. 3). This type of engagement activity could also strengthen the ties the Trustees and administrators have with the three First Nations and thus more tightly align the goals, objectives, and the progress of the NEA initiatives with the overall strategic plan.

Publish written and video tutorials on how to utilize community engagement tools

Though not tied to one of the IDEA-related strategic plan objectives, the creation of a strategic communications plan was a major component of the 2022-2023 Operational Plan; it is clear from the KSS conversation with the four district administrators that improving engagement with the community is a high priority. ThoughtExchange is a community engagement tool which had been previously used by the district to conduct the strategic plan consultation survey in April 2021 and other public engagement issues such as gathering feedback on the transportation plan and the annual budget. More recently, surveys were conducted using a different and undefined format and platform (SD62, 2023e, p. 69). In addition, SD62 contracted with Bakau Consulting to conduct a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Audit and it is unclear from the annual report what platform the consulting firm used to conduct its audit.

Regardless of the engagement platform being used and despite there the presence of a section of the SD62 website dedicated to informing the public about public engagement

opportunities, at no time were there instructions on how to interact with the engagement tool or how to read the reports generated from the platform that were included in meeting agenda packages. Providing visual or written tutorials on how to successfully engage with the Board and administrators that uses wise practices to remain accessible to parents, guardians, and caregivers could help the district raise the level of engagement with parental groups and provide an additional avenue for beneficial feedback that could support the district in making operational planning and strategic planning decisions.

11.3 Transparency in District Operations

Responses to the survey for parents, guardians, and caregivers and the KSS interviews with the Trustees and administrators revealed that they are aware that parents want to be assured that any strategic planning initiatives that are introduced will result in real, actual improvements and not just make-work that will enhance a consultant's pocketbook or an administrator's resume. One way to achieve this could be through these types of operational activities that are aimed at enhancing the district's efforts to provide transparency.

Establish an online archive of livestreamed public Board and committee meetings

One of the arenas through which communication about the district's strategic planning efforts flows is the public Board and committee meetings. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings were held in person at the district offices in Langford; during the lockdown the district moved towards broadcasting their meetings online and allowing the Trustees, members of the standing delegations, and presenters to participate via MS Teams. In January 2022, the district returned to requiring in-person participation from Trustees but allowed members of standing delegations to be present virtually with prior notice. This change to the policy was made with the intention of "support[ing] our objectives of transparency and inclusivity in our strategic plan" (SD62, 2023g, pp. 2–3). However, unlike the four other school districts examined in the jurisdictional scan, none of the archived livestreams are easily viewable by the public. Given that official meeting minutes do not have a record of the arguments for and against motions that are being deliberated, this can result in an obfuscation of intentions rather than the type of transparency for which the district is striving.

As of the 2022-2023 Operational Plan, the district transformed the Information Technology department into the Digital Solutions department (2022f, p. 4). In the 2023-2024 Operational Plan, the SD62 hopes to "develop a digital governance policy that...articulates the structures and processes necessary to maintain digital assets" (2023d, p. 12). A natural progression from these first two operational objectives in service of Engagement Objective 3 would be to undertake an examination of the software solutions available to public school districts for public Board and committee meeting administration with the goal of determining 1) if the district can continue to self-host their archived meeting documents and videos and 2) how to best make such

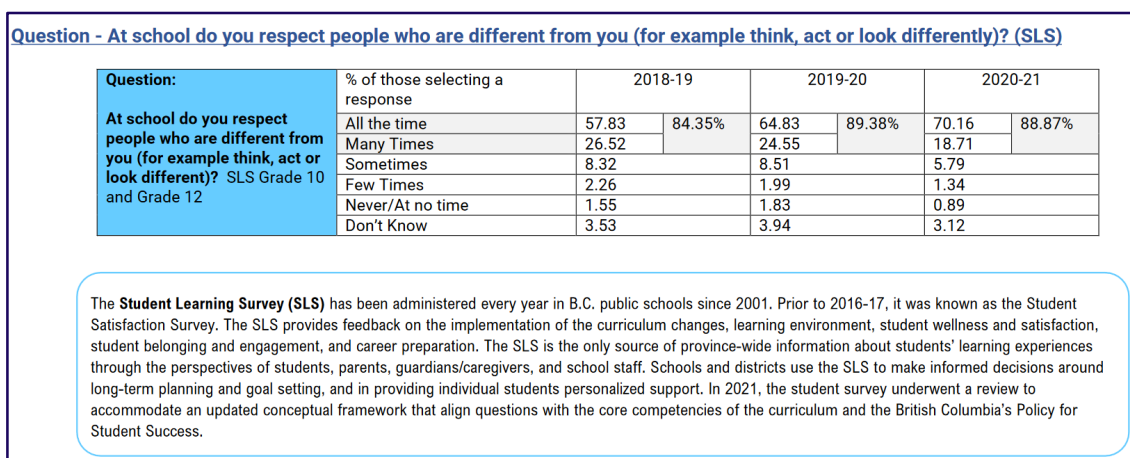
an archive readily available to the public without encountering any risks that are beyond what is possible under the District Risk Management plan.

Train stakeholders on interpreting strategic planning documents

During the KSS interviews with Trustees and administrators, it was clear that prior experience with the strategic planning process—whether it was through being involved in the prior strategic plan’s formulation or in previous professional experiences—was a great benefit when it came to understanding how to remedy problems which may have arisen from the attempt to move towards a more narrative-style of assessment. One administrator even acknowledged that no one at their level had ever received training on how to perform tasks such as implementation or reassessment of strategic plan priorities because it was not part of the stacks of knowledge they had acquired. However, only one or two people from each stakeholder group were eligible to be a part of the SPSG because including more representatives would create too large of a group to work together effectively and efficiently.

A way to combat the inexperience with strategic planning could be to provide a suite of tools that could be used to train stakeholders on how to read and interpret strategic planning documents. This could include such activities as adding a glossary of terms as an Appendix, continuing to create call-out boxes to remind readers of important background information as in Figure 17, and/or providing visual or written instructions on how to interpret strategic planning documents.

Figure 17: Example of Call-Out Box from an SD62 Annual Report. Adapted from SD62, 2021, p. 14.



11.4 Conveying Values of District-Parent Engagement

Though the sampling size was very small, a quarter of the survey participants noted that one of the ways they prefer to hear about policies, regulations, and procedures which are new or have been updated because of strategic plan initiatives is through one-to-

one communication with their student’s teacher, principal, or vice principal. This is supported within the district as described on a page of the SD62 website in the Parents & Students section called Resolving Concerns. This page details the proper escalation process which can be used if an issue that has arisen between a student’s family and a staff member or the student’s teacher is not able to be resolved at the level of the person involved. However, as evidenced through the observations from some of the SPEAC meetings and some of the KSS responses from individual school administrators, it can sometimes be very difficult to determine the level of a parent’s engagement during the interactive portion of SPEAC meetings, after webinars about how to support a child’s educational success in the home, and/or between the low attendance at parent-teacher conference evenings versus events like school dances.

While keeping in mind that the amount of time that teachers have for preparing lesson plans and doing other administrative/ clerical work either before or after a full day of teaching students is limited, an organizational practice that the district could work on implementing in the forthcoming strategic plan could be a more systematic method for learning how frequently parents would prefer to hear from their students’ teachers and the preferred methods of contact. In addition to facilitating the kinds of communication interactions parents, guardians, and caregivers would be more likely to respond to, this could have the added benefit of creating a more positive interaction between teachers and district administration through the successful completion of a shared strategic planning project.

11.5 Sequence of Recommended Options for SD62

The most recent timeline of events for the creation of an SD62 operational plan was set forth in the 2023-2024 operational plan. The timeline for the remainder of the current school year can be seen in Table 15.

Table 15: Milestone Events in the Creation of SD62 Operational Plan (2024-2025) and Year 3 Annual Report. Adapted from SD62, 2023d, p. 6.

| | | |
|---|----------------------|---|
| Meetings with District Executive and SD62 Leadership team to discuss 2024-2025 operational plan opportunities | January 2024 | Creation of 2024-2025 Budget Principles and Assertions, Plans, Timelines |
| Operational plan draft sent to Resources committee for information/review | February 2024 | Amendments (if applicable) to 2023-2024 Budget sent to Board for approval |
| Presentation(s) to Resources committee; operational plan activities adjusted as necessary | March 2024 | Community engagement on 2024-2025 budget priorities |
| | April 2024 | |
| | May 2024 | Presentation of near-final 2024- |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| | | 2025 budget to Board for approval |
| Presentation of the 2024-2025 Operational Plan to Board for information | June 2024 | |
| Individual projects begin planning; key metrics defined by Executive Lead | July 2024 | |
| | August 2024 | |
| Presentation of 2023-2024 Strategic Plan Annual Report (includes Operational Report update) | September 2024 | Prepare adjustments to be made to 2024-2025 budget based on final enrolment |

Based on the previous years’ operational plans, the following implementation activities can be recommended to become part of the 2024-2025 operational plan:

- 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
- Choice of one or two of the following:
 - Creating and publishing written/video tutorials on how to use community engagement tools
 - Rewriting strategic planning and policy/procedures/regulations documents to Grade 12 or lower readability standards
 - Training stakeholders on how to read/interpret strategic planning documents

These activities are recommended because they are time-limited activities which can be completed within a single quarter by one or two members of the administrative staff and/or members of the individual school support staff and/or teachers who are seeking to cross-train. If funding becomes available, any of these implementation activities could also become a project for one or more post-secondary students who are studying public administration, community development, and/or education as part of a co-op position with the district.

Introduction of these recommended implementation activities would normally occur beginning in October; however, due to the amount of time needed to complete this project and report, meetings would need to be held with the SD62 manager of strategic operations and representatives of the District Executive Team during the first two weeks in January 2024. If approved, presentations would then be made at the public EPC and SPEAC meetings later in the same month to encourage the Trustees’ support for these

types of implementation activities and encourage them to consider finding funding for them (if applicable) in the 2024-2025 budget.

February 2024 would likely see a presentation made at the Resources committee meeting with a focus on securing funding for the implementation activities. For the activities which seek to help improve communication with Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) families about strategic planning around IDEA, a presentation would need to be made to the NEC and/or to the education coordinators and families of SD62 students during community lunches on the traditional territories as well as to representatives of the Indigenous community and family services organizations which serve urban Indigenous families in the district. These and other presentations and meetings would continue until June 2024 when the operational plan for the coming school year is presented to the Board for information purposes.

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

Following the timeline outlined in Section 2.4 as Table 4, exploration of the implementation of these activities should begin in November or December 2024, just prior to the formation of the new SPSG which will shepherd the new strategic plan into creation. The similar schedule of activities for the SPSG and the resulting anticipated outcomes would necessarily follow, with some additional time provided to ensure equitable consultation with the NEC and Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) families in the district.

12.0 CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Since the 1950s, Canadian public school districts have found themselves on the front lines when it comes to helping parents, guardians, and caregivers provide children with the information they need to become a part of a society that values the benefits of a diverse population. A part of the mandate for the BCMEC is to ensure that every child can feel like they are included in their school community regardless of their social identities, they are provided with the resources they need to succeed at achieving their competencies, and if their families are unable to acquire resources for their children's education on their own, they will be able to easily access them.

Through a literature review, public meeting observations, an online survey, knowledge-sharing sessions (KSS's), a jurisdictional scan of other similar school districts, and a thematic analysis, the goal of this capstone research project was to determine how parents, guardians, and caregivers of children attending the schools in Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) can be assured that not only will their children learn about IDEA but that every person within the school district will be aware of and become competent regarding issues that may occur regarding IDEA or the lack thereof. The findings suggest that in the final school year of the 2021-2025 strategic plan, there should be some operational emphasis placed on more straight-forward communication between parents, guardians, and caregivers and district leadership with a more systems-thinking approach to resolving any lingering miscommunication issues prior to the next strategic planning cycle.

Due to the limitations of this project, there are additional avenues which could be explored with further research. The sampling sizes for both the survey and the KSS's with parents were too limited to be able to make comprehensive recommendations while a lack of funding made it difficult to recruit parents whose primary language is not English. It would also be valuable to discover what operational plan recommendations could be made for other school districts in British Columbia whose district demographics may be substantially different from SD62. Finally, there is also research which can be performed within independent school districts in Canada as well as comparisons to how other countries approach the same types of community development work around IDEA.

In the 21st century, Canada has committed itself to ensuring that everyone who lives within its borders can feel connected to each other, regardless of whether they were born in the country, immigrated as a child, or immigrated as an adult. Recognizing and encouraging this important community development work that is being performed in public schools is essential to the achievement of this goal. It is my hope that the findings and resultant reforms which may arise from this project will somehow aid in this effort for decades to come.

APPENDIX A: CERTIFICATES OF APPROVAL



Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board
 Michael Williams Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada
 T 250-472-4545 | F 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

Certificate of Approval

| | |
|--|--|
| PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Evert Lindquist (Supervisor) | ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER 22-0136 |
| PRINCIPAL APPLICANT: Trisha Renken-Sebastian Master's student | Expedited review - delegated |
| UVIC DEPARTMENT: Public Administration PADM | ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 16-Dec-2022 |
| | APPROVED ON: 16-Dec-2022 |
| | APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 15-Dec-2023 |

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

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: **None**

DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: **None**

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:

- 2021-02-12 TCPS2 Core Certificate.pdf - 09-Mar-2022
- 2022-02-15 SD62 Conditional Letter of Approval.pdf - 09-Mar-2022
- 1_First Nations and Community Groups Introductory Letters Combined.pdf - 16-Jun-2022
- 2_Executive Summary for First Nations NIEAC Members.pdf - 16-Jun-2022
- 2022-05-20 CIRCLE Conference.pdf - 16-Jun-2022
- Email Package of Engagement Efforts.pdf - 15-Aug-2022
- 2022-08-25 Executive Summary-Community Groups.pdf - 27-Aug-2022
- 2022-09-06 Survey Pre-Test Invite_Social Media Posts.pdf - 13-Oct-2022
- Chronological Compilation of Indigenous and Metis Services Groups Feedback.pdf - 22-Nov-2022
- Draft 1_Presentation Request_SD62 with Final Design.pdf - 22-Nov-2022
- Draft 1_e-Newsletter Request_NIEAC with Final Design.pdf - 22-Nov-2022
- Draft 1_e-Newsletter Request_SPEAC-PACs with Final Design.pdf - 22-Nov-2022
- Draft 1_e-Newsletter Request_Generic with Final Design.pdf - 22-Nov-2022
- 2022-11-27 Figure 1_CapstoneProjectTimelineAndMilestones.pdf - 27-Nov-2022
- Chronological Compilation of Community Service Groups Outreach.pdf - 29-Nov-2022
- 2022-12-09 KSS Recruitment Form.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 1 Survey_Recruitment Letter Final.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 2 KSS Recruitment Letter Final.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 3 KSS Recruitment Letter Final.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 1 KSS Recruitment Letter Final.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- 2022-12-09 Project Website Home Page Draft.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 1 Recruitment Flyer with Final Design.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 1_Knowledge-Sharing Session Script.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 2_Knowledge-Sharing Session Script.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 3_Knowledge-Sharing Session Script.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Draft 14-5_Survey.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- 2022-12-08 Survey Incentive Drawing Form.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 1 Informed Consent for Survey Final.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 2 Informed Consent for KSS Final.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 3 Informed Consent for KSS Final.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- Group 1 Informed Consent for KSS Final.pdf - 09-Dec-2022
- 2022-10-20 Group 1 KSS Scheduling Email Draft.pdf - 09-Dec-2022

Conditions of approval

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.

Amendments

To make changes to the approved research procedure in your study, please submit "Amendments" or "Annual renewal with amendments" form. You must receive research ethics approval before proceeding with your amended protocol.

Renewals

Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

Project Closures

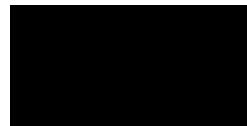
When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria's policies for research involving human participants.



Dr. Sandra Gibbons
Chair, Human Research Ethics Board



Dr. Matthew Murphy
Vice-chair, Human Research Ethics Board

Certificate Issued On: 16-Dec-2022



January 11, 2023

Ms. Trisha Renken-Sebastian
Graduate Student
School of Public Administration
University of Victoria
tlrenkensebastian@uvic.ca

Dear Trisha:

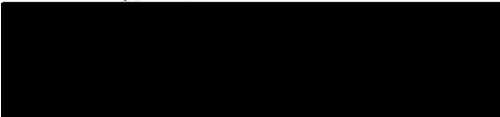
Re: Approval to Conduct Your Research Project

Please accept this letter as approval to conduct your research project entitled "Speaking Across Barriers: How Parents in a Canadian Public School System Learn About Their Children's Diversity Education" in our school district.

Please note, it will be your responsibility to contact the project participants directly. School administration and/or School Board Office staff will not be able to circulate your research request to staff members, Trustees or parents/guardians. The approval for research projects is done by the Superintendent and, therefore, it's not necessary to present to the Board or committee when commencing research. Once completed, it would be appreciated if you could give me a copy of your report.

Best wishes for a successful project.

Sincerely,


Scott Stinson
Superintendent of Schools/CEO



**University
of Victoria**
Public
Administration

Participant Survey for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers of Students Enrolled in a School within the Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) Catchment Area

1. Letter of Informed Consent for Phase 1

My name is Trisha L. Renken-Sebastian and I'm a third-year grad student at the University of Victoria (UVic). As a recent permanent resident who is living and studying on lands which were the traditional territories 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, British Columbia while I begin my career as a community developer in Canada.

This survey is in support of my research project titled *Speaking Across Barriers: How Parents in a Canadian Public School System Learn About Their Children's Diversity Education* (UVic Human Research Ethics Board [HREB] Application #22-0136), in support of my attainment of a Master's degree in Community Development.

The principal supervisor is [**Dr. Evert Lindquist**](#) of UVic's School of Public Administration, my co-supervisor is [**Dr. Sarah Marie Wiebe**](#), 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 Sooke Schools District 62 (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 in raising children within the province.

Informed Consent Letter for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers (Survey)

Research Purpose and Goals

Through conducting this research, my 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.

Research Importance

In Canada, education is a public good through which a provincial government can care for its people. For residents in British Columbia, part of this care is evidenced through how students learn how to interact with people in their community who may not share their social qualities such as ethnicity, gender or sexuality, chronic medical or mental health conditions, and/or type of neurodiversity. As such, the monitoring of the progress made regarding the encouragement of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) principles in B.C. public school districts is a pressing concern.

One of the tools which school districts use to ensure that they are continuing to provide education that is inclusive of, diverse, equitable, and accessible to all the different kinds of learners in a district is a multi-year strategic plan. However, a strategic plan can only be effective if everyone who is a district stakeholder understands and fully supports the strategic plan's objectives. With the information gathered from this Survey, I hope to learn about what social identities are present within SD62 families, their general knowledge about strategic planning and about IDEA principles, and their preferred methods of communication regarding progress on the district's strategic plan objectives around IDEA principles.

Participation

Parents, guardians, and caregivers provide care for students within a Canadian public school district and are responsible for ensuring that students develop the skills and competencies that they need to survive after they've reached adulthood. In addition, they can support educational efforts by encouraging students in their success during the hours they are not spending in instructional time during the day.

You are eligible to participate in this research if you:

- Are at least 18 years of age, and
- Are the parent, guardian, or caregiver of a student who either attended an SD62 school in the 2021-2022 school year or whose child is currently attending an SD62 school in the 2022-2023 school year, and
- Possess the ability to speak with confidence about your experiences as a parent/guardian 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.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. If you do not have a computer of your own and/or a stable Internet connection, you can request that a survey be sent to your mailing address along with a postage-paid, return-addressed envelope by leaving a voicemail or sending a text message with your full name, phone number where you can be reached between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm, and mailing address to principal researcher Trisha L. Renken-Sebastian at +1 (236) 314-3444. Voicemails and text messages will be responded to within 2 to 3 business days.

Please be advised that the Survey for this phase of the research project and method for gathering contact information for the incentive drawing will be conducted through an online program called Survey Monkey that has been licensed to the University of Victoria where the implementation has been created to UVic's specification; this is known as an instance. Under the terms of the licensed instance, all information collected by the Survey will be stored on Canadian servers until removed during the closure of this phase of the research project. If you are concerned about this, you may also request that both a paper copy of the Survey and the Incentive Drawing form be sent to your mailing address along with a postage-paid, return-addressed envelope using the method listed in the paragraph above.

Data Collection

This study includes two (2) data-collection phases for parents, guardians, and caregivers. This letter of Informed Consent covers Phase 1, the Survey.

The Survey is a questionnaire which can take between 10 minutes and 30 minutes to complete. At the end of the Survey, participants can opt into a drawing to win ***one of two (2) gift certificates worth \$45.00 each*** to the retail outlet of their choice as means of compensating participants for any inconvenience related to their participation.

Please be advised that if you choose to participate in the incentive drawing, identifying information about you (your name, residential address, email address, and/or phone number) will be gathered using a UVic-licensed instance of SurveyMonkey under the authority of the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, RSBC 1996, c 165](#) ("FIPPA"). This personal information will only be used to contact you if your name has been drawn to receive one of the two incentive gift certificates. If you wish to participate in the incentive drawing but do not wish for your identifying information to be collected in this way, please contact the principal researcher (Renken-Sebastian) using the method listed in the previous section to receive both a paper copy of the Survey and the incentive drawing form to complete and return. Questions about the collection of this information may be directed to principal researcher Trisha L. Renken-Sebastian (tlrenkensebastian@uvic.ca) or the UVic HREB Office at ethics@uvic.ca.

Potential Benefit to Families 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 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 Families in SD62

SD62 parents, guardians, and caregivers will be asked about their understanding of the IDEA concepts and of the specific objectives in the strategic plan concepts which are directly related to them. They will also be asked whether they feel education about IDEA concepts should take place within the public education system and their perception of how strategic plan objectives are being realized in their children's school. Parents, guardians, and caregivers will be asked about their perspective on how well the district shares information about their strategic planning progress and to provide information about social identities with which they or their children identify that can be considered a minority population within the SD62 community.

For some participants these topics can be divisive and may result in feelings of vulnerability and hurt. To reduce this risk of harm, all participation by SD62 stakeholders will be anonymized and all information will be kept confidential between the participant and the principal researcher (Renken-Sebastian). Participants will also be informed that they can withdraw their consent for participation at any time after completing the Survey without fear of reprisal. Further information regarding harm mitigation will be provided later in this informed consent letter which will also be publicly available to read on [the research project's website](#).

Researcher's Relationship with Participants

There is no relationship between members of the research team and any of the parents, guardians, and caregivers of SD62 students beyond that of acquaintances and none of the school-aged children who are related to them attend an SD62 school.

Providing Your Informed and Ongoing Consent

The study details listed in this first page of this Survey are also provided in the research project's website, located here: <https://renken-sebastian.ca/speaking-across-barriers-2022>. By completing and submitting this questionnaire, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this stud. You are also indicating that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Withdrawal of Participation

If at any time after a participant has received their incentive gift certificate they decide to withdraw during or after data collection, they will be able to keep the incentive as a token of appreciation. No additional incentives or compensation will be given after all the data collection phases are over.

If at any time before the closing phase of this research project you decide that you no longer wish for the information you provided to be a part of this research project, please contact principal researcher Trisha L. Renken-Sebastian by email at tlrenkensebastian@uvic.ca or by phone at +1 (236) 314-3444 so that I can close out your participation and remove your responses from the data set and final project deliverables. You may continue to keep any incentives you have received.

Privacy, Anonymity, and Confidentiality

During the Survey phase of data-collecting activities, great care will be undertaken to preserve and respect the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of Survey participants. All data which identifies a participant in this phase will be kept separate from the rest of the Survey data and will only be utilized to contact participants whose name has been drawn as a winner of one of the two \$45.00 gift certificates. If a response from a survey participant is significant enough to be quoted in part or in whole in the project results, all identifying information will be removed from the quotation and the participant will be identified by pseudonym (Survey Participant 1, Survey Participant 2, etc.).

All research data will be removed from the UVic-licensed instance of SurveyMonkey upon the formalized closing of Survey phase of data collection. Data which has been collected via a paper-copy of the online Survey will be transferred to an electronic spreadsheet which will be stored on Canadian servers; the paper copies will then be destroyed.

Presentation of Research Results

The results of this study will be shared in the following ways that include but are not limited to:

- Master's project defense and the research project website
- UVicSpace, the repository for the scholarly works for UVic students
- Co-presentations with members from SPEAC, NIEAC, and/or other family and community services entities within the SD62 community who have been consulted during the exploratory phase of this research project
- Conference oral and poster presentations
- Press-releases and social media
- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Open-access journal articles

Data Storage and Data Disposal

Data which has been collected from the submission of this Survey will be used for coding and analysis purposes by the principal researcher (Renken-Sebastian). This data will have identifying information removed from the dataset and will be stored electronically on servers controlled by the University of Victoria. All data from this research project will be backed up to an external hard drive once a week which will be stored in a location that is accessible only to Renken-Sebastian.

This online Survey is being conducted through a UVic-licensed instance of SurveyMonkey, and all research data will be removed from SurveyMonkey seven (7) business days from the closing of the Survey. Data which has been collected via a paper-copy of the online Survey will be transferred to an electronic spreadsheet that is stored on servers controlled by UVic; the paper copies will then be destroyed. The electronic spreadsheet will be used to make charts, tables, and otherwise organize the information in a way which will make it easy to understand by the average parent, guardian, and caregiver.

All of the data which is stored electronically will be irrevocably deleted from both the University of Victoria servers and the principal researcher's external hard drive up to twelve (12) months from the date of project completion.

Further Study Updates and Research Opportunities

Every parent, guardian, and caregiver of SD62 students can choose to receive email updates about the development of the study and information about opportunities to participate in the Interview or Knowledge-Sharing Session (Focus Group) phase of data collection taking place in the upcoming months. If you would like to be placed on a mailing list to receive updates in the form of e-Newsletters and/or wish to participate in a Knowledge-Sharing Session, please fill out this recruitment form which is located on a UVic-licensed instance of SurveyMonkey: <https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/SAB2022-Phase2SignUp>

Identifying information about you from the recruitment form (your full name, residential postal code, email address, and/or phone number) will be gathered under the authority of the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, RSBC 1996, c 165](#) ("FIPPA"). This personal information will only be used to contact you if you opt-in to receiving research project updates by email and/or for further research opportunities. If you wish to participate in Phase 2 of this research project and/or e-Newsletter updates but do not want to use the form on SurveyMonkey, please contact principal researcher (Renken-Sebastian) using the contact information below.

Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions about participation or concerns about how this research is being conducted, you may contact members of the supervisory team using the information below:

| Name and Role | Department | Email | Phone |
|--|--|--|-------------------|
| Dr. Evert Lindquist, Supervisor | University of Victoria, School of Public Administration | evert@uvic.ca | +1 (250) 721-8416 |
| Dr. Sarah Marie Wiebe, Co-Supervisor | University of Victoria, School of Public Administration | swiebe@uvic.ca | +1 (250) 721-8068 |
| Dr. Lyndze Harvey, Second Reader | University of Victoria, Faculty of Education (Curriculum & Instruction) | lcharvey@uvic.ca | +1 (778) 678-1183 |
| Trisha L. Renken-Sebastian, Principal Researcher | School of Public Administration, Master's of Community Development candidate | tlrenkensebastian@uvic.ca trishalynn@renken-sebastian.ca | +1 (236) 314-3444 |

You may also contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria by phone at +1 (250) 472-4545 or by email at ethics@uvic.ca.

By completing and submitting the Survey, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.



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Participant Survey for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers of Students Enrolled in a School within the Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) Catchment Area

2. Qualifying Information

This survey is being administered to parents, guardians, and caregivers of students who attended an SD62 school in the 2021-2022 school year or are attending an SD62 school in the 2022-2023 school year. The full list of SD62 schools is located here: <https://www.sd62.bc.ca/schools>

If there is more than one parent, guardian, or caregiver in your household who would also like to provide their perspective, please have each parent/guardian/caregiver complete the survey on separate devices.

Which of these categories applies to you? (Select all that apply)

- I am a parent, guardian, or a caregiver of an SD62 student.
- I work for SD62 as a teacher.
- I work for SD62 as support staff (job titles can include but are not limited to: Education Assistant, Indigenous Worker, Strong Start and Early Childhood Educator, Clerical Worker, Payroll & Finance Worker, Library Technician, Bus Driver, Custodian, Tradesperson, Groundskeeper, Information Technology Staff, Crossing Guard, and/or a Communication and Student Engagement Facilitator).
- I work for SD62 as an administrator (Individual School Administrator or District Executive).
- I was elected to serve on the SD62 Board of Trustees at least once during my lifetime.
- I was eligible to vote in the October 2022 municipal election for SD62 Board of Trustee members.
- I have a different relationship to the student in my household:

What do you do while your student is in school? (Select as many as apply)

- I am employed full-time.
- I am employed part-time.
- I am a student.
- I volunteer for a nonprofit organization (full or part-time).
- I am a full-time caregiver.
- I am retired or on leave from a paid profession.

I have a different way of describing my daily activities.

How many school-aged SD62 students are currently living in your household? ("School-aged" is defined as a child who is older than 5 as of December 31 in the same calendar year they began school.)

- Only one student
- Between 2 and 4 students
- More than 5 students

Do any of the children living in your home attend a public or independent school that is not located in the SD62 catchment area?

- Yes
- No

Which SD62 school is closest to your current residence?

Are you a member of the Parents' Advisory Council at your student's school?

- Yes
- No

What is the reason for your response to the previous question?



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Participant Survey for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers of Students Enrolled in a School within the Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) Catchment Area

3. Familiarity with the SD62 Strategic Plan and Update Reports

This section of the survey will be asking about your general knowledge of *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*, how it was created, how update reports are distributed, and your previous experience with strategic planning. Even if you have never interacted with any kind of strategic plan, your responses will be a great contribution to this research project.

Prior to beginning this survey, did you read the current SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)?

- Yes, I read the entire document
- Yes, I read some of the document
- No, I did not read the document
- No, I was not aware that SD62 has a current strategic plan

Prior to beginning this survey, did you read the previous SD62 Strategic Plan (2018-2021)?

- Yes, I read the entire document
- Yes, I read some of the document
- No, I did not read the document
- No, I was not aware that SD62 had a previous strategic plan

Did you participate in the Strategic Planning Survey administered by SD62 from 1 April 2021 to 18 April 2021?

- Yes
- No
- I do not recall

What is the reason for your answer to the previous question?

What do you know about how the SD62 strategic plan was created?

Prior to beginning this survey, did you read SD62 Operational Plan (2021-2022)?

- Yes, I read the entire document
- Yes, I read some of the document
- No, I did not read the document
- No, I was not aware that SD62 had an Operational Plan for the 2021-2022 school year.

Prior to beginning this survey, did you read the SD62 Strategic Plan Annual Report which was approved by the Board of Trustees on 27 September 2022?

- Yes, I read the entire document
- Yes, I read some of the document
- No, I did not read the document
- No, I was not aware that SD62 had released an annual report on their Strategic Planning process.

Prior to beginning this survey, were you aware of any updates regarding the achievement of objectives from SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)?

- Yes, I was aware of all the updates released by SD62.
- Yes, I was aware that there had been some updates that were released.
- No, I was not aware that SD62 had released any status updates regarding the achievement of Strategic Planning objectives.
- No, I am not interested in hearing about updates regarding achievement of Strategic Planning objectives.

Have you ever been part of a strategic planning process for any kind of organization before?

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

If you answered Yes to the previous question, how was your prior experience with the strategic planning process **similar to** or **different from** your experience with SD62's strategic planning process?



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Participant Survey for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers of Students Enrolled in a School within the Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) Catchment Area

4. General Knowledge about Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA)

This section of the survey will be asking about your general knowledge as a parent, guardian, or caregiver about what your student(s) is/are learning in their SD62 school about the concepts of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

The SD62 Board of Trustees and the District executive staff indicated that inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility were priorities to include in *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*. This decision was based partially on feedback gathered by a district survey which was conducted in April 2021. Out of the 1,095 responses the district received, 892 respondents (or 81.5% per cent) said they were parents, guardians, or caregivers of SD62 students.

If you are not familiar with these terms and how they are defined, they are listed below:

Inclusion: Everyone is able to participate in society and gain the benefits of being part of society.

Diversity: There are many different types of people in the world and it is beneficial for multiple different types of people to interact with each other in society.

Equity: Every person is treated fairly according to their needs; it is possible for some people to need more supports than other people in order to receive the same societal benefits.

Accessibility: Everyone with every level of ability can receive the benefits of belonging to society through the removal of barriers which prevent people from reaching their full potential.

Given the definitions listed above, how well do you think your oldest student understands these concepts?

- I think my student understands them very well.
- I think my student understands them a little.
- I am not sure that my student understands these concepts.
- I do not think my student understands these concepts.
- My student is not aware of these concepts.
- I have a different response to this question:

Does your understanding of the IDEA concepts agree with how they have been defined above?

- Yes, I agree with the definitions provided above.
- No, I do not agree with the definitions provided above.

I have a different response to this question.

What, if anything, would you change about how the IDEA concepts are defined above? (If you do not think that you would change anything, please leave the response blank.)

Inclusion

Diversity

Equity

Accessibility



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5. IDEA in SD62 - Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers, and their own Experiences

This section of the survey will ask you to describe how you feel about the achievement of the objectives in *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* which are related to IDEA concepts and your communications with the district regarding how well they are doing at furthering their progress. You will also be asked for information based on your experiences with learning how IDEA is taught to your student and/or modeled within your student's school.

The strategic plan objectives which specifically mention how IDEA concepts will be enhanced are:

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.

Engagement Objectives

E1. Develop, expand and implement inclusive and collaborative practices and processes.

Growth Objectives

G1. Strengthen organizational practices to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion.

Have you ever been given the chance to provide your feedback on these strategic plan priorities for the upcoming school years?

Yes

No

I have a different response to this question.

To whom would you feel the most comfortable directing your questions, concerns, and/or feedback regarding these specific strategic plan objectives?

My student's teacher

A member of the Board of Trustees

My student's principal or vice principal

The Parents' Advisory Council at my student's school

The district superintendent or associate superintendents

The District Parents' Advisory Council (aka the Sooke Parents' Education Advisory Council)

A district principal or vice principal

The Na'tsa'maht Indigenous Education Advisory Council (NIEAC)

I have a different answer for this question

Why would you feel comfortable providing your feedback to the person or persons from the previous question?

Has there ever been a time during the 2021-2022 school year where you had concerns about the information your student was receiving about IDEA at their SD62 school?

- No, I have not been concerned about this at all.
- Yes, I have had some concerns and they have been addressed to my satisfaction.
- Yes, I have had some concerns, and they **were not** addressed to my satisfaction.
- Yes, I have had **many** concerns and they are being addressed to my satisfaction.
- Yes, I have had **many** concerns and they **are not** being addressed to my satisfaction.
- I have a different response to this question:

Given the definitions of the concepts on the previous page and the objectives listed above, how would you rate your perspective of your student's learning environment?

| | Emerging, where there is an initial understanding and implementation of this objective. | Developing, where there is a partial understanding and implementation of this objective. | Proficient, where there is a complete understanding and implementation of this objective. | Extending, where there is a sophisticated understanding and implementation of this objective. | My student(s) did not attend an SD62 school in the 2021- 2022 school year. |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
|--|---|--|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Provide opportunities for learners to understand, respect, and appreciate diversity and inclusion. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Ensure our learning environments are safe, accessible, and welcoming. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Develop, expand, and implement inclusive and collaborative practices and processes. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strengthen organizational practices to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

Is there anything you would like to add regarding your perspective?



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6. Communicating with SD62 about Strategic Plan Initiatives

SD62 utilises many official forms of communication to convey information about their policies, regulations, and procedures to parents and guardians. Changes or updates to policies, regulations, and procedures may contribute to achieving the anticipated outcomes of the IDEA objectives in *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*. They are:

Anticipated Learning Outcomes

- L1. Students and staff are conscious of variances in diversity and understand inclusion.
- L3. Students, families, and staff feel safe (intellectually, physically, emotionally) [and] that they belong and are valued.

Anticipated Engagement Outcomes

- E1. The District operates with specific practices and processes that enhance collaboration and inclusivity.

Anticipated Growth Outcomes

- G1. The District has practices and standards that support the diverse population that it serves.

Given the objectives related to IDEA on the previous page and the anticipated outcomes listed above, how would you rate your perspective of the presence of these anticipated outcomes in your student's learning environment?

| | Emerging, where there is an initial understanding and implementation of this objective. | Developing, where there is a partial understanding and implementation of this objective. | Proficient, where there is a complete understanding and implementation of this objective. | Extending, where there is a sophisticated understanding and implementation of this objective. | My student(s) did not attend an SD62 school during the 2021-2022 school year. |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|
|--|---|--|---|---|--|

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Students and staff are conscious of variances in diversity and understand inclusion. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Students, families, and staff feel safe (intellectually, physically, emotionally) [and] that they belong and are valued. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The District operates with specific practices and processes that enhance collaboration and inclusivity. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| The District has practices and standards that support the diverse population that it serves. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|

Is there anything you would like to add regarding your perspective?

Of the methods listed below, please indicate **the top 3 methods** by which you would like to receive information about SD62 policies, regulations, and procedures that are new or have been updated to align with **SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)**: (Select 3 choices):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> SD62 and/or Individual School Website | <input type="checkbox"/> Public School Board and Committee Meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SD62 Facebook Page | <input type="checkbox"/> Sooke Parents Education Advisory Council (SPEAC) and/or my student's school Parents' Advisory Council (PAC) meetings/newsletters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SD62 Twitter Account | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SD62 YouTube Channel | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Press Releases and/or Newspapers and/or Broadcast News | <input type="checkbox"/> One-on-One Conversations and/or Text Communication with my student(s)' Teachers, Vice Principal(s), and/or Principal(s) (Including Email, Letters, and/or Text Messages) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual School Newspapers, Newsletters, and/or Blogs |

I have a different choice for this question:

I don't like any of these choices.

Thinking about **the 3 methods** of communication you chose above, what do you like about receiving information this way?

If you responded with either "**I don't like any of these choices**" or specified a **different form of communication**, please expand on/describe your reasons for your choice.



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7. Demographic Information of SD62 Parents and Guardians

This research project is using an equity-centered design approach to understanding which populations of students will benefit the most from the IDEA initiatives in *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*. An important aspect of this is uncovering how many and what type(s) of different social identities exist amongst SD62 families. While you are free to skip any or all of these questions which are centred on your social identities, we ask that you keep this goal in mind as you proceed through this section.

How old are you as of 31 December 2022?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 20 to 24 years | <input type="radio"/> 50 to 54 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 25 to 29 years | <input type="radio"/> 55 to 59 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 30 to 34 years | <input type="radio"/> 60 to 64 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 35 to 39 years | <input type="radio"/> 65 and older |
| <input type="radio"/> 40 to 44 years | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> 45 to 49 years | |

What is your ancestral background? (Select all that apply.)

- I was born in Canada.
- I immigrated to Canada as a child.
- I immigrated to Canada as an adult.
- My ancestors are First Nations.
- My ancestors are Métis.
- My ancestors are Inuit.
- My ancestors are from Europe.
- My ancestors are from Asia.
- My ancestors are from Africa.
- My ancestors are from another North American country.
- My ancestors are from South America.
- My ancestors are from Oceania.

My ancestors are:

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe

Please complete the following sentence by selecting all of the social identities that apply: **I am a:**

- Person whose first spoken language was not English
- Person with disabilities
- Person with a chronic medical condition
- Neurodiverse person
- Gender and/or sexually diverse person
- I do not have any of these social identities.

I have a different response to this prompt.

What is your highest level of education?

- I do not have a certificate, diploma, or degree.
 - Secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate
 - Trades certificate or Certificate of Apprenticeship or Certificate of Qualification
 - Completed or studying at least one Continuing Education class
 - Post-secondary diploma or certificate or studying for post-secondary diploma or certificate
 - I have another way of describing my level of education:
- Bachelor's degree, diploma, or certificate or studying for bachelor's degree, diploma, or certificate
 - Master's degree, diploma, or certificate or studying for master's degree, diploma, or certificate
 - Doctoral degree or studying for doctoral degree
 - More than one post-secondary degree in different disciplines (e.g., a Master's in Education and a Doctorate in Philosophy; two Master's degrees)

Are there any additional social identities you possess which are not mentioned in this Survey?



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8. Demographic Information of SD62 Students

This part of the survey will be asking about some of the demographics and social identities of the student(s) you care for in your household. An important aspect of this research project is uncovering how many and what type(s) of different social identities exist amongst SD62 students, as their demographic information may be different from their parents', guardians', or caregivers'. This is information which may help inform the recommendations that can be made. While you are free to skip any or all of these questions which are centred on your student's social identities, we humbly ask that you keep this goal in mind as you proceed through this section about the student(s) you care for in your household.

If there is more than one SD62 student in your household, please respond from the perspective of your oldest student.

What is the grade level of the oldest SD62 student in your household?

What is your student's gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- I prefer not to reveal that.
- I have a different answer to this question.

What is your oldest student's ancestral background? (Select all that apply.)

- My oldest student was born in Canada.
- My oldest student's ancestral background is the same as mine.
- My oldest student immigrated to Canada as a child.
- My oldest student's ancestral background is different from mine.
- My oldest student has a different way of describing their ancestral background:

Please complete the following sentence by selecting all of the social identities that apply: **My oldest student is a:**

- Person whose first spoken language was not English
- Person with disabilities
- Person with a chronic medical condition
- Neurodiverse person
- Gender and/or sexually diverse person
- My student does not have any of these social identities.

I have a different response to this prompt.

Are there any additional social identities your oldest student possesses which are not mentioned in this Survey?



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the Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) Catchment
Area**

9.

This concludes your participation in the survey for the research project titled *Speaking Across Barriers: How Parents in a Canadian Public School System Learn About Their Children's Diversity Education* (HREB Application #22-0136).

If at the closing of this Survey, you are still feeling vulnerable or feel as if some harm has come to you, you may utilise these resources which have been compiled by the staff at SD62 and are freely available for anyone to use: <https://www.sd62.bc.ca/sites/default/files/2021-04/HSHPMay-MentalHealthList.pdf>

If you are interested in participating in further research opportunities related to this project, please visit this link (<https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/SAB2022-Phase2SignUp>) to indicate your interest in participating in Phase 2. You will also have the opportunity to be placed on a mailing list where you may receive recruitment letters or e-Newsletter updates about the project.

If at any time before this research project has concluded you decide that you no longer wish for the information you provided to be a part of this research project, please contact principal researcher Trisha L. Renken-Sebastian by email at tlrenkensebastian@uvic.ca or by phone at +1 (236) 314-3444 so that I can close out your participation and remove your responses from the data set.

If you are interested in participating in the incentive drawing, you will receive a link to a form after you have submitted your results. Information you enter into this subsequent form will be used to contact you in the event that you have been chosen to receive one of two gift cards and will be held separately from your Survey responses.

Thank you once again, and please remember that even if you do not choose

to participate any further in this research project, the answers you have provided thus far will lead to a greater understanding of how Canadian public school administrators can improve communications between themselves and the parents/guardians of students in their school district about their strategic plans.

When you have finished reading this page, please click the "Done" button to submit your Survey.

APPENDIX C: CHARTS FROM THE SURVEY FINDINGS

Figure 18: Highest Level of Group 1 Participant Education

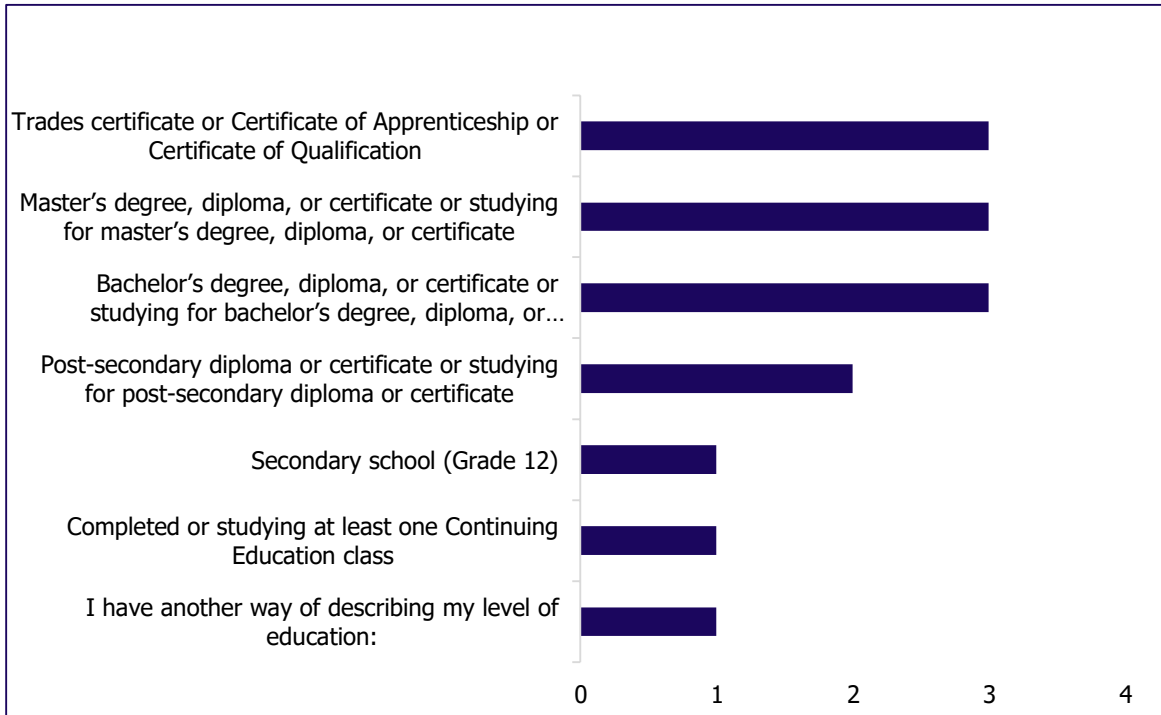


Table 16 Level of Understanding about IDEA for Oldest SD62 Student of Group 1 Participants

| Level of IDEA Understanding | Number of Responses | Grade Levels of Oldest Students |
|---|---------------------|---|
| I think my student understands them very well. | 6 | Kindergarten (2), Grade 5, Grade 5, Grade 9, Grade 11 |
| | 3 | Declined to provide information |
| I think my student understands them a little. | 3 | Grade 1, Grade 5, Grade 9 |
| | 2 | Declined to provide information |
| I am not sure that my student understands these concepts. | 1 | Grade 7 |
| I do not think my student understands these concepts. | 2 | Grade 5, Grade 6 |
| I have a different response to this question. | 1 | Grade 2 |

Figure 19: Age Range of Group 1 Participants

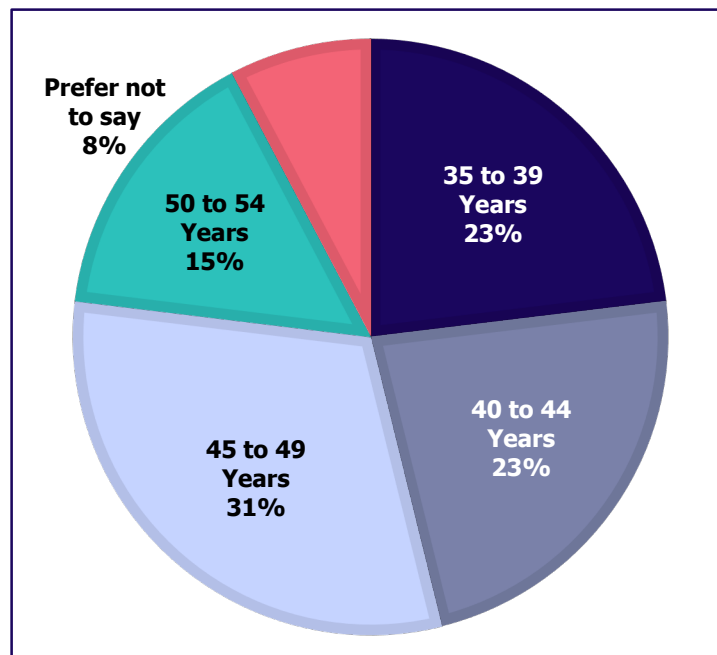
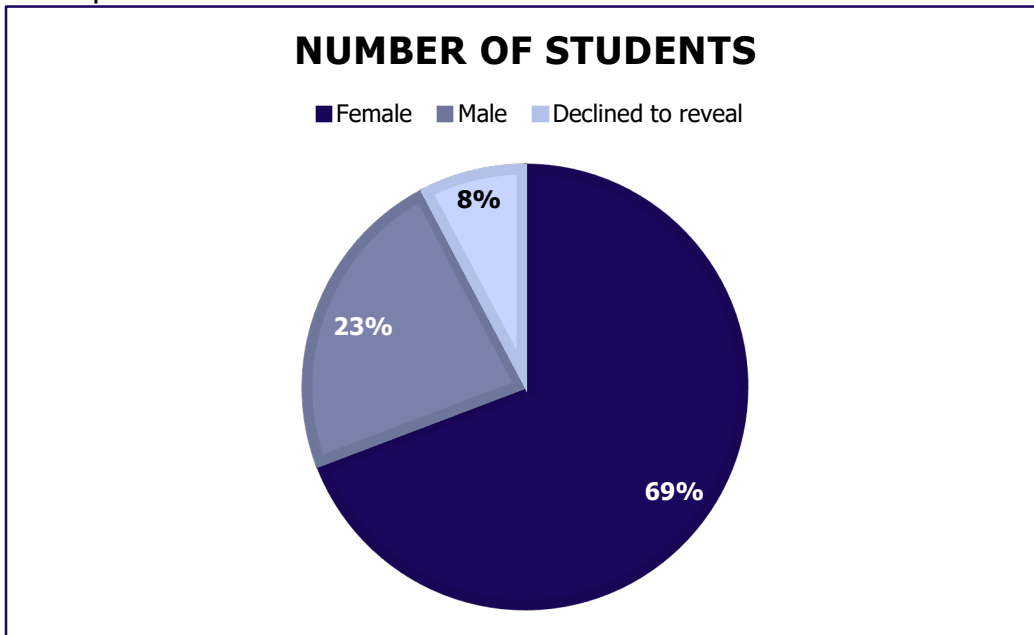


Figure 20: Gender Identity of Oldest SD62 Student of Group 1 Participants



APPENDIX D: KSS DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT (GROUP 1)

Group 1 Knowledge-Sharing Session Script For Research Project #22-0136 (Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers)

Unique

What is your level of involvement in supporting how your child(ren) learns?

- School involvement?
- Joining committees?
- Volunteering in class?
- Helping with homework?
- Other not mentioned?

Based on your child(ren)'s grades, how effective do you think the public education system has been in teaching your children the skills they will need when they reach adulthood? In what areas do you think there could be improvement?

What kind of concerns do you have about what your child(ren) are learning about IDEA?

Have you communicated any concerns about what your children were learning about regarding IDEA to anyone at your child(ren)'s school? If yes, to whom did you communicate and why did you choose this person?

- Your child(ren)'s teacher?
- Your child(ren)'s vice principal or principal?
- District executives?
- Board of Trustees?
- Other person not mentioned?
- If no, why have you not mentioned these concerns to anyone?
- Out of the communication avenues discussed in a Survey I conducted earlier this year, 61% of the responses indicated that they preferred to be able to have one-on-one conversations with their children's teachers, vice principals, or principals (in person or in text by emails or text messages) regarding any changes that are being made to policies, regulations, and procedures as a result of the Strategic Plan objectives. If SD62 decided to focus only on this form of communication, how would that affect your family? How would that change how you interact with your children's school?

Shared

I'd like to start with an introductory question. Going around the room, we're all going to say our first name, our pronouns, and mention what our favorite subject was in school and why. I'll start:

Where (if at all) do you think learning about inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) should be applied in the public education system?

In April 2021, Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) conducted a survey asking members of the school community what they wanted to see the district focus on improving for the next four years, up to 2025. The resulting Strategic Plan places a specific focus on the promotion of diversity and inclusion as a strategic priority. To what extent does that priority align with what you wish for your child(ren)'s education in the next four years?

How do you think these priorities were reflected in SD62 Strategic Plan 2021-2025?

- Inclusion
- Diversity
- Equity
- Accessibility

What do these terms mean to you?

If a parent, guardian, or caregiver whose family was new to SD62 were to ask you for tips on how to communicate well with district leadership, what advice would you give them?

Did you read (or have you read) the following documents?

- Strategic Plan (2021-2025)
- Operational Plan (2021-2022) and/or (2022-2023)
- Operational Plan (2021-2022) Summary Report
- If yes, how much?
- If no, why not?

In September 2022, SD62 released their annual report regarding how well the district was doing in achieving their strategic plan objectives. The school district graded itself as *Proficient* in achieving its Learning Goal and *Developing* on its Engagement and Growth Goals. To what extent does align with your perspective as an SD62 parent, guardian, or caregiver?

Is there anything else you would like to improve about how SD62 communicates with families? What suggestions would you offer?

APPENDIX E: KSS DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT (GROUPS 2 AND 3)

Group 2 Knowledge-Sharing Session Questions for Research Project #22-0136 (Board of Trustees, Administrators)

Unique

What is the reason you decided you wanted to become a member of the SD62 Board of Education?

What do you know now about how SD62 operates when it comes to decision-making and collaboration that you were not aware of before you became a Trustee?

What has your experience been regarding the creation and/or management of a multi-year Strategic Plan for an organization?

How has your experience compared to how SD62 interacts with its Strategic Plan? What do you know about how *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* was created?

What are some aspects about how SD62 operates that you feel the general public needs to know so they can be better informed about Strategic Plan objectives and implementation?

Shared

I'd like to start with an introductory question. Going around the room, we're all going to say our first name, our pronouns, and mention what our favorite subject was in school and why. I'll start:

If a parent, guardian, or caregiver whose family was new to SD62 were to ask you for tips on how to communicate well with district leadership, what advice would you give them?

Where do you think learning about inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) should be applied in the public education system?

In April 2021, Sooke Schools District 62 (SD62) conducted a survey asking members of the school community what they wanted to see the district focus on improving for the next four years, up to 2025. The resulting Strategic Plan places a specific focus on the promotion of diversity and inclusion as a strategic priority. To what extent does that priority align with your goals for your term as a School Board Trustee?

How do you think these priorities were reflected in *SD62 Strategic Plan (2021-2025)*?

- Inclusion
- Diversity
- Equity
- Accessibility

What do these terms mean to you?

Did you read (or have you read) the following documents?

- Strategic Plan (2021-2025)
- Operational Plan (2021-2022) and/or (2022-2023)
- Operational Plan (2021-2022) Summary Report
- If yes, how much?
- If no, why not?

In September 2022, SD62 released their annual report regarding how well the district was doing in achieving their strategic plan objectives. The school district graded itself as *Proficient* in achieving its Learning Goal and *Developing* on its Engagement and Growth Goals. To what extent does align with your views of SD62?

Is there anything you would like to improve about how SD62 communicates with members of the school community? What suggestions would you offer?

GLOSSARY

BCME (now BCMEC)

The British Columbia Ministry of Education became the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Childcare in 2022 as of the Premier's Provincial Throne Speech.

FTE

An acronym which means "full-time equivalent". Indicates the proportion of time experienced by the student or employee within the public school district.

SOGI (also SOGI 123)

An acronym which means "sexual orientation and gender identity". Introduced into the British Columbia *School Act* in 2016 to coincide with the incorporation of "gender identity or expression" as a protected class into the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

Visible Minorities

Defined by the *Employment Equity Act* of 1995, Statistics Canada considers peoples with these ancestral backgrounds to belong to these groups of visible minorities: South Asian (includes Bangladesh, India, Pakistan), Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab (includes Egypt, Jordan, Palestine), Latin American, Southeast Asian (includes Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam), West Asian (includes Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan), Korean, and Japanese (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Throughout this document for referential consistency, this term will be used when the ancestral background of the person in question is known, regardless of how it was previously defined.

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