

# SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

December 5, 2023, Public Board Meeting



## Safe, Caring, and Inclusive Schools Information Update

Chilliwack School District is a rapidly growing community of learners that values and celebrates every student and staff member for who they are through the lens of superdiversity. In simple terms, superdiversity acknowledges that there are multiple ways of being in a school community that coexist simultaneously. It's more than just acknowledging diversity - it's recognizing that it's a multidimensional experience of intersectionality and that we all share the responsibility to create a safe and caring school community where everyone can see themselves as champions for the human spirit and human rights.

Students and their well-being are the centre of the entire K-12 system. When students feel a sense of safety, belonging, and acceptance, it positively impacts school attendance, feelings of attachment and connectedness, as well as academic achievement and overall well-being.

In his article "The right drivers for whole system success," Dr. Michael Fullan (2021, as cited in Center For Strategic Education), states that "In our ever-complex and contentious world, we can no longer afford to separate wellbeing and learning. For one thing, wellbeing is learning. As complexity in the world has evolved, Wellbeing and Learning represent an integrated concept." When students and adults feel like they belong in their school community, it positively impacts their overall well-being.

Every adult in the K-12 system carries the responsibility to proactively create safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments for ALL students, and support experiences of safety, dignity, and respect. It is also important that every adult in the K-12 system feels that their own safety and well-being is supported at their school or workplace.

To further establish the responsibility to create safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments, human rights legislation (i.e., the B.C. Human Rights Code) protects B.C. students from discrimination based on Indigenous identity, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or age.

The Province created the erase (Expect Respect and A Safe Education) strategy to provide resources to help schools, families, and communities build more safe and caring school communities to help ensure every child feels safe, accepted, and respected.

As part of the erase strategy, the Ministry of Education and Child Care supports districts and schools with a breadth of initiatives that foster greater inclusivity in classrooms and schools reflective of the diversity of our communities. These initiatives have been developed at the provincial level to support school districts, recognizing that they know their school communities best and will have locally developed tools in place to meet the needs of students and staff.

**On Friday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023**, Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care; Sonia Furstenuau, MLA for Cowichan Valley; BC School Trustees Association; BC School Superintendents Association; BC Association of School Business Officials; BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association; BC Teachers' Federation; CUPE BC; BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils; Federation of Independent School Associations; First Nations Education Steering Committee; First Nations Schools

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Association; and Métis Nation BC [released the following statement](#) about safe, caring and inclusive schools:

“All of B.C.’s provincial education partners for K-12 schools, joined by Minister Rachna Singh and MLA Sonia Furstenau, are standing together in solidarity to ensure every school is a place where all students deserve to be welcomed, included, and respected in a safe learning environment, while being fully and completely themselves.

“There is no room for any type of discrimination in our schools. The B.C. Human Rights Code protects B.C. students from discrimination based on Indigenous identity, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or age. Every school in B.C. should be a place where everyone is welcome, and no student should feel unsafe or excluded.

“We want to recognize the work being done to ensure all students and staff are protected from discrimination at school. Building an education system that is welcoming for all of B.C.’s K-12 students, staff and families is critical with a focus on student success and well-being at the centre. As provincial education partners, we stand unified in this commitment.”

And finally, here is a beautiful quotation from the late Richard Wagamese, one of Canada’s foremost First Nations Authors and Storytellers that signifies the importance of creating a safe space so we can feel a sense belonging -

*"We are story. All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we're here; you, me, us, together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship - we change the world, one story at a time..."*

