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To: All Saanich Schools Community

Hello Everyone,

The Saanich School District is dedicated to inclusion, accessibility, and equity for students, staff, and all those interacting with our district.  We are committed to improving the experiences of people with diverse disabilities and we encourage our community to share their feedback and experiences.

The Saanich Equitable Access Team (SEAT) is a working group comprised of parents, teachers, support staff, district staff, and community partners collaboratively working on the development of a Three-Year Accessibility Plan.  The work of this group will be transparent and community focused while our interrelated core values of compassion, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and respect provide foundation for this work.

The initial priority for SEAT will involve gathering input from our school community (which will include student voice), identify system needs, establish priorities, and plans for action to enhance equity of access to programming and our facilities within the Saanich School District.

**New Legislation – Accessible BC Act**

The Government of British Columbia has implemented the Accessible BC Act to further support and encourage the work required of all public sector institutions in identifying and addressing barriers to the full and equal participation of people with diverse disabilities.  The accessibility principles considered in the development of the legislation and associated government plan embraced inclusion, adaptability, diversity, collaboration, self-determination and universal design.

Specifically, School Districts are listed in the Accessible B.C. Regulation and are required to establish:

* An accessibility committee,
* An accessibility plan, and
* A tool to receive feedback on accessibility.
* Creation of Accessibility Committee (Saanich Equitable Access Team or ‘SEAT’)

An application process was initiated in the spring requesting engagement from our various community stakeholder groups including the Saanich Teachers’ Association, CUPE local 441, individuals with Indigenous Ancestry, parents/guardians (COPACS) and excluded management. We accepted all applications received within the first few weeks and have, since that time, held three meetings. Our group has been named the Saanich Equitable Access Team (‘SEAT’) and you will see us referenced as such in future correspondence, within the final Saanich School District Accessibility Plan and on the district website.

**Mandate of SEAT**

The mandate of SEAT is to create meaningful opportunities for the shared learning community in identifying barriers that have and continue to prevent inclusive, equitable, and accessible participation in opportunities offered within Saanich Schools with the goal of recommending ways to address and remove the barriers identified.  The work of SEAT will be guided by the principles of the B.C. Council of Administrators of Inclusive Support in Education (‘BC CAISE’) and resources developed in partnership between the Government of British Columbia and the B.C. Accessibility Hub.

**Work Currently Underway**

The members of SEAT are currently engaged in the development of a comprehensive strategy to gather the voice of our community through a variety of methods reflecting the myriad of needs of individuals within our District. We anticipate being able to provide additional information related to opportunities for all members of our community to participate and share YOUR lived experience in the coming months.

**Stay Informed**

As we continue to develop a plan to increase awareness and accessibility, we encourage students and families, staff, and community members and individuals with diverse disabilities to visit the Saanich School District website where you will find additional information related to SEAT and options to provide feedback.

We kindly request your participation in an initial survey, sharing your experiences related to individuals with diverse disabilities. Your valuable feedback will play a pivotal role in our ongoing efforts to identify and, ultimately, minimize or eliminate barriers in support of our Three-Year Plan. There will be opportunities for individuals to share information anonymously if they so choose. All information received will be maintained in a confidential manner in alignment with FOIPPA legislation and use of the information will be restricted to the designated purpose of SEAT in alignment with the BC Accessibility Act.

Collectively, we can strive for an organization where accessibility is a fundamental practice, ensuring the inclusion of all individuals and dismantling barriers that may arise.  We are encouraged by the work ahead and look forward to future communication with you.

SEAT Flyer Messaging - October 2023.pdf

Sincerely,

Peter Westhaver, Director of Instruction - Diversity & Inclusion