

A diverse group of young people, including a young man with a shaved head in a plaid shirt, a young woman with braided hair in a blue denim shirt, a young man with long black hair, and a young woman with dark hair in a red shirt, are laughing together outdoors. The background shows green trees and a building.

Anti-racism, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (ADEI) Working Group

UPDATED
May 2025

BCSTA

British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

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Introduction & Context

BCSTA aspires to embody and work in support of anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the public schools of British Columbia.

BCSTA strives to:

- *eliminate discrimination in policies, procedures, programs, and services.*
- *value human differences within the organization.*
- *ensure that factors such as ancestry, skin colour, place of residence, socio-economic or educational background, sex, gender identity or expression, physical, intellectual or cognitive disabilities, and/or protected grounds under the British Columbia Human Rights Code, do not determine the outcomes a person achieves.*
- *ensure that people of all backgrounds feel they are welcomed and valued.*

To those ends, BCSTA commits to:

- *Educating ourselves and our members about diversity, equity, and inclusion and how they may be achieved, and about the harms that result from discrimination of any kind, including, by way of example, from racism or ableism.*
- *Ensuring that our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion are evident in all that we do, including by demonstrating through our actions, our rejection of unlawful discrimination of any kind.*
- *Ensuring that policies and practices of the organization do not contravene the British Columbia Human Rights Code.*

- *Supporting equity through our policies, procedures, programs, and services.*
- *Advocating for policies and practices that promote anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the public schools of British Columbia.*
- *Measuring our progress in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion by our actions against discrimination.*

This Foundational Statement was added to BCSTA's policies and was a key action item from the Association's 2022-25 Strategic Plan goal area related to Equity and Inclusion. In recognition of this ongoing commitment, the BCSTA Board of Directors established an ad hoc working group to provide BCSTA with further recommendations in the area of anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion (ADEI) that build on its commitment and aspiration, that supports the further implementation of its Strategic Plan goals related to ADEI, and that aligns with the Ministry Anti-racism Action Plan.

This report provides the board of directors with an update on the work of the committee to date including recommendations for the board's consideration.

Working Group Membership:

The BCSTA President, in consultation with the Board of Directors, appointed seven (7) members to the Working Group, including a Director from the Board. The appointed trustees come from a variety of member Boards of Education:

- **Rebecca Barley** - SD48, Sea to Sky (Chair)
- **Maya Russell** - SD40, New Westminster
- **Felicia Zhu** - SD45, West Vancouver
- **Erica McClean** - SD57, Prince George
- **John Chenoweth** - SD58, Nicola-Similkameen (BOD Liaison)
- **Bill Snow** - SD60, Peace River North
- **Tania Brzovic** - SD68, Nanaimo-Ladysmith

Staff Support:

Carmen Batista - Deputy CEO

Consultant:

Dr. Kevin Godden - Retired Superintendent

Terms of Reference

The *Terms of Reference* for the committee, as approved by the board of directors are summarized below:

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Working Group on Anti-racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ADEI) is to:

1. Provide recommendations to the Board of Directors as to how the Association might best achieve desirable outcomes associated with its ADEI resolution and policies and its 2022-25 Strategic Plan.
2. Provide the BCSTA Board of Directors with recommendations to prepare boards of education to fulfill their roles and responsibilities as required by the legislation, and the provincial Anti-racism Action Plan.
3. Recommend a framework to the Board of Directors related to ensuring that future BCSTA motions, where applicable, support its ADEI principles.
4. Provide the Board of Directors with recommendations for ongoing research on the efficacy of ADEI efforts in Canadian educational jurisdictions, with a focus on British Columbia. Research areas may include but are not limited to:
 - a. The collection of identity-based data
 - b. Effective practices and strategies
 - c. Positive student outcomes
 - d. Mechanisms for increasing representation of BIPOC trustees and staff
 - e. Governance best practices associated with positive student outcomes in areas of ADEI
 - f. Best practice tools and approaches for measuring the effectiveness of ADEI initiatives

5. Review the Ministry Anti-racism Action Plan to:
 - a. Provide the BCSTA Board of Directors with recommendations in relation to the Association's strategic plan goal related to Equity and Inclusion.
 - b. Provide recommendations to BCSTA Board of Directors to ensure that the Association's work and events embody the principles associated with anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion.
 - c. Identify synergies between provincial partner groups organizations (i.e., BCSSA, BCPVPA, BCTF, BCCPAC, BCPSEA) with the goal to strengthen system-wide impact.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Issues for consideration for the working group:

1. How does the BCSTA ensure that its aspirations for ADEI are embedded in its practices?
2. What resources does BCSTA currently have to support boards in the implementation of anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion?
3. What ADEI practices in the areas of governance and policy would best support teaching and learning in British Columbia?
4. What resources would be beneficial to member boards to support the successful implementation of the Ministry Anti-racism Action Plan?
5. When considering recommendations for the BCSTA Board of Directors, what implications exist for the various regions of British Columbia including rural, remote, urban and suburban?

Work Conducted to Date

REPORTING:

The committee reports to the board of directors.

Several Working Group meetings were held to fulfill the committee's mandate:

- a. October 2023: Review of the Committee's mandate and approval of a workplan to fulfill the obligations outlined above.
- b. December 2023: Review of the April 2023 Directions Report, and refinement of the Work Plan.
- c. February 2024: Meeting with the Ministry of Education and Care Team to review the provincial Anti-racism Action Plan and understand key actions to date as well as next steps.
- d. April 2024: BCSTA Conference and AGM where two concurrent sessions were hosted.

Conference Highlights:

The Working Group hosted two interactive workshops (*See presentation in Appendix A*) intended to both provide an overview of the Committee's mandate, as well as an opportunity to secure feedback from trustee participants about critical components of ADEI:

Awareness & Education, Policy & Practice, System Alignment & Coherence, Resource Allocation, Outcome Measurement.

Survey Feedback:

The sessions were well attended, and participant feedback suggested that attendees were very pleased with the sessions. Of the eighty-one trustees who attended the combined sessions, 93% were satisfied or very satisfied with session. Further details of the conference feedback are embedded in the report and recommendations below.

- e. May 2024: Review of the feedback received from the Conference & AGM, and draft of initial recommendations.

Recommendations & Further Considerations

Based on the *Terms of Reference*, feedback gathered from trustees*, research conducted, and dialogue among the Working Group Members, the following report and recommendations have been drafted for consideration of the Board of Directors.

*(*While the participation level was sufficiently high to draw reasonable conclusions about trustee opinions in relation to ADEI, caution should also be extended that the views summarized in these surveys may not be fully representative of the body of trustees in BC. For instance, it is possible that trustees who are not familiar with or supportive of ADEI efforts may not have attended the session or participated in the survey, and so their views would not be considered in the development of themes and the resultant recommendations.)*

AWARENESS & EDUCATION:

Two questions were posed to trustees in relation to this domain. The first one investigated the extent to which trustees were aware of their legal obligations and how it connected to the Ministry of Education and Child Care K-12 Anti-racism Action Plan. Attendees were specifically asked:

"What is your level of awareness about the provincial anti-racism action plan?"

Forty percent (40%) of respondents identified that they were unaware (Not Yet Started/Beginning Phase), while fifty-one percent (51%) declared that they were "Well Underway/Fully Developed" in terms of understanding the contents of the Action Plan. Nine percent (9%) were unsure.

Trustees were also asked about their own professional learning about ADEI, and what kinds of learning they would require to deepen their understanding and application of practice related to ADEI going forward.

Responses were varied with close to half of respondents (46%) declaring that they were "Not Yet Started/Beginning" phase of their learning journey. Thirty-eight percent (38%) said they were "Well Underway/Fully Developed," while sixteen percent (16%) were not sure about their needs.

These results correspond well to the feedback provided by trustees during the AGM and Conference. Trustees spoke about the importance of boards taking a comprehensive and system-wide approach to building ADEI awareness. Key themes for ongoing learning included:

- **Awareness:** Ensure ongoing education of trustees and staff about ADEI issues, legal responsibilities, and best practices.
- **Inclusivity:** Create inclusive cultures and foster a sense of belonging for all individuals, including marginalized voices.
- **Partner Group Engagement:** Develop thoughtful strategies to engage with rightsholders and various partner groups, including students, staff, and the wider community in relation to ADEI initiatives.
- **Transparency:** Establish plans for communicating ADEI policies, goals, and progress to all partner groups in clear and accessible ways.
- **Policy Development:** Ensure that boards develop clear policies and procedures to address ADEI issues/needs, including ensuring alignment with strategic plans and regular review cycles.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Ensure ongoing learning, adaptation, and improvement in ADEI efforts based on feedback.
- **Data and Measurement:** Utilize data, surveys, and other measurement tools to track progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability.

Based on these findings, the Working Group recommends the following:

1. That BCSTA continues to provide ADEI training and professional development to trustees (with particular focus on the board's legal obligations) at its various events, that this be embedded as part of the BCSTA strategic plan.
2. That BCSTA provide guidelines, tools and training to trustees in relation to the following areas in ADEI: meaningful engagement with underserved communities, policy development and review, program measurement and evaluation.
3. That the BCSTA review its "conference checklist" to ensure that all its events conform the principles of ADEI, and further that these efforts be communicated to attendees.

POLICY & PRACTICE:

This was a key area of focus for the Working Group, both in terms of the survey question and the feedback provided by trustees at the Conference. Trustees were asked about the status of their district in terms of having clear policies and administrative procedures related to ADEI. Twenty-seven percent (27%) said they were at the "Not Yet Started/Beginning" phase of this work, while sixty-four percent (64%) of participants said they were "Well Underway/Fully Developed." Nine percent (9%) of respondents were unsure.

These results were also well correlated with the discussions that emerged from table groups of trustees, who acknowledged that effective policy development involves meaningful engagement, transparency, alignment with organizational values, and ongoing evaluation:

- **Clarity:** Ensure clarity in definitions and communication of policies and procedures to all partner groups, including staff, students, and the wider community. Policies must translate into actionable steps, with clear connections between policy statements and implementation strategies.

- **Transparency:** Ensure that policies and procedures are transparent, accessible, and inclusive, with clear language and communication strategies to ensure understanding by all partner groups.
- **Inclusive Decision-making:** Include diverse voices in the policy decision-making process, including consulting and listening to impacted groups. Policies should consider intersectionality and tailor approaches to the unique contexts of the organization.
- **Student Involvement:** Include students in the development of policies and solicit their feedback to assess effectiveness.
- **Strategic Planning:** Focus on aligning ADEI policies with strategic planning priorities, goals, and outcomes.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Establish processes for ongoing review and adaptation of ADEI policies and procedures to ensure they remain effective and aligned with organizational goals and values.
- **Ongoing Review:** Establish structures for regular review and evaluation of policies, procedures, and their impact.

Based on these findings, the Working Group recommends the following:

1. That BCSTA develop and make available an "Inclusive Policy Checklist" that allows boards to both develop and review policies with an ADEI lens. Checklist items might include considerations for language/terminology usage, community engagement, alignment with pertinent legislation, accountabilities, and implementation responsibilities. An example of this checklist is provided in the *Appendix B and C*.
2. That BCSTA highlight key district policy examples that fulfill the criteria identified in the Inclusive Policy Checklist.

ALIGNMENT & COHERENCE:

The Working Group identified alignment and system coherence as critical components of successful implementation of ADEI initiatives. Alignment and coherence are connected concepts, or sides of the same coin. Alignment occurs when components parts of an organization work in tandem to support each other (e.g., goals, finances and professional development).

Coherence is the subjective manifestation of alignment and refers to the shared depth of understanding of the work by trustees and staff. With respect to ADEI, alignment refers to ensuring that various district initiatives (e.g., such as strategic plan goals) work together to support districts aspirations for ADEI and are seamless.

Coherence is the extent to which the board and staff “feel” that these initiatives are connected and manifested in their daily work. The Working Group posed two questions to trustees in relation to these twin concepts:

- To what extent are ADEI initiatives embedded in your district’s strategic plan?
- To what extent has your district engaged diverse groups (e.g., families, employees, students, community groups) on issues related to ADEI?

With respect to the first question, thirty-six percent (36%) of respondents said they were “Not Yet Started/Beginning,” while fifty-eight percent (58%) of respondents said they were “Well Underway/ Full Developed”. Six percent (6%) of respondents said they were unsure. With respect to the second question, forty percent (40%) of respondents declared that they were “Not Yet Started/ Beginning” phase, while fifty-three percent (53%) said they were “Well Underway/ Fully Developed.” Seven percent (7%) were unsure.

Themes generated from the table conversations in relation to alignment and coherence were as follows:

- **Infrastructure:** Dedicate staff roles and sustainable structures to effectively address ADEI initiatives rather than treating them as secondary tasks.

- **Accountability:** Prioritize measurable outcomes and accountability measures, including student surveys and roundtable discussions with employee groups, to track progress and ensure effectiveness.
- **Integration:** Integrate ADEI efforts into everyday work and organizational culture rather than treat them as separate initiatives; ensure they are seamlessly embedded into district policies and have priority for implementation through the district’s strategic plan.
- **Collaboration:** Build strong relationships with partner groups, including union educators and employee groups, to foster collaboration and support for ADEI initiatives.
- **Celebration of Diversity:** Identify ways to promote the celebration of diverse cultures and identities (e.g., through shared food, stories, and cultural observances and celebrations).

Based on these findings, the Working Group recommends the following:

1. That BCSTA continue to support school boards with strategic planning, with particular emphasis on inclusive of approaches for embedding their ADEI aspirations in their strategic goals.
2. That BCSTA continue to provide in-service to trustees in relation to the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, with specific focus on community engagement as well as how the needs of underserved and priority populations can be effectively addressed.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION:

The Working Group recognized that the extent to which resources are allocated to any initiative is a strong predictor of its success. To that end, the committee sought to understand the various ways that boards supported their ADEI goals with tangible resources (i.e., reallocated staff time, increased spending, professional development, etc.). While there was no survey question for this domain, it was a dedicated component of trustee engagement at the Conference. Trustees were prompted with the following question: What kinds of resources are being allocated to support ADEI in your district? Trustees shared a myriad of ways that they resource ADEI work in their districts. Themes generated from the table conversations were as follows:

- **Resourcing:** Recognize the importance of allocating adequate resources to support ADEI initiatives effectively, ensuring that they receive the necessary support and funding for success.
- **Leadership:** Empower district leaders to drive change through targeted portfolios (e.g., District Administrator of ADEI), professional development, and collaborative structures such as task forces and district committees.
- **Professional Development:** Provide ongoing professional development opportunities and support for educators, including workshops, dedicated teacher consultants, and inquiry grants for ADEI initiatives.
- **Indigenous Education:** Prioritize Indigenous education through dedicated departments, committees, and funding, including land-based learning, language revitalization, and partnerships with Indigenous communities and elders.
- **Learning Resources:** Ensure that library resources and educational materials reflect the diversity of students.
- **Compassionate Systems:** Foster compassionate and responsive systems, particularly in small districts with limited resources, to meet the needs of all learners and communities.
- **Community Engagement:** Have resources to engage with families and communities, particularly Indigenous communities, through targeted initiatives, equity scans, and consultation processes.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Emphasize data-driven decision-making, including assessments of need, equity scans, and databases of resources, to inform policy development and resource allocation.

Based on these findings, the Working Group recommends the following:

1. That BCSTA continue to support school districts with the importance of strategic planning and encourage districts to embed their ADEI aspirations within their strategic plans.
2. That BCSTA provide a list of existing district-level ADEI structures/ configurations that Boards might reference to support their ADEI aspirations.
3. That the BCSTA include district ADEI presentations at conferences that showcase how boards support the work through strategy, policy, accountability and resource allocation.

OUTCOMES & EVALUATION:

The Working Group acknowledged that perhaps the most challenging aspect of ADEI work is having evidence-based evaluation mechanisms to validate that the work being done in districts is actually having positive impact, not just on student outcomes, but also in shaping positive inclusive cultures in districts. Trustees were asked the following question:

To what extent has your district identified metrics to gauge your progress towards your ADEI outcomes?

Fifty-one percent (51%) said they were at the “Not Yet Started/Beginning Phase” and thirty percent (30%) said they were “Well Underway/Fully Developed.” Nineteen percent (19%) said they were unsure, which was the highest of percentage of all the questions asked. This domain was an important part of the focused table conversations, as trustees shared the various ways they do (and might) measure ADEI success. Themes emphasize the importance of community engagement, data, storytelling, cultural celebration, feedback and continuous improvement:

- **Goal Setting:** Set goals and utilizing assessments, such as student learning surveys, to measure progress and ensure accountability.
- **Data Collection:** Gather feedback and data from various partner groups, including students, staff, and the wider community, to measure progress and inform decision-making.
- **Storytelling:** Value the power of storytelling and allow individuals to share their experiences, with a focus on understanding how stories may change over time.
- **Cultural Celebrations:** Celebrate cultural diversity in schools through events, ceremonies, and curriculum that reflect local traditions and languages.

- **Professional Development:** Provide training and support for leaders and staff to lead difficult conversations and effectively address equity and inclusion issues.
- **Policy Development:** Integrate equity and inclusion measures into policies, hiring practices, and curriculum development.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve the wider community in decision-making/data gathering processes.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Constantly review practices, policies, and outcomes to ensure ongoing improvement and accountability.

Based on these findings, the Working Group recommends the following:

1. That BCSTA develop an “ADEI evaluation framework” toolkit which includes key measures for boards to consider in evaluating the effectiveness of their ADEI efforts. Components of this framework are provided in the *Appendix E*.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Overall, the evidence gathered from the survey and dialogue with trustees suggests that there is still much work to be done in the province with respect to ADEI. While there was encouraging evidence with respect to the perceived role that Boards play in creating inclusive schools, the variability in practice suggests that more work needs to be done to educate trustees about their legal obligations, and more importantly about the effective practices they might utilize to provide assurance that they are fulfilling their governance responsibilities in the service of all children. Looking ahead, the BCSTA might consider how to sustain ADEI as an ongoing part of its overall strategy, and how the organization might deepen both understanding and application of inclusive practices among trustees at its various events.