



Vancouver School District

School Plan for Vancouver Technical

Year 2 of 3 Year Plan, 2019 – 2020/21

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, current school plans have been carried forward to the 2021/22 school year

1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY:

Vancouver Technical Secondary School was established in 1916. In its earliest years, the school was a technical school (with all of the expected technical facilities) and served an exclusively male population. Girls were admitted to Vancouver Technical in 1940, major additions were built in 1954 and in 2011 a seismic upgrade was concluded. Today Vancouver Technical is a thriving, diverse learning community, proud of the many innovative programs and initiatives offered, in what has become the tradition of this ever dynamic and evolving (but also century-old) school!

Unique to Van Tech are our annual focus weeks (Literacy Week, Indigenous Awareness Week, Fine Arts Week, Applied Skills Week and new this year, Wellness Week), our schoolyard garden projects (Indigenous Foodscape, Accessible Garden, Garden Club and Science Garden Beds and the Fresh Roots partnership) and our strong social justice and Indigenous focus (displays, presentations, activities, clubs and classes).

We celebrate our students' spontaneous acts of community leadership with TLC cards; Grit and Determination, Diligence, Improvement, Creative Measure, and/or Class Inclusion and Leadership at our Breakfast of Champions; and academic achievement through Honour Roll. We recognize and celebrate our community at our Grade 8 Family Welcome, Indigenous Family Meal, along with numerous program potluck evenings.

We are excited to be continuing with our LSP program, including both our incoming Grade 8 LSP students and our continuing Grade 9 LSP students in regular program classes with support!

Van Tech remains committed to our inquiry into how best to support our students' well-being, specifically, how we might alleviate stress and anxiety in our students, foster a sense of belonging, strengthen student engagement, nurture self-regulation and independence, create a culture of care and connect students to the learning community at Van Tech. Our school data and observations support this continued focus.

2A. WHAT DID WE SEE?

The COMPASS (Cannabis Use, Obesity, Mental Health, Physical Activity, Alcohol Use, Smoking and Sedentary Behaviour) Survey results revealed our learners to be:

- ✓ Of a healthy weight (81%) but concerned about their weight (56% describe themselves as being about the right weight)
- ✓ Active (72% are meeting the National Guidelines of 60 minutes per day of physical activity)
- ✓ In need of nutritional information and healthy food options at school (6% eat the recommended number of fruits and vegetables per day, 7% eat the recommended servings of grains, 24% eat the recommended servings of dairy and 75% eat the recommended servings of meat and alternatives)
- ✓ Spending 1.7 hours per day on homework and 5.7 hours on recreational screen time (only 8% are meeting the National Guideline of 2 hours or less of recreational screen time)
- ✓ At the BC average for tobacco and marijuana use, below the average for alcohol use
- ✓ Feeling safe at school (86%), with 12% reporting that they have been bullied
- ✓ Feeling close to people at school (80%), that teachers treat them fairly (80%) and that they are part of their school (73%)
- ✓ Focused on their grades (90%) and wanting to continue on to post-secondary education (78%)
- ✓ Positive about their mental or emotional health (75% rating it as good, very good or excellent)
- ✓ Within the typical range in BC for depression and anxiety (20% reporting feeling depressed most days in the last week and 25% reporting anxiety)
- ✓ Know whom to approach if they need help, but not all (15% say they do not know)

While the survey results reveal some strengths, there are some spots where we think we could see our students doing better. Staff identified school connectedness and mental health as two areas in which they would like to make a positive difference. School Connectedness and Depressive Symptoms had been two areas identified as concerns and key wellness issues when Van Tech worked with UBC on the Wellness Initiative (a 5 year longitudinal research project that concluded in 2018).

*The survey was repeated in the spring of 2019 and 2020 and was discontinued in 2021. We will be using street data and our results from the Student Learning Surveys completed by our Grades 10 and 12 students.

2B. WHAT DO WE NEED TO RE-ADJUST?

As a result of the COMPASS Survey results and discussions, staff and students decided to:

- ✓ Completely restructure homerooms and the first days of school and start the school year with two cross-grade, inclusive homeroom periods with community-building activities led by trained senior students (from Here 4 Peers and/or Leadership)
- ✓ Continue with the Here 4 Peers Program, training our students to be leaders in the areas of mental health and well-being
- ✓ Continue to use articulation events as an opportunity to talk about well-being with students and their families
- ✓ Implement a Wellness Week full of information and activities, this year with a focus on Indigenous ways of wellness
- ✓ Start a Mental Health Club
- ✓ Create a Wellness Board for the club to use to provide information to students and for interactive displays
- ✓ Implement Double Blocks in January and June to build classroom community through deep learning and community building activities
- ✓ Continue with the BC Fruit & Veggie Program, our Breakfast Club, the DSP Break Cart along with efforts to start offering healthy options to students through the school store

With the shift to remote learning opportunities in the spring of 2020, we looked at ways to connect students with each other and staff to foster an online school community. Using Microsoft Teams, we:

- ✓ Created grade-based channels on Teams for students to connect with each other, their counsellor and administrator
- ✓ Implemented a student space on the Van Tech Student HUB on Teams
- ✓ Connected Grade 11 student leaders with Grade 8 students on Teams
- ✓ Created online social opportunities for Grade 8 students at lunch lead by student council and Grade 8 administrator

3. INQUIRY QUESTION

From 2018-2021 we focused new energy on activities and initiatives that we hope will: alleviate stress and anxiety in our students, foster a sense of belonging, strengthen student engagement, nurture self-regulation and independence, create a culture of care and connect students to the learning community at Van Tech. Our greatest concerns are for our students' mental health. We believe that the most important things that we can do for them are to create a sense of connectedness and belonging to the school community, engage students in learning and planning for their futures, and teach some very practical skills (organizational, goal setting) and strategies (coping).

For 2018-19 we decided to make a change to the year's opening procedures, focus on community building, restructure homerooms, rethink student recognition, continue the work of our leadership teams, invite increased student leadership, establish a Wellness Week and seek more community partnerships around our areas of concern. We have continued with all of these over the past three years! We have also included some of the questions from the survey our First Nations 12 students conducted in the Ministry's Student Learning Survey, all in order to see if we are making a measurable and meaningful difference in the lives of our learners. We will continue our efforts to engage parents as partners, to connect our work to current issues and initiatives and to focus attention on well-being in areas in which in has not previously been considered.

4. WHAT IS YOUR NEW PLAN?

For 2020-2021, we started to have conversations with our students, staff and parents around narrowing our focus for our inquiry question. We had stakeholders prioritize our goals and we found some overlap within the prioritization amongst all groups. Students and parents would like us to focus on: Alleviating stress and anxiety in our students, fostering a sense of belonging and engaging students in learning and planning for their futures. Staff would like us to drill deeper on: Alleviating stress and anxiety in our students, fostering a sense of belonging and creating a culture of care and connect students to our learning community. We look forward to having more conversations with our school community around these areas to help us focus our attention and drive our plan.

5. WHAT SUPPORTS WILL WE NEED?

Professional Development, FIT Conversations and Staff Meetings will provide opportunities for new learning for staff.

Continued work with student/parent forums and use of the Student Learning Survey will provide data for staff to work with.

6. HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE SUCCESSFUL?

We will continue to make use of survey data, focus groups and anecdotal reports to monitor our progress. We have established baselines with our various tools and can gauge progress from there over the next 3 years. The leadership teams established in Student Voice, Indigenous Education, Wellbeing and Social Justice will take an active role in leading and monitoring the impact of this work.

7. HOW WILL WE SHARE?

We have continued to share information through our school website, announcements, emails, Teams posts, Instagram posts and tweets.

Staff have discussed issues related to our school plan at numerous meetings, and participate in committees, focus groups and activities in support of a number of our new initiatives.

PAC receives an update each month at their meeting, which is shared with other parents through our school website. We would also like to have parent forums (in-person and virtually) to engage parents who typically don't attend PAC meetings.



District-wide Aboriginal Goal: To increase knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions among all students.

8. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE ABORIGINAL LEARNERS IN OUR SCHOOL?

In 2018-19 Vancouver Technical enrolled 104 students of Indigenous heritage, 31 in Grade 8, 24 in Grade 9, 26 in Grade 10, 12 in Grade 11 and 11 in Grade 12. This number remains quite steady, and we continue to have 100 students of Indigenous heritage registered since 2019.

Our students of Indigenous heritage are supported by a full-time Indigenous Education Enhancement Teacher and Indigenous Education Enhancement Worker. In addition, we have a strong leadership team overseeing this focus area and directing this work at Van Tech.

Success Plans are completed each term by the grade team (administrator, counsellor, IEET and IEEW) to ensure that we maintain a focus on individual students and their success in school. This wrap-around support has been very successful over the years and will continue.

Van Tech currently offers 3 blocks of BC First Peoples 12, 1 block of English 12 First Peoples and 3 blocks of Contemporary Indigenous Issues 12! Interest in Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures and contributions is strong and growing in our community, as are acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation. Staff and students at Van Tech demonstrate a strong desire to make a difference in the lives of all young people, particularly those of Indigenous heritage.

9. WHAT HAVE WE DONE AT OUR SCHOOL TO SUPPORT ALL LEARNERS IN REGARDS TO THIS GOAL?

In support of this goal we have offered:

- ✓ Indigenous Awareness Week
- ✓ Indigenous Reads Month in our library
- ✓ Staff discussions at Staff Meetings and during our Collab Time and workshops on Professional Development Days
- ✓ Additional Indigenous resources to be taught in the English Department
- ✓ Team teaching – IEET and IEEW with teachers across curricular areas to teach history and the impacts of colonization
- ✓ Classroom activities, embedding Indigenous Principles of Learning into the curriculum
- ✓ First Peoples' English 12, Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12 and BC First Nations Studies 12
- ✓ Support for staff and students
- ✓ Encouragement and leadership opportunities for students of Indigenous heritage

- ✓ A Family Potluck during Indigenous Awareness Week, celebrating and welcoming families to our community
- ✓ Established a club for Indigenous students and allies
- ✓ Held a camp a day-long retreat in the fall for our students of Indigenous heritage
- ✓ Questions from last year's survey of our school community were included in the Student Learning Survey this year so we can track knowledge and attitudinal growth at Vancouver Technical
- ✓ Continued contributions to the development of our Indigenous Foodscape

In addition to this focus on our students, we are committed to the District goal of increasing everyone's knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures and contributions. To that end we have established:

- ✓ The custom of recognizing the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh Coast Salish peoples' traditional and unceded territory at the beginning of gatherings, meetings, and events
- ✓ A permanent display of traditional cultural art work representing the 3 Nations on whose traditional and unceded territory we live and learn
- ✓ An Indigenous Education Leadership Team, meeting regularly

10. WHAT WILL WE CONTINUE TO DO IN THIS AREA?

We will continue all of the initiatives listed above, and further, plan to:

- Expand understanding of the recognition of the traditional territories at the opening day Staff Meeting and opening assemblies for all grades
- Establish an opening assembly for students of Indigenous heritage, along with another half way through the school year
- Establish an Indigenous Student Voice group at Van Tech, to bring student voice to students and staff, to inform our School Plan goals and objectives and to allow us to reflect on our progress
- Increasingly partner with staff to display student work in the allocated display cabinet
- Provide and make use of the First Peoples' Principles of Learning as they inform work on the Core Competencies
- Offer a Capacity Café for parents of our students of Indigenous heritage
- Continue to provide opportunities for open, respectful, professional dialogue (through Collab Days, Pro-D Days, Staff Meetings) around issues of colonization, institutionalized racism, First Peoples' Principles of Learning, making curriculum more inclusive, etc...

11. HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE ARE BEING SUCCESSFUL IN THIS AREA?

Anecdotally, we have reports of increased knowledge, awareness, empathy, and appreciation of Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures and contributions at Vancouver Technical. We have strong student involvement in leadership opportunities, very strong interest in First Nations Studies 12 amongst our student body and increasing comfort in identifying as of Indigenous heritage in our community. As mentioned above, we plan to continue to utilize survey questions to gather data and then monitor our progress on an ongoing basis.

In reflecting on this year:

- Indigenous Awareness Week was very successful again this year
- The incorporation of Indigenous Ways of Wellness into Wellness Week was a great way to bring our school goals together and promote more than just western ways of understanding well-being and ways to address wellness
- The Red Dress Project display to mark International Women's Day, draw attention to Canada's Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and kick off Indigenous Awareness Week was hugely impactful
- An increased number of students at Tech have self-identified as Indigenous
- The First Nations 12 course has been very successful, and sign-up is strong for next year
- We have observed: increased student awareness, willingness and interest to speak about issues of racism, privilege and colonization; good rapport and communication; improved attendance and class participation; lots of positive reflections; strong evidence of learning in classes; increased parent participation in events
- Students of Indigenous heritage have taken on leadership roles at Van Tech
- Non-Indigenous students have verbalized their surprise at the history and conditions
- We have had deep and sustained discussions about racism and privilege

There is much more work to do, but the level of readiness to take on challenging conversations is increasing.