

2024-2025 School Learning Plan

SCHOOL STORY

With deep gratitude and respect, we are honoured to be learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).

Vancouver Technical Secondary School, established in 1916, initially served as a technical school located at 12th and Oak. The current building, constructed in 1928, boasts state-of-the-art technical facilities and originally catered exclusively to male students. However, in 1940, female students were welcomed, and subsequent major additions in 1954 and a seismic upgrade in 2011 have shaped the school's physical space to meet the evolving needs of our community. This year, the student group, Community for Care and Dignity, has been actively engaged in conversations around making the washrooms more welcoming for all students.

Van Tech thrives as a diverse learning community. Approximately 1650 students and over 100 staff members, including office and building support staff, multicultural workers, CST members, and VPD and VCH employees, contribute to its vibrancy. Our student body represents a rich tapestry of ethno-cultural backgrounds, spanning over fifty language groups. The programs and initiatives offered at Van Tech mirror this diversity, adapting to the ever-changing needs and values of our school community. Notably, we maintain strong partnerships with organizations such as Vancouver Coastal Health through our Leadership and Resiliency Program (LRP) and collaborate with Fresh Roots on our school farm. Additionally, our engagement with Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House further supports our students through the Community Schools Team (CST).

Van Tech's comprehensive school programs encompass Jr. and Sr. Learning Assistance (LAC), the Learning Support Program (LSP), Life Skills/DSP, Flex/Humanities Mini School, Summit Mini School, French Immersion, and English Language Learner (ELL) classes. We also welcome international students from Asia, Central and South America, and Europe.

The uniqueness of Van Tech lies in our commitment to social justice and reconciliation. We host annual an Indigenous Celebration week. Our schoolyard garden projects, including the Indigenous Garden, and Garden Club beds in partnership with Fresh Roots, contribute to our vibrant community. Notably, on September 27, 2023, we unveiled artwork by artist Xwalacktun (Rick Harry) at the front entrance—a tribute to the Squamish and Kwakwak'wakw nations. Students create works of art under the guidance and support of Indigenous artist mentors. Our Celebration of Champions recognizes students' Grit, Determination, Diligence, Improvement, Creative Measure, and Class Inclusion and Leadership. Leadership opportunities abound, both formally through PE Leadership and Mental Health Leadership courses and informally via school clubs and CST and LRP initiatives.

We actively foster community through events like the Grade 8 Family Welcome, program potluck evenings, music concerts, drama performances, Fine Arts week, and athletic events. This year we received a generous grant from the Vancouver Police Foundation to run a free FIT Boxing Program for Grade 8 and 9 students; the

intention of the program is to encourage students to be physically active and to foster a sense of belonging. Our commitment to community extends to supporting students from low-income families through the annual Holiday Hamper drive, which receives donations from local charities and Van Tech families. As we continuously seek innovative ways to foster student belonging and empower student agency and ownership, our Student Forum provides a platform for actionable change and student involvement in shaping the school's operations.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS?

At Van Tech, 251 of our students have Ministry designations. We support 86 Indigenous students, 30 of whom are in Grade 8, 76 English Language Learners (ELL) students, and 23 international students. This year, we collected student data from:

Van Tech Senior Student Survey – September 2023

- Grades 10 -12s were surveyed as part of our school start-up.

Student Learning Surveys – March 2024

- Completed by Grades 8-12
- We concentrated on the data collected from our Grads of 2025 because this is the only cohort from whom we have two years of data; we examined their responses from Grade 10 and 11.

Student Forum – April 2024

- This event provided an opportunity for students to engage in conversations about their school experiences and the 3 focii of the School Learning Plan.
- We hosted 35 students (invited and randomly selected) to ensure full representation of student intersectionality.

Van Tech student strengths:

- involved in a wide-range of school-based activities (clubs, athletics, events)
- care about the feelings, safety and fair treatment of other people in the building
- value diversity

Van Tech student support needs:

- dealing with mental health and wellness
- more opportunities for student-led initiatives (including during FIT)
- developing a greater sense of agency
- more teacher involvement in clubs and events

The evidence we collected tells us that Van Tech students are socially conscious and have a clear understanding of what they want in and from their school. The themes that emerged from students' voices are what shaped the development of this plan.

AS A SCHOOL COMMUNITY, WE ARE WORKING ON THE FOLLOWING TO:

Improve student achievement in literacy and numeracy, physical and mental well-being, and belonging

Our goal is to develop a sense of belonging amongst students and staff of the Van Tech community, working towards an increased sense of belonging. We aim to employ positive and sustainable practices to develop deeper connections, and feelings of belonging for our students and staff.

Why did we select this goal?

This goal is carried over from our 2023-2024 School Learning Plan. It connects to the Education Plan objective of improving school environments to ensure they are safe, caring, welcoming and inclusive places for students and families. A focus on belonging aligns with the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (AEEA) Belonging goal (to increase students' sense of pride, self-esteem, belonging, place, acceptance, and caring in their schools). The data we collected from students this year indicates a need to continue our pursuit. We know that when students feel like they belong, it positively influences their engagement, motivation, and persistence, and can have a significant impact on their academic achievement. Similarly, we believe that a staff community that feels a strong sense of belonging will be better placed to foster a sense of belonging in their classrooms.

What are we doing to address this goal?

Action #1 (continue from 2023-2024): Share and implement classroom strategies that foster belonging.

In March 2024, the staff evaluated over 50 strategies to enhance classroom belonging and agreed on a unified approach to implement for the year's remainder. This involved greeting students by name or with a smile during class transitions. Some educators adopted an additional strategy. Each week since April, a new strategy was included in the WAAG newsletter for those wishing to further this initiative. Informal lunches in April and May allowed staff to exchange insights, which were also discussed at the April staff meeting. At the May staff meeting, feedback was sought through three questions about these efforts: *what did you try, how did it go, and what will you do next?* The feedback from March to May suggests that while there's been short-term success, ongoing and perhaps additional measures are necessary to achieve our objective. We'll be able to assess the long-term impact next year.

Action #2 (continue from 2023-2024): Increase staff's sense of belonging by offering ways for staff to connect.

During our regular monthly staff meetings, we conduct a recognition event called the Van Tech TLC draw. This event honours staff members who have been acknowledged by their peers for contributing to a collegial and positive school climate. The nominees' actions are posted on the staff Team for all to see. Additionally, in April, we began hosting 'Coffee Chats' every three to four weeks. These informal gatherings held before the start of class are designed to provide a social opportunity for staff members. The number of participants has been growing, and those attending have enjoyed connecting with their colleagues. We plan to maintain this initiative next year.

Action #3 (continue from 2023-2024): Host Student Forums to foster student belonging and develop student agency

Next year, Van Tech will host two Student Forums—one in December and another in April. During these half-day events, approximately 35 students from grades 8 to 12 will participate. The selection process will include both randomly chosen students and those specifically invited to ensure a diverse representation of student

perspectives. At the forums, students will discuss their school experiences, highlight priority issues, and provide feedback on the School Learning Plan.

How did we come to the specific actions we plan to undertake to address the goal?

The School Learning Plan team, which consists of a core group of 8 educators with an additional 10 staff joining regularly, met 8 times from December to May. We assessed the effectiveness of our 2024 plan and considered recently collected belonging data to determine these 2025 belonging actions.

Reference literacy / numeracy or achievement data

We know that when students feel like they belong, it positively influences their engagement, motivation, and persistence, and can have significant a impact on their academic achievement. We will continue to monitor our students' literacy and numeracy results year to year and we'll add some questions to the Student Learning Survey to ascertain if there is a correlation between student achievement and our belonging actions.

Improve equity

Our goal is to increase the representation of equity-seeking groups in the school. We define equity-seeking groups (ESG) as those communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society because of barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination. (Ex: BIPOC, 2SLGBTQ+, persons living with a disability)

Why did we select this goal?

This equity goal is closely tied to the Education Plan's objective of eliminating racism and discrimination in all its forms. It also intersects with our goal of enhancing the sense of belonging for both students and staff. Additionally, it aligns with the AEEA Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement goal of Culture and Community (to increase knowledge, awareness, appreciation of, and respect for Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions by all students through eliminating institutional, cultural and individual racism within the Vancouver school district learning communities). Effective strategies to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion include increasing the representation of equity-seeking groups in course materials and display cases. When we intentionally showcase diverse perspectives, identities, and cultures, it validates students' identities, provides positive role models, and enriches their overall learning experiences. Exposure to different viewpoints fosters critical thinking and empathy. Importantly, when students feel acknowledged, heard, and valued, they are more likely to thrive both academically and emotionally.

What are we doing to address this goal?

Action #1 (optional): Increase the number of staff and classes that create Indigenous-centered displays for the foyer-area display cases.

In September, staff members will receive a reminder about the sign-up process for utilizing the display cases in the foyer area. Additionally, they will be informed about which Indigenous Education Teachers from both the school and district can assist with this initiative. During the October staff meeting, we will engage in discussions about the significance of representation. We'll also share ideas for creating displays and explore potential collaborations with Indigenous Education Teachers. Notably, there is a dedicated group of teachers who

consistently showcase their students' work. Among them are educators who teach Indigenous Focused Graduation requirement courses and those who lead student social justice clubs. Their insights and contributions will be invaluable during these conversations.

Action #2 (optional): Increase representation of equity-seeking groups (ESG) in course content and materials.

During the November staff meeting, we plan to explore the district's Equity and Anti-Oppression Sharepoint site alongside school leads or district Equity and Anti-racism DRTs. We will invite interested departments and/or staff to review their collection of ESG resources. If there's interest, after personal and/or department inventories are complete, we will organize an informal session for sharing resources and invite Equity and Anti-racism DRTs to support staff in the collection of further ESG resources.

Action #3: Ensure school announcements highlight topics and events that raise awareness of the history and lived experiences of equity-seeking groups. (e.g. National Truth and Reconciliation Day, Black Excellence Day, International Women's Day, Asian Heritage Month)

This action will be spearheaded by our student communication team and supported by our Administration and other equity-minded staff. The team will meet in June to create a purpose statement and they will meet regularly to select ESG announcement topics.

How did you come to the specific actions you plan to undertake to address the goal?

When the School Learning Plan Team considered actions to build and increase a sense of belonging for all members of the Van Tech community, we considered how to best serve equity-seeking groups. We believe that increasing the representation of ESG in our school community demonstrates our belief that everyone matters and will ultimately improve student engagement and achievement.

Reference literacy/numeracy or achievement data

When students feel seen, heard and valued, they are more likely to thrive academically and emotionally. We will continue to monitor our students' literacy and numeracy results year to year and we'll add some questions to the Student Learning Survey to ascertain if there is a correlation between student achievement and our equity actions.

Continue on our journey of reconciliation with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit

Our goal is to increase knowledge, awareness, appreciation of, and respect for Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures and contributions among all learners.

Why did we select this goal?

Our goal is the same as a district Education Plan objective. It aligns with the aforementioned Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (AEEA) Culture and Community goal as well as BCTF Professional Standard 9 and the BCPVPA Leadership Standards. Interest in Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures and contributions is strong at Van Tech and continues to grow in our community. Reconciliation - engaging in the work of reconciliation through action - by students and staff is ongoing at Van Tech and the actions they have taken in this regard over the last several years are too numerous to list here.

What are you doing to address this goal?

Action #1: Increase use of First People’s Principles of Learning when planning for student learning (curricular & extra-curricular)

In May, staff members were invited to participate in a survey assessing their comfort level and preparedness for utilizing the FPPL in designing learning activities. The data collected from this survey will inform the planning of professional learning opportunities by Indigenous Education teachers, our DRT and administrators. These opportunities will be offered during optional monthly lunchtime conversations and regular mini-learning sessions at staff meetings. Our professional learning initiative will begin in June with the distribution of key resources to staff. In the fall, each staff member will be asked to select one FPPL to explore further and intentionally engage with throughout Semester 1. Teachers will then be asked to plan learning experiences through the lens of this FPPL during Semester 2.

Action #2: Organize an Indigenous Celebration Week to be held in June.

We will build on the 2023-2024 ICW, with an eye to increasing student involvement. June 2024 activities and events included:

- daily announcements with songs by Indigenous musicians and profiles of Indigenous role models;
- display cases highlighting Van Tech’s Indigenous Grads, student art work made with the guidance of Indigenous artists, and student research projects;
- in-school field trips to view the display cases and QR codes posted around the school that connect to student projects about Indigenous poets, authors, artists and more, *en francais*;
- FIT time activities for all students including Indigenous Math Games, an opportunity to learn the Coast Salish Anthem and the Women’s Warrior Song, a tour of Van Tech’s Indigenous Garden, an opportunity to hear a TedX talk on the power of Indigenous storytelling, and a chance to plant their very-own “three-sisters”;
- classroom events, including Powwow dance lessons in PHE with Nyla Bedard.

In April, we’ll strike an Indigenous Celebration week organizing committee and invite Indigenous students to join.

How did you come to the specific actions you plan to undertake to address the goal?

Van Tech teachers prioritize Indigenous knowledge and worldviews and are committed to learning more about culturally responsive pedagogy. Approximately 20 interested staff members received copies of Jo Chrona’s book “Wayi Wah!” in November. Additionally, a small group of teachers collaborated with our school’s Indigenous Education teacher and a CAM team DRT during dedicated Collaborative time focused on place-based learning. The next beneficial step is to invite all staff members to engage more deeply and plan using the FPPL. The Van Tech staff actively collaborates with Indigenous artists and speakers, fostering whole-school participation. By intentionally involving Indigenous students in the planning and execution of Van Tech’s ICW, we aim to amplify their voices and enhance their sense of agency.

Reference literacy / numeracy or achievement data.

When students feel seen, heard and valued, they are more likely to thrive academically and emotionally. Van Tech’s Indigenous teachers, Learning Hub teachers, and administrators will continue to work together to support our Indigenous students and monitor their literacy and numeracy results year to year. The additional questions we plan to add to the 2025 Student Learning Survey are intended to ascertain if there’s a correlation between our School Learning Plan actions and Indigenous student achievement.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE'RE ON TRACK?

To assess the effectiveness of our actions, we'll compare baseline student data from the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years, including the Student Learning Survey and Student Forums. We'll add some questions to the 2025 Student Learning Survey related to student achievement. The purpose is to investigate whether there is a correlation between student achievement and their sense of belonging. We'll facilitate two Student Forums – one in December and another in April, and lastly, a Senior Student Survey, to be issued in September and April, will focus on students' feelings around belonging and equity and their understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures.

We'll continue to share news, activities and events that connect to our School Learning Plan with the Van Tech Community in the monthly Family Bulletins and at PAC meetings.

Some of our actions will require additional progress checks:

Belonging

Action #1: Share and implement classroom strategies that foster a sense of belonging.

- We'll collect staff-generated anecdotal evidence through FORMS at the January and May staff meetings and offer informal conversation opportunities during staff meetings as needed to share ideas and gain inspiration.

Action #2: Increase staff's sense of belonging by offering ways for staff to connect.

- We'll track staff involvement in both our TLC draw and Coffee Chats over time and adjust accordingly.

Equity

Action #1 (optional): Increase the number of staff and classes that create Indigenous displays for the foyer display cases.

- During the 2023-2024 year, our school's foyer-area display case, which highlights Indigenous culture, was utilized by five different teachers for four distinct courses and a significant school-wide event commemorating the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We expect that the emphasis on the FPPL across the school, coupled with our new Indigenous teacher's second full year of teaching here, will lead to achieving our goals by June 2025.

Action #2 (optional): Increase representation of equity-seeking groups (ESG) in course content and materials.

- Interested teachers will use at least one new ESG resource with their class(es), monitor the results, and participate in an informal share-out about their experiences at a time determined by the group.

Continue on our journey of reconciliation with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit

Action #1: Increase use of First People's Principles of Learning when planning for student learning (curricular & extra-curricular)

- Staff will be invited to informal monthly lunch-time conversations to learn with and from each other and gain inspiration. At the April staff meeting we'll use a FORM to collect staff-generated anecdotal evidence regarding their experiences.