

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 səliłwətał (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 foci 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 français*;
- 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.

Evidence

- Staff surveys conducted in January and May indicate that teachers are generally pleased with the implementation of the school-wide belonging strategy of greeting students at the door. Many staff report feeling positive about the practice, which appears to be used frequently and consistently. Even those who find it challenging express a desire to use it more often.

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

Evidence

- Recruiting students for the Student Forums proved challenging, especially in April. Informal conversations between students and some staff suggest two main reasons: students are reluctant to miss class time, and many feel that their participation in the forums does not lead to meaningful change. While the latter is disappointing, it is understandable—many of the topics students have discussed over the past 16 months fall outside their direct control. These include the creation of social spaces within the school, improved bathroom supplies, adjustments to the FIT schedule, and changes to the FIT-freeze process for Core Competency self-assessments.
- Although this year's forums did not appear to significantly enhance students' sense of agency, we have already begun addressing their feedback—particularly concerning the Core Competency assessment process. We have communicated our actions to participants and hosted a thank-you lunch to show our appreciation.

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.

Evidence

- Participation in nominating colleagues for the TLC staff draw declined from last year. We believe this may be due to the shift from collecting nominations on paper during staff meetings to using online Forms submitted in advance. We will revisit this action for next year.
- Staff surveys from January and May indicate that the coffee chats are well-received. Attendance remained relatively steady throughout the year, with approximately half the staff participating.

Final Reflection, May 2025

Van Tech successfully met its goal of fostering a sense of belonging among students and staff, likely due to initiatives outlined in the 2024–2025 School Learning Plan. While students’ sense of belonging remained relatively stable, staff belonging showed notable improvement.

Student Belonging

Positive Adult Connections: The February 2025 Student Learning Survey revealed that 90%–96% of students across all grades reported that at least one adult at school cares about them. Similarly, the April 2025 Senior Student Survey showed that 88% of Grade 10–12 students could name two or more adults who care about them and believe in their success—an increase from 79% in September 2024.

Student Perceptions: Feedback from the December 2024 Student Forum and the two Senior Student Surveys indicate that students view staff as friendly, encouraging, and inclusive. They noted that staff check in with them, engage in conversations about their lives, and offer academic support when needed.

Survey Results on Belonging: In the 2025 School Learning Survey, students were asked whether they feel a sense of belonging at school. The percentage who responded “sometimes,” “most of the time,” or “all of the time” were:

- Grade 8: 88%
- Grade 9: 84% (↑ from 81% in 2024)
- Grade 10: 77% (↓ from 82% in 2024)
- Grade 11: 82% (↓ from 83% in 2024)
- Grade 12: 80% (↓ from 81% in 2024)

Survey Results on Feeling Welcome: Students were also asked if they feel welcome at school. The responses were:

- Grade 8: 88%
- Grade 9: 90% (↑ from 88% in 2024)
- Grade 10: 90% (↑ from 87% in 2024)
- Grade 11: 88% (↓ from 92% in 2024)
- Grade 12: 88% (unchanged from 2024)

Staff Belonging

Two unexpected indicators of increased staff belonging emerged this year:

- The revival of the Staff Sunshine Fund, inactive since the COVID-19 pandemic.

- A week-long Christmas game and prize draw, initiated by teachers in the absence of a formal social committee.

Additionally, the May 2025 staff survey showed that interest in joining a staff social committee has doubled—an encouraging sign, especially given the committee’s inactivity in recent years.

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 hope 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.

Evidence

- The number of Indigenous-focused displays in the large foyer-area display cases increased by two during the 2024–2025 school year, while staff and class usage remained consistent. One display to note is the Indigi-Queer display created for the June Pride season. Happily, Van Tech’s Indigenous belongings are now housed in a permanent display case in the foyer area, ensuring ongoing visibility and recognition.
- A number of bulletin board displays around the school were dedicated to Indigenous content in 2024-2025.

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.

Evidence

- Although we had planned to explore the district’s Equity and Anti-Oppression SharePoint site during the November staff meeting, this did not take place. However, a Van Tech team did participate in the District Equity Scan. The team— a Social Studies teacher, teacher-librarian, and administrator—reviewed the library’s French collection focused on Indigenous and Asian peoples. This review led to a significant purchase of books by and about French-speaking Asians, supported by a VSB grant.

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)

Evidence

- Data from the Student Forum and Senior Student Surveys as well as the two staff surveys indicate that ESG-related announcements have been noticed and appreciated.

Final reflection, May 2025

We achieved our goal of increasing the representation of equity-seeking groups within the school. These equity-focused initiatives likely contributed to a stronger sense of belonging among students. According to the May 2025 Senior Student Survey, 92% of respondents indicated that they value individuals from Equity-Seeking Groups (ESGs), marking a 1% increase since September 2024.

One notable initiative that supported this progress was a highly successful Asian Heritage Month, which played a key role in enhancing visibility and representation.

Continue 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.

Evidence

- Discussions about incorporating the First Peoples’ Principles of Learning (FPPL) into instructional planning took place during the October, November, and February staff meetings, rather than over lunch as originally planned. At the February meeting, seven teachers from four different departments shared how they integrate FPPL into their teaching.
- According to our May staff survey, approximately 30% of teachers are intentionally designing learning experiences through the lens of one or more of the FPPL.

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

Evidence

- The 2024-2025 ICW was on par in terms of size and scope to the 2023-2024 ICW. We were unable to engage students involved in the Van Tech Indigenous Leadership group, however we will try again next year.

Final reflection, May 2025

We continue to work towards our goal of increasing knowledge, awareness, appreciation, and respect for Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures, and contributions among all learners.

Insights from the December Student Forum indicate a strong desire among students to explore a more comprehensive understanding of local Indigenous nations prior to colonization, as well as to learn more about stories of Indigenous resilience. Similarly, the May 2025 Senior Student Survey revealed that 93% of respondents value the histories, traditions, cultures, and contributions of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).

Teachers who incorporated the FPPL into their planning reported positive outcomes. Students demonstrated increased awareness and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing and learning, and many developed a deeper understanding of their own roles within the community. The February staff meeting was particularly engaging, with many educators expressing inspiration from their colleagues' shared practices. There is strong interest in repeating this sharing structure in the 2025–2026 school year, and a new group of teachers has already volunteered to participate.

A meaningful addition to our efforts this spring was the offering of weaving and beading workshops for teachers, led by the school's Indigenous Education Teacher and an Indigenous staff member. These hands-on sessions provided valuable opportunities for experiential learning rooted in Indigenous knowledge and practices, likely deepening staff appreciation for these approaches.

Reflection regarding the connection of actions to student achievement, May 2025

We know that a strong sense of belonging positively influences students' engagement, motivation, and perseverance, and can significantly impact their academic success. When students feel seen, heard, and valued, they are more likely to thrive both academically and emotionally. However, it is difficult to make a direct correlation between our belonging, equity and Truth and Reconciliation actions and our students' Literacy and Numeracy Assessment marks.

Van Tech's 2024–2025 results show some modest shifts. For the first time since 2020–2021, the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Extending on the Literacy 12 assessment has dipped below the district average. In contrast, the percentage of students achieving Proficient or Extending on the Numeracy 10 assessment remains slightly above the district average, bucking a trend seen since 2020–2021. The Literacy 10 results have consistently remained slightly higher than the district average over the same period.

Additional questions in the Student Learning Survey aimed at exploring potential correlations between student achievement and our belonging, equity, and Truth and Reconciliation initiatives were not included. This decision was made because such questions would capture students' perceptions of their achievement rather than actual academic outcomes.