

SD 91 Teacher Survey

Summary

The aim of the teacher survey was to get a firm understanding of teachers' preparedness and awareness of provincial teacher requirements to teach for identity and the strengths and barriers facing Indigenous students in the school system. Too often surveys like these are seen as evaluating or judging educators, instead we view them as a supportive tool that can locate where teachers are in relation to emerging trends in education and the best ways we can aid their progress in lifelong learning. The initial design of the surveys exclusively examined teachers' relationship to Indigenous education and their perspective of the experiences of Indigenous students in their schools. We promptly recognized the transformative moment and decided to expand beyond social justice for Indigenous students and began examining teacher perspective and ability to engage with multiple identities and student experiences in school. For this survey we received 138 responses, which is a solid representation of the district's teachers that have approximately 265 in their ranks.

The initial section of the survey sought demographic information on the location of their school and how many years they have taught. The survey was based upon "personal and social core competency" in the ministries curricular guidelines, which requires teaching for, "Personal Awareness and Responsibility, Positive Personal and Cultural Identity, Social Awareness and Responsibility". Given the provincial mandate, we saw the survey as an excellent opportunity to understand how prepared most teachers are to meet standards they are required to adhere to. Our feeling is that too often now requirements emerge for teachers without the requisite training to ensure they are successful in the new approach. Moreover, we then broke down aspects of identity and asked teachers about the comfort level and ability to engage with these topics, what additional supports they could use, and how the approach fits into their discipline.

The following section engaged with questions about teachers Knowledge, openness, and ability to teach Indigenous topics in the school system. Given the district has a student population that is over 35% Indigenous, gauging teacher ability, awareness, and engagement with this topic is critical since it will be an increasingly foundational aspect of teaching and learning in the district. The final section of the survey asked questions about teachers' perspectives and understanding about the Indigenous student experience. The opening question in this section asked teachers what helps Indigenous students succeed, to insure we open with strengths-based approaches. In the previous student survey we began in a similar fashion, positioning all learners as successful in some aspects of their learning. The following three questions in the teachers survey probe their perspectives on the impacts of racism on Indigenous students, how they have seen it occur, and productive responses. Finally, the final question on the survey asks about the specific experiences of Indigenous girls in the school system and the potential barriers they face.

The survey is expansive, covering substantial ground in order to gain a robust understanding of teachers' experience, perspective, and preparedness for new educational approaches. The findings, which will be shared in the following sections, can lead our subsequent programming and professional development approaches, since we are hearing directly from educators. The data becomes critical when we compare with the Indigenous student responses in the surveys we distributed the previous year.

Section 1 – Demographics

The findings of this section are relatively straight forward when considered on their own. When asked the town or region of their school we received the following responses: Burns Lake area 30.66%, Fort St. James 16.79%, Fraser Lake 10.95%, and Vanderhoof 41.61%. The size and number of schools in these regions has resulted in close to a representative number from each region based on the size of the faculty. In a later section we will return to discussions of unique findings on future questions based on the location of the school. The second demographic questions asked how long respondents have been teaching. The findings in this section were 1-5 Years 18.84%, 6-10 years 15.22, 11-19 years 18.84%, and 20+ years 47.10. Compared the provincial average in response rates on other surveys (BCTFA, 2012), we are seeing the level of teacher experience in the responses mostly in line with what is expected. In other surveys across BC teachers with 20+ years of experience typically respond to surveys at twice the average rate, giving their group a larger voice in the data. A critical reason for this question was to separate data to see if any trends emerged regarding teacher experience and openness or ability to teach for identity. The results, which we will discuss in a later section, is not what we anticipated. The demographics section provides insight into which schools are in the best positions to take up this work, which regions could use additional supports, and if we see differences among experienced and new teachers.

Section 2 – Personal and Social Core Competency

The first question of this section inquired about teacher understanding of the competency required by the ministry. Our intent for this question is twofold. First, we were trying to understand teacher familiarity with the competency, while also establishing this work as supporting requirements already established by the ministry, so that our work is viewed as supportive rather than adding additional work to teachers' already sizeable responsibilities. The response to the first question was, zero knowledge 0%, minimal knowledge 8.70%, some knowledge 63.77%, very knowledgeable 27.54%, and expert 0%. Given the data there is a clear foundation for most teachers to build upon, with the vast majority having some knowledge or being very knowledgeable. When taking level of experience into consideration we see almost no change in the data, with negligible differences found between the responses in teachers from years 1-5 and 20+ in experience.

The following question posed additional supports for their knowledge of the personal and social core competency. Responses were mostly evenly divided, with professional development receiving 46.72%, teacher resources at 40.15%, and other 13.14%. The majority of 'other'

responses asked for both professional developments and resources. Some additional answers asked for opportunities to engage in larger discussions or parental access to the same resources and opportunities. The subsequent section inquired about fit of the competency in their teaching discipline. Responses were resounding, with 87.59% believing the competency fit with their discipline, with an additional 4.38% acknowledging that it fit with some of their topics better than others.

The final question in this section probed teacher competency engaging with various aspects of identity, as teachers are prompted to do by the competency. Specific aspects of identity were presented to understand if there are aspects of social justice teachers typically feel more or less comfortable teaching. The responses are as follows.

	1 - UNSURE	2 - NOT COMPETENT	3 - SOMEWHAT COMPETENT	4 - COMPETENT	5 - EXTREMELY COMPETENT	TOTAL
Gender Identity	6.52% 9	23.19% 32	40.58% 56	21.74% 30	7.97% 11	138
Race	2.92% 4	6.57% 9	39.42% 54	42.34% 58	8.76% 12	137
Religion	3.62% 5	18.84% 26	33.33% 46	33.33% 46	10.87% 15	138
Sexual Orientation	7.25% 10	20.29% 28	39.13% 54	24.64% 34	8.70% 12	138
Ability	2.90% 4	7.25% 10	32.61% 45	44.93% 62	12.32% 17	138
Social Class	3.68% 5	9.56% 13	31.62% 43	42.65% 58	12.50% 17	136

As you can see there are significant discrepancies between teachers’ belief in their competency to teach for difference aspects of identity. If we start by examining the ‘not competent’ responses, we see gender identity (23.19%) and sexual orientation (20.29%) are substantially higher than all other aspects of identity. Conversely, we see race (6.57%) and ability (7.25%) with relatively fewer teachers feeling not competent to teach these subjects. Clearly, based on the data, there is a need for professional development and ongoing learning about gender identity and sexual orientation in the district. If we look at the other end of the results, in the section where teachers felt ‘extremely competent’, we see the highest numbers in social class (12.50%) and ability (12.32%). Moreover, even the areas with the fewest number of teachers who feel extremely competent, gender identity (7.97) and sexual orientation (8.70%) we have a number (11 and 12) of teachers in the district who can lead their colleagues through this work. The data for this section provides direction on our approach to supporting teachers to leading education as it relates to various aspects of identity.

In this instance we start seeing some disparity in teaching experience and perspective. As you will see, when we compare the responses from teachers who have 1-5 years of experience compared to 20+, we start seeing significant diversion.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNSURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
Q2: 1-5 years	7.69% 2	38.46% 10	23.08% 6	26.92% 7	3.85% 1	28.57% 26
Q2: 20+ years	3.08% 2	23.08% 15	32.31% 21	30.77% 20	10.77% 7	71.43% 65
Total Respondents	4	25	27	27	8	91

Earlier career teachers strongly agree at more than double the rate, substantially higher number agree, with a far lower number unsure, slightly fewer disagreeing, and almost a third of the number of senior teachers who strong disagree. In this case we begin to find some statistically significant divergence depending on age of teachers.

Adding a separate variable, we can see trends depending on the region of schools the responses came from.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNSURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
Q1: The Burns Lake Area (including Granisle and the Southside)	9.52% 4	26.19% 11	28.57% 12	33.33% 14	2.38% 1	30.66% 42
Q1: Fort St. James	13.04% 3	39.13% 9	21.74% 5	17.39% 4	8.70% 2	16.79% 23
Q1: Fraser Lake	0.00% 0	33.33% 5	26.67% 4	20.00% 3	20.00% 3	10.95% 15
Q1: Vanderhoof	5.26% 3	22.81% 13	35.09% 20	28.07% 16	8.77% 5	41.61% 57
Total Respondents	10	38	41	37	11	137

On the 'strongly agree' side, we see Fort St. James (13.04%) and Burns Lake (9.52%) with a far greater percentage than Vanderhoof (5.26%) and Fraser Lake (0.00%). On the opposite ends of the spectrum, for 'strongly disagree', we see Frasier Lake (20.00%) substantially higher than every other school. Vanderhoof (8.77%) and Fort St. James (8.70%) are nearly equal, with Burns Lake (2.38%) at a significantly lower number of reports.

Section 3 – Teaching Indigenous Education

This section consists of two questions that are designed to understand teacher perspective on the necessity of teaching and learning about the Indigenous people in the areas they teach, and if they feel like they have received sufficient training. In response to the first question, teachers nearly uniformly agreed (strongly agree 54.9% and agree 40.58%) that teachers have a

responsibility to know about the Indigenous cultures and history of the region. Clearly, teachers recognize the necessity of this knowledge both as educational leaders in the community and also to respect the Indigenous students and families in the school. The second question in this section as to what extent teachers feel they have been adequately trained on cultures and history of the region. In response the teachers said, no training 16.67%, some training 57.25%, adequate training 15.94%, and other 10.14%. Responses in 'other' varied considerably, from thinking that most of their knowledge is at the surface level, to wanting more hands on experience, to finding some of their training outside of the district.

A critical finding in these two questions is that the vast majority of teachers believe teachers in this district have a responsibility to be educated about local Indigenous cultures and history, while also recognizing that most of them do not have sufficient training. Clearly, this is a mandate, directed by the teachers, to increase the training and resources provided to them to meet the requirements.

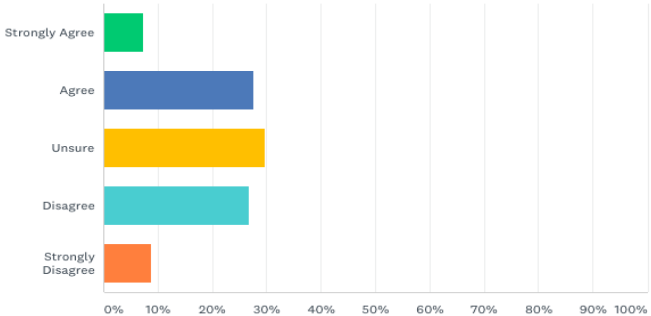
Section 4 – Perspective of Indigenous Student Experience

The first question of this section we ask the teachers their perspective on what has helped Indigenous students succeed. This question was open-ended in nature, which resulted in a wide range of responses. Responses included, a belief that higher expectations from teachers and admin influence Indigenous student success, having the curriculum and teaching align with cultural experiences and beliefs, intentionality of relationships with staff in the school, Indigenous staff and faculty, team approach, and connect to community. The most consistent response was definitely connections with teachers or adults in the building. Similarly, responses from students and parents in our preview survey pointed to the same results, with students and parents also pointing to relationships with adults in the building as the most significant indicator of student success.

The second question in this section asked about the teachers' perspective of racism as a barrier to educational success for Indigenous learners. The findings are as follows:

Do you think racism is a barrier to Indigenous student success in your school?

Answered: 138 Skipped: 0



The results are an even dispersal of perspectives, many of which falling somewhere in the middle. Notably, the student and teacher surveys saw drastically different results. In the student surveys there were reports of significant experiences of racism at a rate of 81.8%. Upon reading the qualitative descriptions it is clear that students are only including overt acts of racism in their reporting, which does not include the vast majority of racism that occurs through ignoring, avoid, low expectation, negative assumptions, and myriad other less overt acts. Similarly, Indigenous parents in the study pointed to experiences of overt racism for their children at school at a rate of 60.2%. Conversely, in the findings here we see teachers responding to questions posed if racism is a barrier to Indigenous students with unsure 29.71%, disagree 26.81%, and strongly disagree 8.70%. This means that of the teachers responding, 65.22% were either unsure or disagreed that racism is a barrier for students in the district. While in contrast Indigenous students and parents are reporting experiences of overt racism in schools at a rate that is significantly higher.

The glaring discrepancy between the experiences of Indigenous students and their parents and the perspectives of teachers in the school provides a significant opportunity for growth. Our intention is not to shame the teachers with this perspective, but instead provide the training and awareness of the experiences of students in the school. Moreover, in the following section when asked questions about how racism occurs, many teachers talked about lateral violence between Indigenous communities, instead of racism. Uncovering these instances of lateral violence is key to the growth of the district, but it is also telling that many educators believed lateral violence is an aspect of racism instead of discrimination, which shows a substantial need for additional training on power and oppression.

The rest of the responses in the section varied substantially. Some teachers had strong conceptual language of oppression and spoke directly to how they have witnessed students' experience, others spoke of students not feeling they belonged or felt welcome in the school, one teacher said the special treatment they receive cause others to resent them, streaming into non-academic programs, racism becoming pervasive in the older grades, and a number of references to lateral violence.

The following question in this section is a follow-up to learn the intervention methods used by educators to respond to instances of racism in their classroom. Teacher responses, much like the previous question, widely varied. A common response was trying to model treating everyone the same or a sense of equality in the classroom. While this is a noble pursuit, it is important to understand the ways in which we unconsciously treat people differently depending on various aspects of their identity. It is common for pre-service and in-service teachers to rely heavily on their belief that they treat all students the same, which places them in the position of failing to reflect on the reality of our relationships with identity and unconsciously harming students. Other responses include naming and drawing attention to problematic behavior or statements, diversity education, anti-racist education, not seeing any racism in their classrooms, and teaching about historic acts of racism. There are a number of the responses that are progressive and proactive approaches to racism, the teachers who have used these tools can be leaders in the school on anti-racist or anti-oppressive training. The

majority of teachers have significant room to grow in relation to their knowledge of interventions and anti-racism, a wonderful opportunity for the schools.

The final question of the survey asks about unique challenges faced by Indigenous girls in the schools in this district. The responses in this case were open-ended, with two responses appearing repeatedly. First, teachers responded that they did not know any specific challenges. In these cases they could not identify anything outside of the typical challenges of other students in this area. It is interesting in a region that is infamous for being dangerous for Indigenous women and girls that so many teachers did not make a connection to the lived experiences of these girls. The second most common response was that Indigenous girls are often quiet and do not participate too often in class. While there were also responses that spoke to the impacts of colonization on Indigenous girls, the majority fell under either not knowing or seeing them as quiet.

Emerging from data is a clear mandate to support teachers to gain more knowledge about the highway of tears, the implications of gender in colonization, and leadership from teachers on how to approach this issue in the school. Clearly there is significant space for growth in this area, which means a great opportunity for the district to implement substantial change.