

June 8, 2021

Dear Families,

**Important Information – Please Translate**

這是一份重要資訊 — 請找人為您翻譯 這是一份重要信息 — 請找人為您翻譯

Mahalagang Impormasyon - Paki salin sa sariling wika

Thông tin quan trọng - Xin tìm phiên dịch

ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ-ਮਿਹਰਬਾਨੀ ਕਰਕੇ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕਰੋ/ਕਰਵਾਓ

महत्वपूर्ण जानकारी - कृपया अनुवाद करें	중요한 정보 - 번역 부탁드립니다
Información importante - Por favor traducir	معلومات مهمة - الرجاء الترجمة
重要な情報-翻訳してください	اطلاعات مهم - لطفا ترجمه کنید

The Vancouver School Board (VSB) is pleased to inform you of the launch of the **Stronger Together** community engagement process that provides an opportunity for the school community to share their insights into eliminating racism and discrimination from Vancouver Schools. The insights and feedback collected through the engagement process will support further developing the *Anti-Racism and Non-Discrimination Strategic Plan*. The VSB has hired Urban Matters, a third-party organization, to listen to students, families, staff and the community on their experience and understanding of racism and discrimination in schools.

The engagement process, **Stronger Together**, will take place between June 8 to June 29, 2021.

Through a series of engagement activities, Urban Matters is providing opportunities to members of the Vancouver School Board community who have been affected by bias, racism and discrimination to share. While the engagement process is open to all students, families, staff and community members within the Vancouver School District, there is a special emphasis placed on listening to the voices of people with lived experience of racism and/or discrimination, in particular people who identify as Indigenous, Black/People of African Descent, People of Colour, 2SLGBTQIA+, people with disability, newcomers and refugees and anyone who identifies as belonging to a marginalized group.

**Stronger Together** offers a variety for engagement opportunities that include online surveys for students, families, and staff, sharing circles, and one-on-one interviews. A self-guided toolkit is also available to any community group or organization to have a guided discussion about their experiences and observations of racism and discrimination across the school system.

To learn more about the engagement opportunities or to participate please visit the **Stronger Together** webpage at: [www.vsb-strongertogether.ca/](http://www.vsb-strongertogether.ca/)

The engagement opportunities are listed on the next page.

Families are welcome to participate in any of the following engagement opportunities that are available till June 29, 2021:

1. Families of all students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 are invited to complete the *Stronger Together Families Survey* that is available at: [www.vsb-strongertogether.ca/](http://www.vsb-strongertogether.ca/)
  - a. Students in Grades 6 to 12 have a separate survey that they can independently complete at the same link.
2. A series of virtual sharing circles have been arranged to provide opportunity for students and families with lived experience of racism and discrimination to share and be heard in a safe space. The sharing circles are low-barrier, trauma informed discussion groups where participants can safely share their experiences and thoughts related to racism and discrimination.
  - a. The sharing circles are offered to students in Grades 8 to 12 who would like to share their experiences and observations of racism and discrimination in the school system.
  - b. One sharing circle is offered to families who identify as newcomers and/or refugees.
  - c. Students who identify as person with disabilities are welcome to have a family member or support person join them in a sharing circle that closely reflects their experience.
  - d. The sharing circles will take place online through Microsoft Teams and will last 1.5 hours. Participants will receive an honorarium for their participation. The following sharing circles are being offered:
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Students who identify as Black/African descent</b> Tuesday, June 15 at 4pm</li> <li>• <b>Students who identify as Indigenous</b> Wednesday, June 16 at 4pm</li> <li>• <b>Students who identify as Newcomers/Refugees</b> Wednesday, June 16 at 4pm</li> <li>• <b>Families who identify as Newcomers/Refugees</b> Wednesday, June 16 at 7pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Students who identify as People of Colour</b> Thursday, June 17 at 4pm</li> <li>• <b>Students who identify as East Asian/South East Asian descent</b> Tuesday, June 22 at 4pm</li> <li>• <b>Students who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+</b> Tuesday, June 22 at 4pm</li> <li>• <b>Students who identify as People with Disability</b> Thursday, June 17 at 6:30pm</li> </ul>
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  - e. For anyone interested in participating in a sharing circle who identifies with more than one racial/ethnic identity or marginalized group, they are welcome to join a group that they believe most closely reflects their lived experience.
  - f. If you are interested, please email [vsb\\_engagement@urbanmatters.ca](mailto:vsb_engagement@urbanmatters.ca) to register.
3. Families who are not involved in a sharing circle and who are interested in having a deeper discussion around racism and discrimination, they are welcome to form a group with interested community members and use the online Self-Guided Group Discussion Toolkit to host a virtual group discussion using the guidelines in the toolkit.
  - a. Urban Matters can provide access to Microsoft Teams for groups to host virtual discussions. The feedback from the discussion can be inputted directly into the toolkit online that can be accessed through: [www.vsb-strongertogether.ca/](http://www.vsb-strongertogether.ca/)
4. Families may also directly submit written submissions to: [vsb\\_engagement@urbanmatters.ca](mailto:vsb_engagement@urbanmatters.ca)

**Equitable and Inclusive Engagement Process**

Urban Matters is committed to intentionally integrate practices to provide inclusive and equitable opportunities for everyone to participate, regardless of their background. We are closely following best practices in engaging with people with lived experience, including providing translation services, honouring time through compensation, offering engagement in the evenings and conducting phone interviews. Due to COVID-19 public health orders, it is not possible to conduct in person engagement and hence Urban Matters will actively address any technological barriers faced by community members.

Your comfort and safety are important to us. We recognize this topic may cause discomfort or negative emotions for those with lived experience of facing racism and discrimination. We suggest identifying self-care strategies and support systems as you participate in the engagement process. The school counsellors are aware of the engagement process and are available to support students as needed.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Urban Matters team by emailing: [vsb\\_engagement@urbanmatters.ca](mailto:vsb_engagement@urbanmatters.ca)

Respectfully,



Talia Ahmad (she/her/hers)  
Social Health and Well-being Analyst & Engagement Co-Lead  
**Urban Matters CCC Ltd.**