

“You have to find ways, no matter what field of study... to get proximate to people who are suffering, to get closer to people who are excluded, to go into the parts of the community that other people say you shouldn’t go to”

Bryan Stevenson

Dear Vancouver Public Schools Team,

The Valbrun Consulting Group and UPD Consulting are partnering with the district to conduct an equity audit that will chart the direction of the district as it strives to closely examine and close opportunity gaps. Through the audit process, we will focus on the structural equity issues within the system and culture and on addressing issues as they impact the community and students. As an important first step, we are seeking your input on what is going well, what could be improved and what’s most important to pursue excellence and equity in every school and champion the success of all students.

Our approach to developing a comprehensive and inclusive equity audit process is one that will:

- Be dedicated to better understanding the challenges faced by you all, by the communities you serve, and by the movements we are all a part of.
- Engage and reflect the feedback, insights and ideas shared by staff, students and community members.
- Analyze policies, impact, internal practices, and equity outcomes across the district.
- Assess the equity consciousness and readiness of the district to address and eliminate inequities.

We hold strongly to our belief that effective equity work requires getting “proximate” to the problem. Starting this week, we will be conducting interviews and focus groups with internal and external stakeholders. Our goal is to learn more about the equity climate in the district and discuss some of the outstanding issues, opportunities, and challenges. **We want to make sure that we hear a diverse range of views and that everyone has the opportunity to provide input into this work.**

In addition to connecting with you directly, we have already started to do some initial training with leadership across the district and begun our first round of analyzing literature and curriculum, policies and practices, the district leadership’s readiness to address institutional racism and equity and financial resource distribution.

Specific opportunities for input in the coming months:

- **Designated interviews and focus groups** - You may receive a request to participate in an interview or small focus group. Please join these conversations if you are willing and available. We requested these interviews and groups to seek specific expertise, information, historical context, and points of view.

- **Survey** - The Climate and Culture Survey will be distributed the week of March 15, 2021. Please respond, as we will integrate the engagement data as part of our assessment. In addition, we have added a set of questions on race and racism, which will have a different feel than the rest of the survey. Thank you in advance for your participation.
- **Listening Sessions** - We will be holding space to learn from you and welcome the opportunity to hear from you during a group listening session or a 1:1 conversation. When completing the Culture and Climate Survey, please indicate your interest in participating. Someone will reach out to you to schedule a time to meet upon the completion of the survey. We will make ourselves available and do our best to accommodate everyone.

Your feedback through surveys and focus groups will provide valuable information and insights as we conduct the initial assessment phase of our work. Thank you for taking the time to give us your input. We will keep you informed of additional opportunities to engage in this process in the coming weeks. We thank you in advance for your patience and partnership and look forward to connecting with you soon.

To stay up to date on the progression of this equity audit, we invite you to follow updates on the [Equity Initiative](#) page of the Vancouver Public Schools website.

In partnership and equity,

The Valbrun Consulting Group and UPD Consulting