

# EMBRACING DIVERSITY

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JUNE 2025







## PREAMBLE

In Edmonton Catholic Schools we believe that each person is created in the image and likeness of God and in the goodness, dignity and worth of each person. We honour the dignity of each person by treating one another with empathy, compassion, and respect. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (EDIAR) are guiding values consistent with Catholic Social Teaching, reaffirming dignity at every level. In our Division Plan for Continuous Growth 2023-2026, our Board of Trustees has established, as one of its priorities, Embracing Diversity. Embedded in that priority is the following goal and key strategies.

**Goal E1:** Students and staff recognize and celebrate the unique gifts and talents of every member of their learning and working community.

- Develop common understandings of EDIAR concepts and language from a Catholic worldview for students, staff and families.
- Create opportunities for students and staff to develop and celebrate the uniqueness and diversity as children of God.
- Promote and support welcoming, caring, safe and inclusive Catholic learning and working spaces.





## Inclusive Communities

Our Division is an inclusive community where the fundamental dignity and rights of everyone are honoured and where those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ are welcomed and supported as children of God.



*God saw  
everything that was  
made, and indeed,  
it was very good.*  
GENESIS 1:31

## Communautés Inclusives

Notre conseil scolaire est une communauté inclusive où la dignité et les droits fondamentaux de chacun sont honorés et où ceux qui s'identifient comme 2SLGBTQ+ sont accueillis et soutenus en tant qu'enfants de Dieu.



*Et Dieu vit  
tout ce qu'il avait fait,  
et voici que c'était  
très bon.*

As a Catholic organization, we embrace the values of equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism as is evident through the implementation of the priorities, key strategies and actions within the EDIAR strategic plan. This report shares the vast array of work that is happening across the Division with students, staff and families that truly demonstrates how we are embracing diversity. To ensure continuous relevance, ECSD has committed to ongoing engagement with interested parties, including students, staff, and families.





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# STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ADVISORY

## EDIAR STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

The first Division-wide action in the EDIAR Strategic Plan was to, *“Create an EDIAR Strategy Implementation Committee who have the authority to guide, assess, and support the ongoing growth of the strategy across the Division. Membership of this committee should consist of a broad and diverse range of individuals from the ECSD community including representation from each department.”* This committee is now in year three of implementation and is comprised of managers and directors representing departments as well as Principals and Assistant Principals from Elementary, Junior High and High School. The committee meets five times during

the school year and drives implementation of the EDIAR strategic plan at the Division level. Each member brings the lens of their school or department as well as their personal lived experience creating a diverse body of knowledge to help promote the values of EDIAR from within a Catholic lens.

Members of the EDIAR Strategic Plan Implementation Committee also join the EDIAR Advisory Group for four meetings to listen to the perspectives of staff from across the Division and inform decisions.





# BE PROUD OF YOUR ROOTS<sup>3.1</sup>



## EDIAR ADVISORY GROUP

The EDIAR Advisory Group is also in its' third year with each member serving a two- year term. Staff from all employee groups are invited to complete an expression of interest to put their name forward for consideration for the group. A matrix of criteria is utilized to select membership with the greatest diversity possible. Several identity factors are considered including faith background, race, gender, employee group, sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity, years of experience in the Division, and experience and knowledge of EDIAR matters. There are 24 members in the group representing ATA, Unifor, AUPE and Out of Scope employee groups.

The EDIAR Advisory Group has played an integral role in helping the Division address the priorities within the EDIAR strategic plan and specifically embracing diversity.





## EDIAR DISCUSSION BOOSTERS

EDIAR Booster videos and discussion guides support ongoing learning for all staff by building on the key concepts introduced in the Division's onboarding EDIAR training. Developed by the EDIAR team with input from the EDIAR Advisory Group and feedback from department managers and directors, the Boosters reflect multiple perspectives while intentionally permeating a Catholic worldview and embracing the diversity within Edmonton Catholic Schools.

A total of 12 EDIAR Booster videos and discussion guides are now available on the EDIAR SharePoint site to support ongoing learning in schools and departments across the Division. These boosters are designed to deepen understanding of equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism, and are being used regularly by staff to facilitate meaningful dialogue and reflection. Informed by feedback from the EDIAR Advisory Group and grounded in our Catholic worldview, these resources have played a vital role in advancing our Division's commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable environments. The final three boosters mark the completion of this staff-focused series, as we now begin shifting our efforts toward the development of a new booster series designed specifically to support student learning and engagement in EDIAR.

### Nine Boosters 2021-2024

| PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY                                   | INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS        | INCLUSIVE CONVERSATIONS                |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| ANTI-RACISM                                            | MICROAGGRESSIONS & UNCONSCIOUS BIAS | TRUTH & RECONCILIATION                 |
| REPORTING OF & RESPONDING TO DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM | ABLEISM AND NEURODIVERSITY          | ACTIVE ALLYSHIP & EMPATHETIC LISTENING |

### Three New Boosters 2024-2025



#### Welcoming Newcomers and Embracing Diversity

This booster highlights how welcoming newcomers reflects our Catholic call to love others, affirm dignity, and foster belonging in our school communities.



#### Power and Privilege

This booster uses the Wheel of Privilege and Power to explore how identity shapes access, influence, and how people are treated.



#### Mental Health and Stigma

This booster clarifies the difference between mental health and mental illness, and challenges stigma through inclusive, person-first language and understanding.



## EDIAR CONSULTANT

The EDIAR consultant role continues in the 2024–2025 school year and has been crucial in integrating EDIAR priorities into curriculum planning and programming. This role fosters collaboration across departments and demonstrates the connection between Catholic faith and EDIAR principles. EDIAR approaches accountability by building bridges of understanding, transforming respect, and restoring relationships.

Faith and EDIAR principles permeate all activities at ECSD, ensuring students celebrate success as unique children of God. The EDIAR consultant has contributed significantly to the Division's goal of embracing diversity, including expanding the annual Black Student Alliance Conference to include increased collaboration with division high schools, expanding the annual regional Be an Upstander Showcase introducing yet more schools to the program, and further developing curricular resources and presentations linked to student wellbeing and building community.

The following infographic highlights staff and student presentations led by the EDIAR consultant. These sessions build capacity across the Division by linking Catholic teachings with inclusive practices, creating spaces where all feel seen, heard, and valued.

### EDIAR Consultant-Led Presentations for Staff and Students

#### STAFF PRESENTATIONS



##### Faith, UDL and EDIAR

Presented during the District Mini Conferences in collaboration with Religious Services, this presentation connected SEL and EDIAR through the lens of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by making connections with our Catholic Faith Participants left with tools to build inclusive classrooms that celebrated every student's unique identity as a child of God.

##### Addressing Derogatory Language

This presentation helps staff, administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers navigate strategies to help confront inequity and derogatory language at their respective sites while simultaneously connecting to curriculum, permeating faith, and building community.

##### SEL and EDIAR

Presented during School Teams Round 2 in collaboration with Inclusive and Physical Education Curriculum Consultants, participants dove into the vibrant world of SEL and EDIAR through the lens of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Discussions focused on practical strategies to create inclusive classrooms that celebrate every student's unique identity.

##### Unlocking Rigour: Pathways to Academic Success for EAL Learners

This four-part series was presented in collaboration with EAL Consultants. Participants learned about culturally responsive teaching and how to incorporate culture in all subject areas to honour the diverse perspectives of all students, newcomers or otherwise.

#### STUDENT PRESENTATIONS



##### God Makes Us Unique

This presentation speaks to the diversity that we see and the uniqueness we are blessed to experience in our world. In this presentation, we discuss what equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism and God's love looks like, sounds like, and feels like.

##### Addressing Language and Community

This presentation is tailored to meet the needs of school administration and staff in addressing concerns related to student relationships and community building. Centered around positive uses of language, strategies are shared that demonstrate culturally responsive approaches to struggles students may face. Tailored for each individual school, this presentation highlights the need for mutual respect, interpersonal understanding, and our common human struggle united in God's love. Group sizes range from small class groups to groups of up to 400 depending on the wishes of the site Administrator and the needs of the staff.

##### Restorative and Proactive Circles

Presented to classes and groups in both proactive and restorative formats, restorative practices are a transformational approach to building and maintaining positive relationships within our school community. Rooted in the principles of empathy, respect, and accountability, these practices focus on repairing harm and restoring trust when conflicts arise. This approach not only aligns with our Catholic faith, emphasizing forgiveness and reconciliation, but also strengthens our commitment to diversity and inclusion, ensuring that all students thrive as unique children of God.



## EDIAR SPECIALIST

The EDIAR specialist continues to play a vital role in addressing peer conflict and de-escalating incidents involving racism and discrimination within schools. In collaboration with administrators, teachers, and school staff, the specialist provides coaching, facilitates restorative conferences, and often follows up with educational presentations for both students and staff. By approaching conflict through both a responsive and proactive lens, the EDIAR specialist helps create learning environments where all individuals feel seen, respected, and included.

With a strong focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism, the EDIAR specialist supports administrators in navigating the complexities of EDIAR-related issues, while encouraging awareness and thoughtful informed responses that consider broader societal contexts when responding to challenges. Approximately 6,500 staff and students in 60 departments were supported in 2024-2025. The EDIAR specialist works collaboratively with schools' teams to:



Identify areas  
of growth



Implement proactive  
measures to address  
issues before they  
escalate



Promote awareness,  
understanding, and acceptance  
of differences to foster a sense  
of belonging for all individuals

The EDIAR specialist serves as a core member of the leadership team for Restorative Conferences and Restorative Circles, using a restorative approach to foster open dialogue, active listening, and consensus-building. This method has been instrumental in managing conflict, encouraging understanding of diverse perspectives, and bringing together all parties involved to address harm, repair relationships, and collaboratively develop solutions for nearly 300 people across the division.

Recognizing the deep connection between EDIAR and mental health, the EDIAR specialist also plays a key role on the Student and Staff Mental Health/Wellness Committee. This collaboration has enabled the integration of EDIAR principles into mental health initiatives, enriching the learning experience for both students and staff. For instance, during the Student Symposium, students explored how equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism contribute to understanding different perspectives, the impact





of our words, and how values can be shared within peer communities. Meanwhile, staff engaged in meaningful conversations about equity and took part in self-reflective practices aimed at deepening their ability to foster inclusive and supportive environments.

The EDIAR specialist delivers presentations designed to cultivate a sense of belonging and community among students by encouraging mutual respect, understanding, and appreciation for diversity. Presentations on *Belonging and Inclusion*, *Words that Hurt*, *Words that Heal*, *Students Equity Sessions*, *Everyone has a Story*, and *Restorative Circles for All* were offered in 2024-2025. These presentations aim to positively influence students by increasing awareness, nurturing empathy, developing inclusive skills, and inspiring collective action. Through interactive discussions and active participation, students are empowered to lead initiatives, campaigns, or projects that advance social justice and equity.

## EDIAR Specialist-Led Presentations for Staff and Students

### STAFF PRESENTATIONS



#### Courageous Conversation about Race

These sessions guided participants in exploring the role of race in their lives through Dr. Singleton's Four Agreements. They reflected on their beliefs and worldviews, and in the second session, deepened their understanding by examining the Six Conditions and the Conversation Compass. Participants considered how these tools can support meaningful change with staff and students.

#### Equity Diversity Inclusion and Anti-Racism Staff Boosters

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Antiracism (EDIA) Staff Boosters in 2024–2025 covered key topics including:

- Psychological Safety** – fostering environments where staff feel safe to speak up.
- Microaggressions** – understanding impact and intention in everyday interactions.
- Welcoming Newcomers** – emphasizing belonging as a reflection of Catholic values.
- Power and Privilege** – exploring how these dynamics shape relationships in schools.

#### Courageous Conversations for Students with a Faith Perspective

This District Wide session explores a framework for courageous conversations on inclusion, human dignity, and the common good. Participants will gain strategies to help students embrace their identity, relationships, and the diverse abilities of their peers. Three sessions in total were offered.

#### Restorative Conferences and Circles Training Sessions

In 2024–2025, educators participated in restorative training sessions. This two-day **Restorative Facilitator Conference Training** is focused on providing participants with the tools and strategies to address conflicts, bullying, and misconduct. The **Restorative Circles** session focused on proactive classroom strategies, with an emphasis on equity, inclusion, anti-racism, and EAL.

### STUDENT PRESENTATIONS



#### Student Equity Groups Sessions

##### Brave Spaces, Bold Voices

In partnership with the Centre for Global Education, this two-part session united EDIAR student groups for thoughtful dialogue, reflection, and interactive activities to foster inclusive, equitable schools.

##### Student Equity Groups

Students learned how to start and maintain EDIAR groups while planning school-based equity and inclusion projects.

#### Belonging and Inclusion

Elementary students learn about belonging and inclusion with a focus on "The Invisible Boy." Belonging means feeling accepted, safe, and valued just for being yourself while inclusion is when everyone is welcomed, respected, and given a fair chance to join in and shine.

#### Words that Hurt, Words that Heal

##### Words that Hurt, Words that Heal

K–9 students participated in age-appropriate EDIAR learning, exploring the power of language, brave spaces, and courageous conversations. As students progressed through the division, their understanding deepened through discussions, reflection, and activities focused on intent vs. impact and discriminatory language.

##### Student Symposium

Elementary and junior high students engaged in conversations about the meaning and history of words and took part in activities to bring back and share with their schools.

#### Black History Month-Everyone Has a Story

This grade 4-6 presentation emphasized the achievement of a young black hockey player in Canada, breaking stereotypes, and helping students further develop their understanding of Black history month.

#### Restorative Circles for All

Restorative circles aim to strengthen relationships, build community, and cultivate a culture of trust and respect by offering a space for all voices to be heard before conflict occurs. K–9 and Inclusive students participated in these proactive circles to connect with others and collaboratively develop solutions to emerging issues.



# DIVERSITY IN DIVISION PERSONNEL

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Our recruitment and retention strategies are grounded in a Catholic worldview. All teacher applicants must submit a Faith Formation Plan, complete Religious Education courses (CHRTC 250/380/381), and provide a pastoral reference before being awarded a continuous contract.

In partnership with Human Resources, Religious Education Services, and Learning Services, new and beginning teachers engage in intentional formation through personalized Faith Formation Plans, Summer Summit sessions, and faith-permeated professional learning. Onboarding includes explicit support in faith integration, helping teachers live out Catholic identity in daily practice. Through this, we develop educators who model Christ's teachings and foster environments where each student is recognized as a unique child of God.

## WELCOMING, CARING, RESPECTFUL, AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Our hiring practices promote inclusive, caring school communities. Teachers are placed in roles aligned with their strengths and specializations, enhancing job satisfaction, staff wellness, and student outcomes.

Efforts to diversify our workforce include international recruitment for Spanish and Ukrainian Bilingual Programs, culturally responsive hiring for French Immersion, a partnership with the Spanish Embassy, and collaboration with Indigenous consultants to attract First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and Cree Language Educators. We also promote the Bridge to Teacher Certification program for tradespeople entering CTS education.

Early engagement of preservice teachers includes events such as Application and Preparation Sessions and a Career and Resource Networking Event. In Fall 2024, over 200 preservice teachers were welcomed, with 246 more expected in Spring 2025. Beginning teachers attend four division-led learning days on topics such as classroom management, wellness, curriculum, and faith formation. Staff wellness is closely monitored through fill rates and workload reviews, with responsive supports in place. These actions ensure that all students and staff experience learning environments that are safe, respectful, and inclusive.

## INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Effective inclusive culture building is built on proactive hiring and on comprehensive onboarding and inclusive culture-building. Recruitment is a shared responsibility, with principals, assistant principals, consultants, and division staff all involved in attracting and supporting new hires. This collective approach strengthens communication and fosters alignment across schools. Beginning teachers are matched with mentors, while divisional consultants maintain open dialogue and provide early support to prevent miscommunication. By building diverse classrooms and staff teams that reflect student needs, we promote mutual respect and understanding. Ongoing faith formation, inclusive practices, and professional growth help create healthier, more cohesive teams. These supports ensure that conflict is addressed constructively and that staff are equipped to build strong, inclusive school communities.



# DIVERSITY IN LEARNING

## CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

The Curriculum team is grounded in the belief that equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism (EDIAR) from a Catholic worldview are essential to building the conditions for optimal learning. Our work is guided by the Teaching Quality Standard, particularly the expectation that teachers apply effective planning, instruction, and assessment practices to meet the learning needs of every student. With a deep commitment to TQS Competency 3, we support educators in designing inclusive, culturally responsive, and engaging learning experiences that reflect both the Catholic worldview and the diversity of our learners. This year, our curriculum projects have focused not only on equipping teachers with practical tools and resources, but also on creating spaces where student identity, voice, and belonging are affirmed through thoughtful integration of EDIAR principles across all subject areas.



## ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

### Grade 4–6 Literacy Project – Seeing Ourselves in Story

This year, our team expanded our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism by launching the Grade 4–6 Literacy Project: a curated classroom novel collection designed to make every student feel seen, valued, and engaged in their learning. Building on our earlier work with mentor text bundles, this initiative placed class sets of hand-selected novels into schools across the division — titles chosen not only for their rich literary merit and connection to the new English Language Arts and Literature curriculum, but also for the diversity of voices, experiences, and identities they represent.

Our approach to resource selection was rooted in **three deliberate stances**:

#### 1. Catholic Worldview:

Guided by Catholic Social Teaching and the belief that every human person is sacred and deserving of dignity, the texts reflect core Gospel values such as empathy, community, courage, hope, and care for creation. Books like *Wonder*, *Rain Reign*, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, and *Wishtree* exemplify how story can nurture compassion and a sense of belonging. This aligns with our call to ensure all students feel welcomed, respected, and supported in their journey as learners and as children of God.



#### 2. Curriculum Connection:

Each text was mapped to specific Knowledge, Understanding, Skills, and Procedures (KUSPs) from the ELAL curriculum, with clear instructional opportunities for comprehension strategies, vocabulary development, writing, oral language, and cross-curricular integration. Texts also aligned with concepts like character development, author's craft, and multiple points of view to deepen students' engagement and literacy growth.



#### 3. Resource Review Lens:

We applied the principles outlined in Alberta's Provincial Resource Review Guide to ensure that each resource was developmentally appropriate, fostered pluralism, and reflected inclusive, authentic representations of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and global perspectives. Our selections emphasized themes such as environmental stewardship, resilience, identity, and social justice. For example, *Refugee* tells the stories of three children from different eras and regions, all fleeing their homes in search of safety. The themes of global perspectives, identity, and equity explore how global issues affect individuals and communities, emphasizing empathy and action towards a more just world.



This project was also deeply enriched by collaboration across departments. Our Indigenous Learning Services team provided vital insight to ensure respectful and accurate representation of Indigenous voices, while our English as an Additional Language consultants supported culturally responsive teaching strategies and language scaffolds for diverse learners. Additionally, a French language bonus bundle was developed in partnership with our Languages team to ensure our immersion schools also had access to inclusive, engaging texts that support biliteracy and reflect the multicultural nature of our division.

With intentional planning, deep pedagogical reflection, and cross-departmental partnership, this project stands as a model of how thoughtful resource curation can support both high-quality instruction and inclusive learning environments—where every student can see themselves, and others, with dignity and hope.



## Religious Education Services

The Religious Education Services team is deeply committed to advancing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (EDIAR) in ways that are firmly rooted in Catholic teaching. At the heart of this work is the belief that every person is created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore, each individual possesses inherent dignity and worth. This foundational truth guides our efforts to create inclusive, faith-filled environments where all students and staff are welcomed, valued, and celebrated as children of God.

Our collaboration with the Division Goal of Embracing Diversity and the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism team is both strategic and spirit-led. Together, we explore the intersections of identity, justice, and human dignity—areas where Catholic Social Teaching and EDIAR principles naturally converge. This partnership allows us to support schools in ways that are both theologically sound and pastorally responsive.

One of the most visible expressions of this collaboration is the participation of the Manager of Religious Education on the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Implementation Committee. The Manager of Religious Education brings a Catholic lens to the development of Booster scripts, offering thoughtful revisions to ensure

that the language and concepts reflect the richness of Catholic tradition. Her contributions help shape resources that are not only inclusive but also spiritually grounded.

The Manager of Religious Education also created and presented a comprehensive Catholic Social Teaching (CST) presentation to the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee. This presentation highlighted how CST principles—such as solidarity, the common good, and the preferential option for the marginalized—align seamlessly with the mission of EDIAR. It served as a powerful reminder that Catholic education is uniquely positioned to lead in the work of justice and inclusion.

In school communities, our Division Chaplain plays a vital role by participating in LIFE Group meetings. His presence supports teacher leaders in cultivating spaces where students from diverse backgrounds can express their beliefs, share cultural practices, and collaborate on social justice initiatives. These gatherings are sacred opportunities for students to encounter one another with empathy and respect, grounded in the Gospel call to love our neighbor.



“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

— ROMANS 12:4–5



## Key Initiatives Supporting Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism from a Catholic Worldview

- The Religious Education Consultants collaborated with Learning Services to develop and deliver “Creating Faith-Filled Inclusive Classrooms,” a session offered during ECSD’s Unity and Diversity Mini Conferences. This session explored the integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Catholic worldview, offering practical strategies and scripture-based resources to support inclusive classroom practices.
- The Secondary Religious Education Consultant worked with the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Specialist to infuse Catholic perspectives into sessions on Courageous Conversations. The Secondary Religious Education Consultant aligned learning intentions with Catholic teachings on human dignity, conversion, and Christ’s example of compassionate dialogue. She also developed a Catholic framework for facilitating difficult conversations, emphasizing prayer, respectful space, and hope.
- Religious Education Services, the EDIAR Specialist and the EDIAR Consultant meet regularly to share insights, discuss school needs, and support one another in their work. These ongoing conversations ensure that Catholic teaching is thoughtfully integrated into all EDIAR initiatives and that consultants feel empowered to collaborate in service of school communities.
- Together, Religious Education Services and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism work to ensure that school environments are inclusive of spiritual needs. This includes providing accommodations for prayer, worship, and other expressions of faith, affirming that every student’s spiritual identity is respected and nurtured.

In recognizing the face of Christ in each person, we affirm that diversity is not a challenge to overcome but a gift to be embraced. Through collaboration, reflection, and action, the Religious Education Services team continues to support schools in building communities where every student and staff member can flourish in the fullness of who they are—beloved children of God.



## Natural Connections – Learning with the Land, Through Story

Launched during our fourth round of School Teams in April 2025 and poised to grow into a divisional Community of Practice for the 2025–2026 school year, the *Natural Connections* project embodies our belief that the land is not just a backdrop for learning—it is a teacher itself. Designed in partnership with Indigenous Learning Services, this initiative brought together consultants from English Language Arts and Literature (ELAL), Science, and Physical Education and Wellness (PEW) to help educators explore how the natural world can anchor cross-curricular learning while fostering deeper student connection, wellness, and competency development.

As with many of our projects, literature served as the entry point. Carefully selected Indigenous texts such as *You Are the Land*, *Relatives with Roots*, and *Just Like Grandma* were used as mentor texts to invite storytelling, inquiry, and reflection rooted in both curriculum and lived experience. These resources were not only aligned with the ELAL organizing ideas and the KUSPs across subjects, but were chosen through a lens of cultural relevance, developmental appropriateness, and alignment with both the Provincial Resource Review Guide and the Catholic worldview—honouring creation, stewardship, community, and dignity of the person.

The *Natural Connections* series prioritizes holistic pedagogy, infusing Indigenous knowledge systems, environmental awareness, and inclusive practices. Each professional learning session guides teachers in building their capacity to move from teaching *in* nature to learning *with* nature. The sessions will demonstrate a commitment to fostering inclusive environments where all students feel valued and supported. The goals of the series are to ensure all students, regardless of background or learning preferences, can access the holistic teachings, feeling successful, but also recognizing they are a part of God's creation.

Next year, the project expands into a Community of Practice, offering participants sustained, cyclical support through collaborative planning, classroom modeling, and peer-to-peer mentorship. By aligning this work with *Natural Curiosity* and *Four Seasons of Reconciliation*, we are not only supporting curriculum implementation, but also furthering our division's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, wellness, and student empowerment.

Natural Connections highlights the transformational power of land-based learning to support equity, identity, belonging, and a deeper understanding of our collective responsibility—to each other and to the world we share.

## Reframing Curriculum – Planning with Neurodiversity in Mind

Recognizing the urgent need to design classrooms where all students feel seen, valued, and capable of success, our team launched *Reframing Curriculum*—a professional learning series and community of practice grounded in the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Sparked by the insights of the **ECSD Autism Working Group**, this initiative specifically supports the inclusion of Autistic and neurodiverse students through intentional, curriculum-connected planning.

Working closely with consultants across English Language Arts and Literature (ELAL), Math, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education and Wellness (PEW), EmTech, and Inclusive Learning, and in collaboration with educators from schools with site-based and division-wide specialized programs (The Learning Center, SPACES, Generations), we co-designed four immersive sessions. Each session invited educators to explore practical, neuro-affirming planning strategies—starting from understanding neurodiversity to implementing UDL-aligned lessons in core subjects. Teachers observed live model lessons, visited inclusive classroom environments, and co-planned strategies tailored to their learners.

To make this work tangible and scalable, we created a Reframing Curriculum Kit: a curated set of hands-on tools, mentor texts, accessibility supports, and planning templates designed to help teachers reimagine what curriculum delivery can look like when it begins with learner variability at the center. Books like *Rain Reign* and *A Boy Called Bat*, paired with planning frameworks and tech supports, helped bring inclusive instruction to life.

The foundation of this work aligns not only with Alberta's TQS Competency 3 and Competency 4, but also with our Catholic commitment to honoring the dignity of every learner. By embracing neurodiversity as a strength, and designing with all in mind, this project models how equity and excellence can live side by side in every classroom.

With strong interest from participants and school leaders, Reframing Curriculum will expand to more sites next year, continuing to support educators in building inclusive environments where all students—regardless of cognitive, social, or sensory profile—can thrive.

In anticipation of the new K–3 Social Studies curriculum rollout in September 2025, our Elementary Curriculum team undertook a comprehensive and deeply collaborative planning initiative to ensure teachers are ready to deliver inclusive, engaging, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. At the heart of this work is a commitment to helping all students explore identity, place, and community through a lens that affirms diversity and amplifies underrepresented voices.

This past year, our focus has been twofold: curriculum design and resource development. Our team has created over 300 classroom-ready resources, including fully scaffolded lesson plans, rubrics, student templates, Book Creator tools, and teacher backgrounders. Our approach was not done in isolation. In deep partnership with Indigenous Learning Services, we ensured respectful, authentic integration of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives. Our consultants participated in sessions such as *Our Shared History, Our Shared Future* (ATA) and *Weaving Rupert's Land Metis Resources into Classrooms*—building shared understanding and capacity among teachers. We also supported the use of the Indigenous Canada MOOC and engaged in a final focused PD day examining the historical and contemporary realities of the Indian Act.

Language diversity was another key priority. In collaboration with our French language consultants, we developed materials in both English and French. Where full parity wasn't feasible, we ensured flexible translation formats (e.g., Google Docs and Book Creator) and created dual-language videos to support accessibility. These efforts support student pathways toward bilingual proficiency and respect the cultural and linguistic identities of our learners.

Across all materials, we placed the Skills and Procedures at the forefront to emphasize Social Studies as a *curriculum of doing*. Lessons encourage inquiry, action, and identity formation rather than passive content absorption. This framing also aligns with Catholic Social Teaching, particularly in how students explore themes like community, dignity, stewardship, and justice—connecting local and global perspectives through both faith and learning.

Our work is not only preparing classrooms for next September—it is also laying the foundation for a Social Studies experience where every student feels rooted, empowered, and inspired to engage with the world around them.





This year, our Physical Education and Wellness (PEW) team continued to embed mental health literacy (MHL) into the heart of curriculum planning and school wellness culture—recognizing that student well-being is foundational to equity, inclusion, and optimal learning.

Through our Mental Health Literacy half-day PD model, we reached 10 new schools, bringing the total to 34 ECSD schools that have now participated in the MHL professional learning series. These sessions provide educators with tools and strategies to support student mental health in developmentally appropriate, curriculum-connected ways. With a goal of expanding to 10 additional schools in the upcoming year, the impact continues to grow across the division.

A major milestone this year was the launch of the Integrated Plan for Well-Being. At its core is a shift toward using real-time school-based mental health data to drive responsive action. Instructional Leaders supported schools in reviewing their staff and student mental health data and identifying a “Top 3” priority list. Schools then worked with Wellness Champions—a newly formed role blending OHS staff reps and mental health champions—to develop school-wide strategies using the Comprehensive School Health Framework. These strategies were revisited in spring for reflection and refinement, ensuring continuous improvement.

This division-wide initiative has directly informed our planning for the upcoming Student Mental Health Symposium, which will centre on our division’s **top three student well-being needs**:

- Sleep and rest
- Having a trusted adult in the building
- Help-seeking behaviour

To address these themes, the Integrated Well-Being Committee recognizes the importance of scaling mental health literacy and social-emotional learning (SEL) initiatives. In response, next year will see the launch of SEL Pilot Schools—with up to 15 schools committing to focused implementation and reflection on evidence-informed SEL practices embedded across subjects and routines.

In addition, four ECSD schools earned Gold status in the national Healthy Schools Certification program—up from last year—demonstrating our division’s growing leadership in comprehensive school health.

To further support educators and families, the PEW team in conjunction with the integrated well-being committee, developed and launched a suite of targeted mental health resources aligned with our top three themes:

- A SharePoint hub featuring curated tools
- A “Wayfinder” tool that allows users to locate resources based on specific concerns
- Grab-and-go content for newsletters, announcements, and classroom connections

This work exemplifies our commitment to responsive, data-driven, and inclusive health and wellness education—ensuring all students have the skills, knowledge, and supports they need to thrive in body, mind, and spirit.

## SECONDARY CURRICULUM

### Junior High Math

We continue to engage in conversations about bias in our instruction, recognizing how it can limit student success in mathematics. By exploring these biases through the lens of teacher and student noticing, we aim to build connections across diverse perspectives to enhance student understanding. Our strategies include leveraging real-time conversations to gain insights into students' mathematical thinking and using these insights to inform instructional decisions. Additionally, we have collaborated with the EDIAR Specialist on the intersection of Culture and Mathematics and continue to implement social justice-themed math lessons through the "Math that Matters" initiative.

### Senior High Math

Our focus has been on developing written response questions and math activators that use visuals and inclusive language to reflect diverse student experiences. We created a Combinatorics Teacher Resource that offers alternative approaches to traditional math instruction, providing diverse perspectives. High School Professional Learning Community sessions have concentrated on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, promoting strategies from *Teaching Math to English Language Learners* by Adrian Mendoza and Tina Beene, which include scaffolding and visual support to help students engage with content.

### Secondary English

We have developed a Text Selection Database that provides teachers with information on a wide range of texts highlighting the identities of authors and characters that connect with our ECSD student makeup. The "Book Club for All" initiative engages teachers as lifelong learners and readers who appreciate diverse voices. The High School Writing Anthology celebrates the diverse voices of our students, and we assist schools with their Dream Makers grant applications by selecting books by diverse authors with joyful stories. ELA content cards (manipulatives) provide equitable access to terms and materials, and our prompt-based book club honors the need for multiple means of response across student abilities.

### Junior High Science

EDIAR principles have been integrated into the Junior High science context through resources grounded in a UDL framework. The ECSD Science Showcase invites students to build and share science projects that celebrate diverse perspectives. Professional development for teachers has included presentations on neurodiversity, curriculum planning, and incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing into science education. Our ECSD SharePoint highlights cultural observances, such as Black History Month.

### Senior High Science

Science consultants continue to advance equity and diversity by applying UDL principles in the design of assessments and resources. Our ongoing book study, *Supporting EAL Learners in Science*, equips teachers with practical tools to support language development in science classrooms. Resources have been developed with diverse representation in mind, and this year's Science Academy incorporated land-based learning and Indigenous ways of knowing.

### Secondary Social Studies

Junior and Senior High School Social Studies Consultants have advanced EDIAR and Truth and Reconciliation through professional development and collaborative initiatives. Regular collaboration through the Indigenous Learning Services/Social Studies Resource Working Group has focused on curating resources related to teacher foundational knowledge and Indigenous histories. Guest speakers such as Dr. Kisha Supernant have enriched teacher capacity to teach hidden histories and the ongoing impacts of colonization. In-class initiatives, such as inviting Métis knowledge keeper Dan Cardinal, bring lived experiences and Indigenous perspectives directly into classrooms.





## EmTech

Our curriculum area has intentionally embedded EDIAR principles through the development of digital citizenship resources and inclusive digital learning tools. We have curated monthly Digital Citizenship Resources for various grade levels, emphasizing respect, empathy, and human dignity within online spaces. We developed K–6 Digital Learning Resources that draw from a range of cultural perspectives and experiences, with a central focus on using Book Creator to support UDL by removing barriers and fostering inclusivity. In collaboration with Indigenous Learning Services, we have built capacity in using Book Creator among educators and students, ensuring Indigenous voices are represented and empowered. Additionally, our involvement in the Alberta Research Network Artificial Intelligence Research Project with the University of Alberta has integrated Indigenous perspectives into the exploration of Artificial Intelligence in education.

## Languages/Francophone Perspectives

We collaborate with the Coordinator French Culture, Special Events to connect with Francophone organizations and integrate authentic Francophone texts and resources into classrooms. Our efforts include creating a norm of celebrating all languages and cultures, developing new curriculum resources with Indigenous Learning Services, and fostering a culture of linguistic identity within the Languages programs. Initiatives such as Language Mythbusters videos and various school and community events further support these goals.

## English as an Additional Language Team

Our curriculum area has integrated EDIAR principles into teaching, learning, and resource development. We emphasize cultural competency and culturally responsive teaching, ensuring that students see themselves in materials and creating a safe and caring culture. Collaborations with the EDIAR Consultant, Indigenous Learning Services, and other departments have supported this work. Our approach is rooted in the Catholic worldview, embracing diversity and acceptance with the belief that God loves us all the same.



## Secondary Physical Education and Wellness

Professional learning opportunities for Physical Education and Health teachers have focused on integrating Social Emotional Learning and UDL to promote EDIAR within schools. Moving forward, our EDIAR consultant will be involved in supporting teachers with the implementation of new curriculum.

## Assessment and Reporting

We reference *Grading for Equity* by Joe Feldman to explore best assessment practices that honor all students. Professional development on backwards design allows us to integrate UDL principles into learning experiences from the start. We are also working on making Summary Reports and Report Cards more accessible and understandable for all parents and families. SpacesEDU supports students accessing IPPs and provides a visual window into learning for families, including English as an Additional Language families.



# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

## BLACK STUDENT ALLIANCE (BSA) CONFERENCE

The BSA Conference was an opportunity to bring together BSA Teacher leads and their students from all of the high schools within the division together. BSA and related equity groups within the division high schools had an opportunity to meet in a division wide networking event. As a Community of Practice, teachers were supported throughout all facets of their group development. This support can come in the form of presentations, strategy sessions, meeting with BSA groups, connecting with teacher leads, and providing a presence at different school and community events.

Our signature event, the BSA Conference, which was held on February 22nd, 2025 at Louis St Laurent High School. It was and continues to be an open invitation to students in ECSD to celebrate black excellence and attend a conference like atmosphere.



## BE AN UPSTANDER

The Be an Upstander program empowers students to recognize injustice and use their strengths to create change. In coordination with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the program amplifies student voices and encourages them to take action and spread awareness about issues around social justice. This year, ECSD students shared their work at our regional showcase at Lumen Christi Catholic Education Centre. Approximately 150 students from 5 different schools participated. They set up presentation booths and spent the afternoon talking with visitors, educators and politicians about how they are taking action to turn injustice toward justice.

The EDIAR Consultant supported several sites throughout the year long process, engaging in multiple visits to classrooms and different schools over the course of the project from inception to the final regional showcase. Schools also participated in their own demonstrations of learning and carousels at their individual sites. Students covered many topics, including houselessness in Edmonton, poverty, self-esteem in boys, youth mental health, the link between food and environment, and more.



The showcase was an amazing opportunity for youth to interact with decision-makers, parents, and our community, allowing them to profile their work and highlight ways to make our world a better place for all.





# SPECIALIZED INTERDEPARTMENTAL SERVICES AND CONTINUOUS DIALOGUE

## IDENTITY-ROOTED DEPARTMENTS

### Indigenous Learning Services

The Four Directions Wellness Specialist has made significant strides in fostering a welcoming and safe environment for Indigenous students and their families. Through innovative wellness programs, cultural inclusiveness initiatives, and professional development for all Division staff, we have enhanced the educational experience and overall well-being of Indigenous students within our school community.

### KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

#### 1. Wellness and Cultural Programs

**Holistic Programming:** Developed and led wellness programs integrating Indigenous ways of knowing and being, utilizing the Medicine Wheel. These programs have been instrumental in promoting mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being among Indigenous students.

**Trauma-Informed Care:** Assessed and refined wellness programming to ensure it reflects Indigenous trauma-informed care principles, addressing intergenerational trauma and fostering resilience.

**Safe Spaces:** Established standards for space spaces for Indigenous students to experience belonging and success, ensuring culturally safe and inclusive educational environments.

#### 2. Indigenous Student and Parent Engagement

**Special Projects:** Coordinated projects responsive to the holistic needs of Indigenous students, such as Indigenous arts and violence prevention initiatives.

**Restorative Circles:** Facilitated support and healing circles for students experiencing difficulties, promoting a sense of community and belonging.

**Family Gatherings:** Organized culturally based wellness-focused family gatherings to increase engagement and involvement.



**Mentoring:** Offered mentoring support to staff, helping them address the wellness needs of Indigenous students and families.

**Training Sessions:** Developed and facilitated professional development sessions focused on Indigenous anti-racism education, social justice, trauma-informed care, and wellness modalities.

**Resource Development:** Created culturally relevant wellness resources for staff, enhancing their ability to incorporate Indigenous content into school programming.



## Professional Development

### Building Knowledge About Indigenous Worldviews

This professional development workshop is designed to deepen participants' understanding of Indigenous worldviews, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives. By exploring the foundational principles and cultural practices that shape Indigenous ways of knowing and being, educators and staff will be better equipped to create inclusive and respectful learning environments.



### Selecting Indigenous Resources

This professional development workshop is designed to equip educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to select authentic Indigenous resources that accurately reflect the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Participants will learn how to identify and integrate culturally appropriate materials into their curriculum and programming, fostering a more inclusive and respectful educational environment.

### Indigenous Trauma-Informed Care

This professional development workshop is designed to provide educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement Indigenous trauma-informed care in educational settings. Participants learn about the unique aspects of trauma experienced by Indigenous communities, including intergenerational trauma, and how to create supportive environments that promote healing and resilience.



## PATHWAYS FOR YOUNG AND DIVERSE LEARNERS

### One World...One Centre

At *One World...One Centre*, we recognize that successful student transitions begin with compassionate, culturally responsive support for families.

From August 2024 through April 2025, we welcomed 2,180 students from ninety-five countries helping newcomer families establish a home-school-parish connection grounded in trust and Catholic social teaching.

#### Highlights:

- Registration and Orientation sessions hosted throughout the year at Lumen Christi Catholic Education Centre.
- Intercultural Liaison staff from diverse cultures guided families, support families settling in at Edmonton Catholic Schools, and connect with families through shared experiences and common language.
- One World.... One Centre staff cultural identity during school multicultural days, by leading presentations and discussions on faith, family, and culture, which allows students to take pride in sharing their cultural identity.
- Supported the development of the EDIAR Booster focusing on newcomers and refugees.
- Conducted cultural learning sessions for staff and students to highlight diverse worldviews and traditions.
- Promoted inclusive classroom tools by collaborating with schools to incorporate stories, holidays, and values from multiple cultures.
- Supported the ECSD Teacher Recruitment Fair.
- Our Intercultural Liaison Staff facilitated restorative conversations to help staff navigate cultural misunderstandings and assisted with complex conversations between schools and families, including topics like parenting in two cultures.

*One World...One Centre*, continues to foster a community where every newcomer child can thrive—academically, socially, and spiritually.

Together, we celebrate the unique gifts of every individual and build a future rooted in faith and inclusion.



### 100 Voices

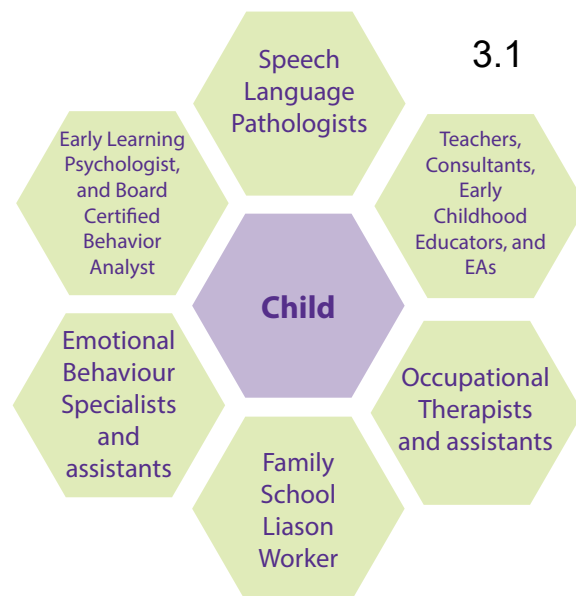
100Voices is our **Pre-Kindergarten program** that begins a child's journey in Edmonton Catholic Schools. 100 Voices is a diverse program. Children enter the program identified with moderate, or severe developmental delays, or medical needs. As **each child is supported with an individual program plan** to support access to learning. As the community of children that makes up 100 Voices is diverse we are constantly striving to create welcoming, safe, inclusive Catholic learning environments to support children, staff and families. Below are some of the actions we have taken this year.

#### Programs are offered at:

- St. Monica – 6 classrooms
- St. Vladimir – 5 classrooms
- Edmonton Valley Zoo/ St. Paul – 1 classroom
- Ben Calf Robe/ St. Clare – 1 classroom

Programs are supported by a full multidisciplinary team. New this year six Early Childhood Educators and a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst were added to the team to respond to an increase in the number of children with high support needs in our programs.

100 Voices Teachers partake in monthly professional learning which allows for professional reading, dialogue, and planning. A focus has been on **planning for our diverse learners**.



## Planning for Diverse Learners: 100 Voices Professional Learning

### Planning for regulation needs:

- Sensory play
- STEM opportunities
- Outdoor learning
- First Nations, Métis, and Indigenous Connections

### Planning for communication needs:

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools
- Music
- Stories
- First Nations, Métis, and Indigenous Connections

### Planning for learning:

- Access to the curriculum (finding entry points)
- Spaces EDU: digital platform to highlight learning and success
- Environments which bring joy and offer choice

Many of the children in 100 Voices are working to develop communication skills. As such classrooms have been supported with both high and low technology options for all children to learn to communicate their needs, wants, ideas and preferences. We have **22 children** who are accessing **AAC iPad trials** to support their communication.

As many of the children in 100 Voices utilize a variety of tools and spaces to regulate their bodies, support has been provided to build sensory rooms, as well as sensory spaces within classrooms. **Additional proprioceptive materials as well as cause and effect toys were added to each site.**

To nurture the relationship between home and school as well nurture relationships between families, the Multidisciplinary Team **offered a variety of parent sessions** that included:



**Two AAC iPads in each classroom (one with touch chat, one with Lamp)**

**Access to Chat Editor**

**Low technology supports: core vocabulary board and story boards**

**Regulation**

**Communication**

**Assessment Information**

**Parent Newsletters**

**Parenting in Two Cultures**

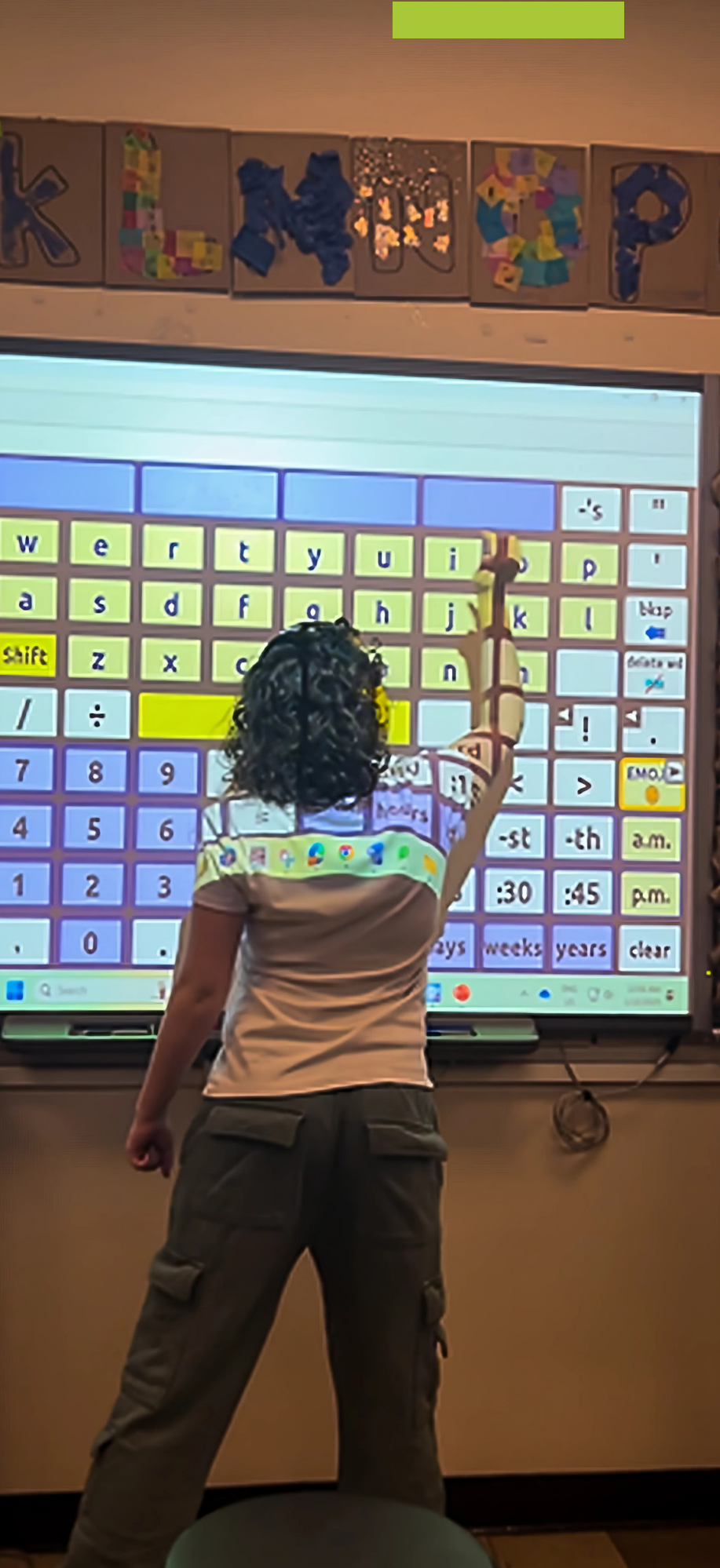


## Generations

Generations is a Program of Choice pathway designed to support our most complex learners with a range of intentional actions to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity. We acknowledge the multiple exceptionalities and medical needs of each student and provide programming and specialized staff to create a safe environment to remove barriers, so all students have access to learning in their own unique way. The program ensures that each student has an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) tailored to their specific learning, medical, and developmental needs.

Also, a multidisciplinary team including therapeutic assistants, a licensed practical nurse, and educational assistants work collaboratively alongside the teacher to provide personalized support. Students have access to assistive technologies and adaptive learning tools, such as communication devices, buttons and switches, which allows equitable access in ways that align with their abilities. The program also invites students to participate in grade-level classrooms and option classes whenever possible alongside their peers. The students are invited to Art, Music, Physical Education, Science, and any other subject of interest. In this way, programming and learning experiences stem from student strengths and interests. This includes hands-on activities for students who, for example, enjoy building, cooking, music, and physical activity. This is intentionally designed to support the diverse learning needs of all students and foster equity and inclusion by engaging students in meaningful, personalized ways.

Generations is offered at St. Vincent Catholic Elementary School, Divine Mercy Catholic Elementary School, St. Mark Catholic Junior High School, and Austin O'Brien Catholic High School.





## BEHAVIOUR, WELLNESS, AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

### Emotional Behavioural Specialist (EBS) Team

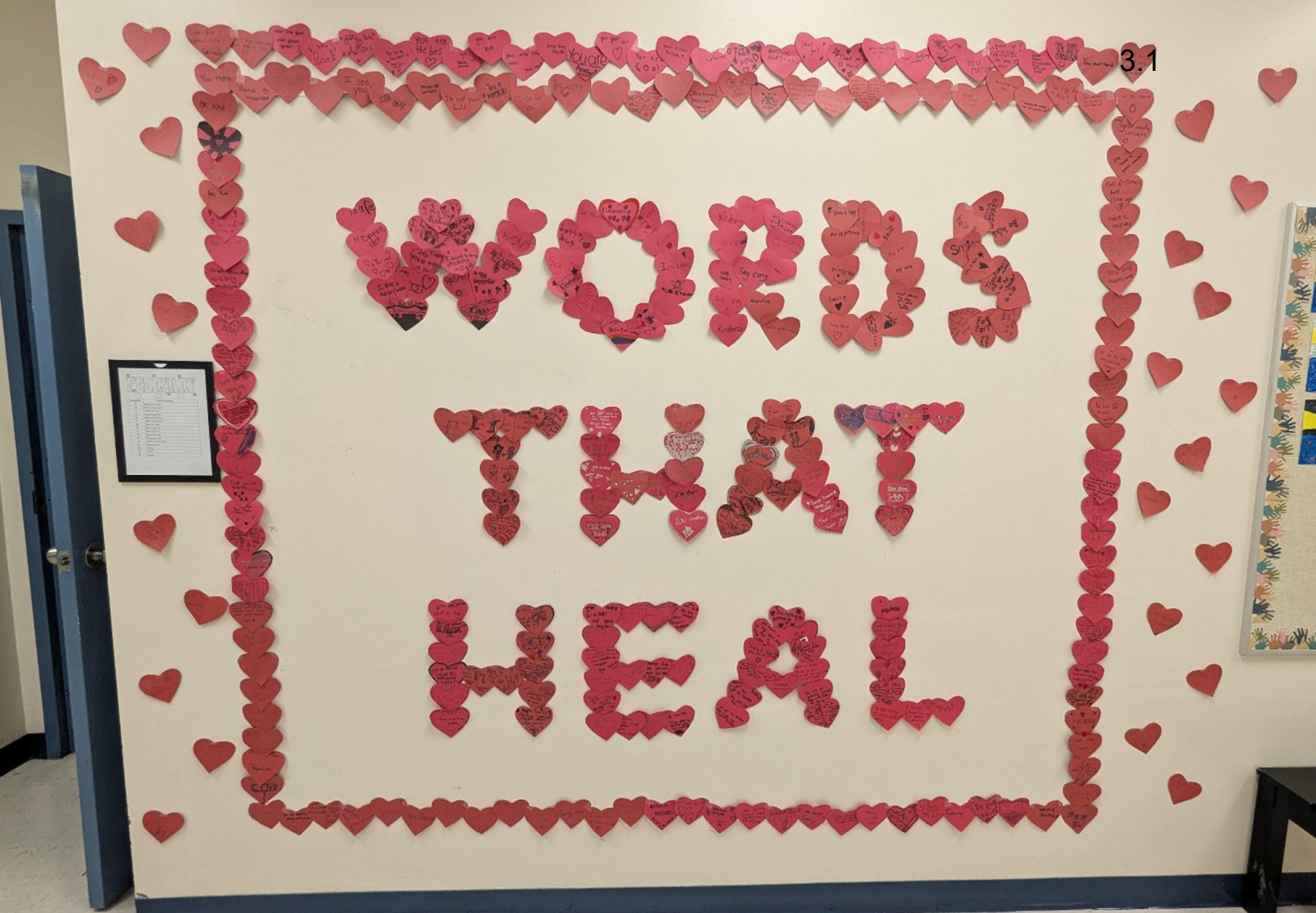


The Behavioral Therapy Team remains committed to fostering a workplace and service environment that upholds the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and reconciliation. Over the past year, our team has prioritized creating inclusive frameworks for both staff, students and families we serve. We've emphasized cultural competency training and actively encouraged open dialogue about diversity within our team. This ensures that our practices not only acknowledge but celebrate the unique perspectives and experiences brought by varied cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds. This ensures that interventions and strategies are culturally responsive and respectful of diversity.

The EBS team will involve families and community members in developing behaviour support plans and implementing interventions, respecting their perspectives and contributions. Recognizing that each student is unique, an EBS will develop behaviour support plans in collaboration with the school, the community and student's families, that consider students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities. The Behaviour Team is mindful to take into account the student's perspective and make the student a big contributor to their own support plans. The team also creates various small groups throughout the year to support students. These groups create safe spaces where students can share their experiences, celebrate their identities, and build meaningful connections with peers from diverse backgrounds. By focusing on collaboration, empathy, and active listening, small groups allow participants to explore perspectives different from their own, promoting mutual respect and understanding. These small groups provide tailored support that meets the unique needs of each participant. They provide opportunities for students to voice their concerns, develop interpersonal skills, and cultivate a sense of belonging. Through such interactions, small groups strengthen communal bonds and inspire collective action toward equity and inclusion. This collaborative environment lays the foundation for fostering sustainable change and creating a community where everyone is valued and included.







## One School's Story

Earlier this year, one school's Behaviour Team collaborated with our EDIAR Specialist, to present the "Words That Heal" activity to each class in the school. Building on her "Broken Heart" exercise, the team provided small paper hearts to every student, encouraging them to think of kind words or actions that could heal a broken heart. Students wrote their ideas on the hearts, which were then displayed to inspire and share their collective insights. This simple yet impactful activity reinforced the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism (EDIAR) by ensuring every student equally contributed their perspective, celebrating diverse viewpoints on kindness and empathy, fostering a sense of belonging through shared participation, making the activity accessible to

all abilities, and encouraging communal unity through empathy and healing. Together, this initiative nurtured an inclusive, empathetic, and collaborative environment that aligns with EDIAR values.

Looking forward, we aim to strengthen our efforts by implementing more robust strategies for accessibility and reconciliation. By embedding these values into our daily operations, we ensure that every team member and student feels respected, valued, and empowered to thrive. This ongoing commitment aligns with our broader mission of supporting well-being and fostering understanding in our community.

## Occupational Therapy and Mental Health Team

The Occupational Therapy and Mental Health Team directly serve students across the division for whom equity, diversity and inclusion underpin all aspects of developing their capability to live, work and play at school with independence and self-authenticity.

With the priority of recognising and celebrating the unique gifts and differences of students and staff the Occupational Therapy team advocate in classrooms, schools and across teams to create communities that promote belonging and safe and caring learning spaces. One team priority this year relates to addressing inequities for autistic youth, such as non-autistic people's perceptions of autism, inclusion, positive self-identity and use of neurodiversity-affirming language and strategies.

To address equity and inclusion, the Occupational Therapy team organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Autism Celebration Month to promote positive identities, neurodiversity-affirming practices and relationship-building with peers in support of over 1000 autistic students from pre-kindergarten to grade 12. Activities focused on learning from autistic and neurodivergent speakers. Over **6,000** students across **53** schools (K-12) engaged in learning activities focused on building peer acceptance and belonging for neurodivergent youth. [Families were also invited](#) to take part. Occupational Therapy management team presented a paper entitled *Taking Action: Occupational Therapy's Role in Addressing Autism Acceptance in Schools*. The session was attended by over 100 occupational therapists across Canada.

### This year, the Occupational Therapy team has:

Expanded university partner research on peer inclusion to **5** schools.

Presented on promoting neurodiversity-affirming practices to approximately 250 Educational Assistants, 90 OT-MH discipline team members, 90 principals and over 100 Learning Service staff (consultants, Multi Disciplinary Team, managers and others).

Presented at schools on supporting neurodiversity in the classroom.

Mental health challenges affect people of all backgrounds, cultures, and life circumstances. It intersects with many aspects of equity, diversity and inclusion – through factors such as a person's cultural background, sexuality and gender identity, disability, socio-economic status, spoken languages, systemic & historical factors and more.

The Occupational Therapy and Mental Health team have used this lens to actively respond to the personal, social, structural and other factors that influence wellbeing and opportunity for students in ECSD. For example, In the annual Division Student Mental Health Survey, students identified mental health stigma (help-seeking) as the second highest area of need. To address this, our team members have focused on broader actions to reduce stigma through collaboration with curriculum consultants, classroom presentations, leadership presentations and Community of School Councils sessions on empowering parents to support mental health at home.



## Speech Language Pathology Team

The Speech-Language Pathology Team recently gathered to reflect on their efforts to support the Division's Plan for Continuous Growth. In their commitment to **embrace diversity** and acknowledge the unique gifts and talents of every student, the team undertook several initiatives, resulting in the following outcomes:

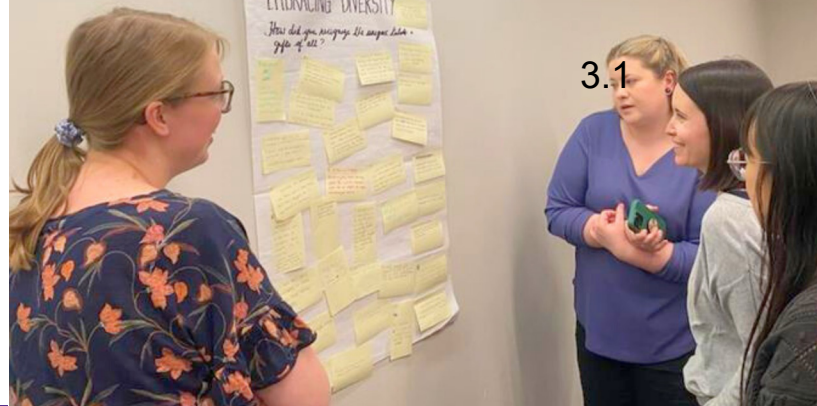
### INITIATIVES

**Learn and implement neuro-affirming practices to support neurodiverse learners in all programs, including:**

- Adopting strength-based terms and neuro-affirming language in speech-language assessment and progress reports to respect and acknowledge the identities and experiences of neurodivergent individuals, while avoiding terminology that suggests these students require correction
- Accepting students' unique and special interests to support and advance their learning and communication, replacing expectations to be play and interact in ways similar to their neurotypical peers
- Collaborating with school teams to support the creation of sensory and play-based learning spaces for autistic learners and other neurodiverse students

**Commit to learning about and engaging in culturally responsive practices by:**

- Ensuring diverse representation of cultures and abilities in materials, including our award-winning Language in Action therapy cards
- Utilizing intercultural liaison staff from One World One Centre to provide cultural insights and interpretation during speech-language assessments
- Considering cultural differences when evaluating communication skills, setting goals, and supporting families



3.1

### OUTCOMES

**Celebrating neurodiversity allows us to flourish as individuals while becoming a stronger and healthier society.**

- By reframing language and avoiding judgmental terms, neuro-affirming practices help in understanding and addressing behaviors as forms of communication. This approach reduces distress and promotes a more supportive environment
- Neurodiversity-affirming approaches influence how therapists view their students and their experiences, leading to more effective and empathetic support
- Neuro-affirming therapeutic practices lead to more inclusive, respectful, and effective therapeutic outcomes, enhancing the overall well-being and communication abilities of neurodivergent individuals

**Validating the identities and diverse experiences of all learners allows students to feel empowered and accepted.**

- Students who see themselves reflected in learning resources feel more connected and are more engaged
- Striving to uphold culturally respectful and inclusive practices leads to greater trust and stronger rapport between therapists, students, and families
- Reducing cultural and linguistic barriers to participation and progress leads to increased equity in service delivery and enhanced communication outcomes for students



## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT

### The Right to Choose Inclusive Education

Edmonton Catholic Schools is an inclusive school division that fosters a sense of belonging for all learners. Our students bring a wide range of strengths that enrich the diverse fabric of our schools. At the same time, they may require varying levels of support to thrive.

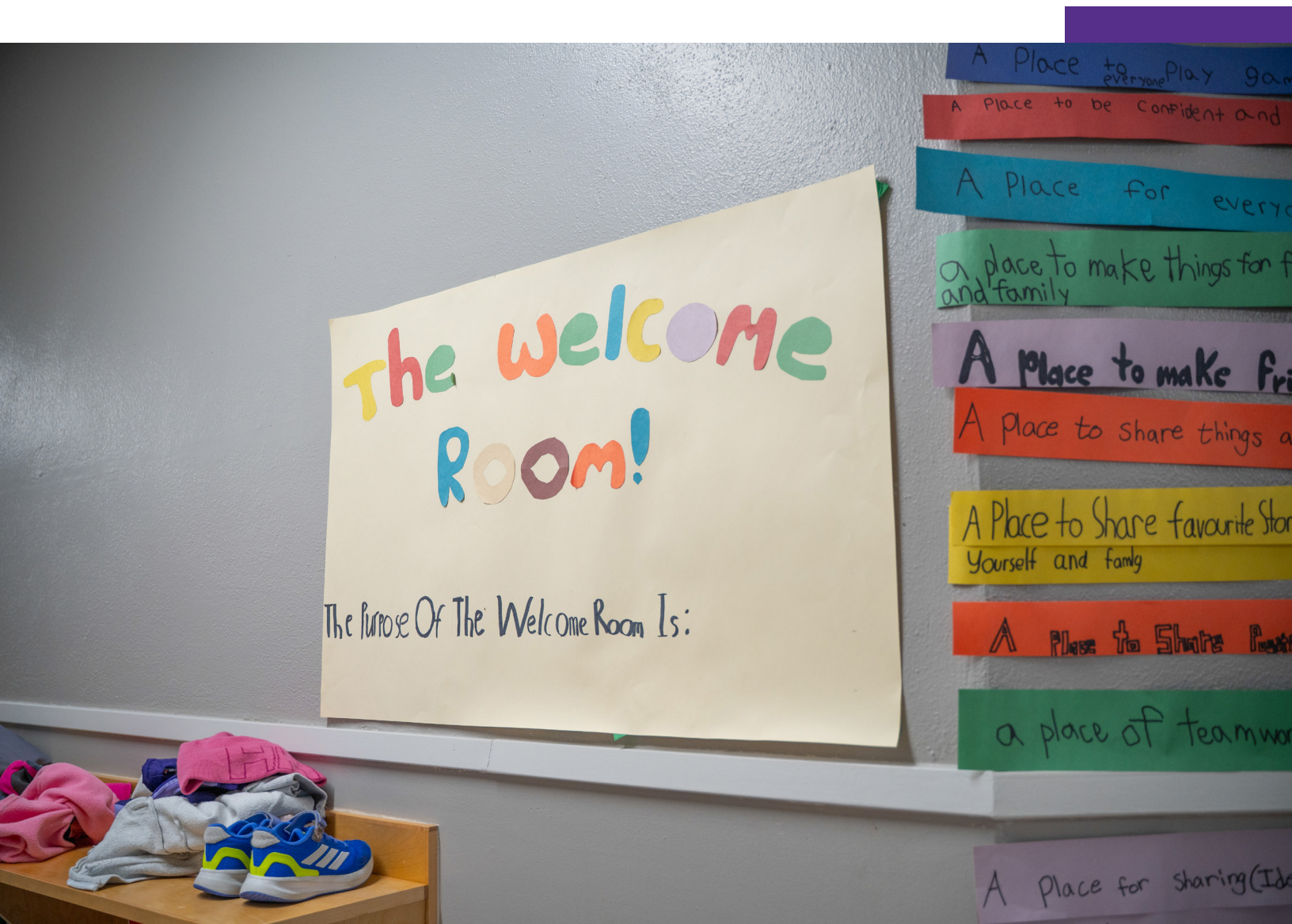
With this in mind, Edmonton Catholic Schools affirms the right of all families to choose inclusive education in their community school. This means that every student—regardless of ability—has the opportunity to learn alongside their peers in a supportive and welcoming environment.

Our community schools are committed to being flexible and responsive to the needs of their students. This may include adjusting the school environment, offering

diverse learning opportunities, implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) practices, and utilizing accommodations and adaptations as needed.

Ongoing professional learning—such as ECSD Mini Conferences, District-Wide Professional Development Sessions, School Teams, and In-School Professional Sessions—provides staff with access to tools and strategies necessary to support all learners.

We believe that inclusive education is a shared responsibility. We work in partnership with families, school team professionals, consultants and multidisciplinary team specialists to create learning environments where every student can succeed.





## Actions of Autism Working Group

This year, members of the Autism Working Group presented a series of professional development sessions for teachers. These sessions were each based on a section of the Classroom Reflection Tool that was previously developed by the Autism Working Group. The objectives for each session in this series were to provide teachers with tools, strategies and resources to increase access to curriculum and learning for all students. The sessions provided teachers with lesson plans, videos, mentor texts and instructional strategies to support increased access for all learners in their community school classrooms.

## Actions of Inclusive Consultants

The Inclusive Consultants provide support to their community schools and regularly collaborate with administrators, teachers and support staff to plan for students with diverse learning needs. Throughout the year, Inclusive Consultants provide professional development sessions for their community schools that align with each school's vision, goals and the needs of the students in those schools. Teachers will connect with Inclusive Consultants when they need guidance in making sure their students with diverse needs are being programmed for and included in a meaningful way in the daily life of their community schools.

## Inclusive Consultants

Restorative Practices continue to be a way in which ECSD is building relationships between students, repairing harm and restoring relationships. During the 2024 – 2025 school year, ten staff members, including Family School Liaison Workers (FSLWs), Inclusive Consultants, and Assistant Principals, were trained as Certified Trainers for Restorative Practices for Educators through the Train the Trainer program early in September 2024. This training took place over three days with a Trainer from the IIRP (International Institute for Restorative Practices). These trainers delivered presentations on Restorative Practices Conferences at schools during Professional Development (PD) days, Thursday afternoon staff meetings, Elementary New Curriculum



School Teams sessions, and Division-Wide Professional Development sessions. The team connected with over one hundred staff members from various schools across the division.

The focus for the 2025 – 2026 school year is to shift towards Restorative Practices for Educators, emphasizing proactive skills that can be utilized in whole school environments for day-to-day interactions. This approach aims to provide schools with additional tools to support student relationships beyond the formal conference process. By moving away from formal conferences and working more in the informal realm, school teams will gain tangible strategies to build and foster relationships, as well as repair harm in the moment. The reason for this shift is to create opportunities to repair harm while being proactive, which should lead to fewer incidents of harm among students. Additionally, through a restorative lens, students develop skills to navigate relationships that extend beyond interactions with adults and can be applied in their daily friendships and interactions.



Our goal is to conduct training sessions three times next year, to have an additional 100 staff members trained in Restorative Practices for Educators by the end of the 2025 – 2026 school year, so more staff can provide strategies to foster positive relationships to create caring, respectful, and safe learning environments for all.

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

### Mini Conference Report: Education for Everyone

The Education for Everyone Mini Conferences support ECSD's goal of celebrating diversity and fostering inclusive, faith filled learning environments. The theme for this year's mini conferences:

Edmonton Catholic Schools uphold the principle of solidarity by valuing diverse perspectives. During this conference we will apply Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities.

By acknowledging equity-seeking groups and promoting inclusive learning experiences, teachers will continue to learn how to foster a sense of belonging.

By linking diversity with UDL, schools create an inclusive environment where students learn from one another, appreciate unique identities, and grow together in mind, body, and spirit.

| TEACHER REGISTRATION     |               |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Location                 | Date          | Registered Teachers |
| Christ the King          | Feb. 20, 2025 | ~262                |
| Archbishop O'Leary       | Feb. 20, 2025 | ~136                |
| Corpus Christi           | Apr. 17, 2025 | 399                 |
| Father Michael McCaffery | Apr. 17, 2025 | 420                 |

**Total Registered Teachers: 1,217**

**Participating Schools: 83**



## Keynote Speaker

Each conference opened with a keynote address by Intercultural Liason, who shared powerful and personal stories of newcomers to our school division. These keynotes highlighted the challenges and strengths of students adapting to a new culture and education system, deepening educators' empathy and understanding of the newcomer experience.

## Session Highlights and Impact

Sessions were designed to enhance teaching practices and create inclusive, engaging student learning environments. Key themes included:

- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** Designing flexible, accessible learning experiences for all students.
- **Culturally Responsive Teaching:** Affirming student identities and integrating diverse perspectives.
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) & Wellness:** Building emotionally safe, supportive classrooms.
- **EDIAR Practices:** Promoting equity and inclusion through a Catholic lens.
- **Thinking Routines:** Encouraging student voice, collaboration, and critical thinking.

## Lasting Impact

Teachers left the conferences feeling empowered with practical tools to renewed purpose to:

- Support diverse learners with inclusive strategies and thinking routines
- Fostering welcoming, faith based classrooms
- Enhance student engagement and academic success through equitable practices



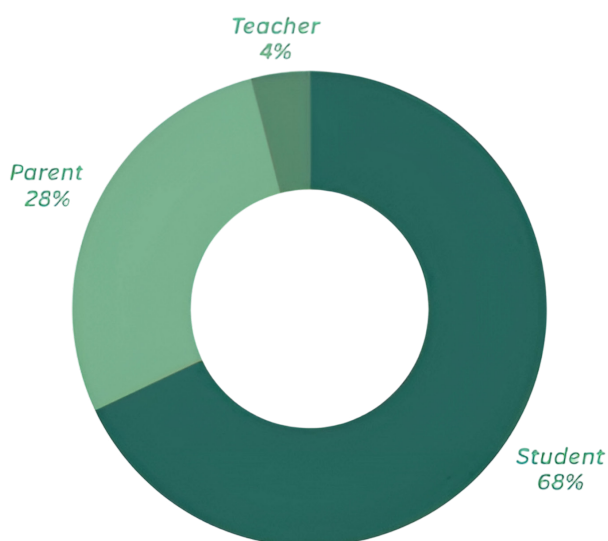
# FOSTERING BELONGING THROUGH CARE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

## MANAGING CONFLICT AND RESPONDING TO RACISM THROUGH A RESTORATIVE APPROACH

As of the time of the writing of this report in May 2025, the Division has received twenty-five submissions through the online reporting form for discrimination and racism. Students, staff and families are becoming more aware of how to seek support, who they can talk to at their school or site, and are also aware of the reporting process and formally report when they feel it is necessary. Each report was directed to the appropriate personnel to be addressed appropriately.

### REPORTING DISCRIMINATION & RACISM

2024-2025



Student



Parent



Teacher



**TOTAL  
REPORTS  
25**





## MEASURING OUR PROGRESS IN THE DIVISION PRIORITY OF EMBRACING DIVERSITY

The first Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism (EDIAR) Strategic Plan was released in June 2022, with implementation beginning in August 2022. Rooted in Catholic Social Teaching and the dignity of every person, the plan outlines key strategies to embed EDIAR principles across Edmonton Catholic Schools (ECSD) and is designed as a living document that evolves alongside the Division. As we entered the final year of the first strategic plan multiple engagement sessions across the division were planned for the 2024–2025 school year to gather feedback on the EDIAR plan's implementation and to inform next steps.

This engagement process included Listening Circles, Structured Listening Sessions, Visioning Sessions, and a follow-up survey. Guided by the teachings of Christ, ECSD remains dedicated to continuing the journey toward a more equitable and inclusive future for all. The table below outlines the engagement sessions that took place during the 2024–2025 school year in preparation for the revision of the EDIAR Strategic Plan.

| DATE                       | PARTICIPANTS                                         | METHOD                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| September 11               | Senior Admin. Team                                   | Visioning Session Facilitated by Manager of EDIAR and to Chief Superintendent                                                               |
| September 12               | EDIAR Implementation Committee                       | Visioning Session Facilitated by EDIAR team                                                                                                 |
| September 25               | EDIAR Advisory Group                                 | Visioning Session Facilitated by EDIAR team                                                                                                 |
| October 15                 | Student Voice                                        | Engagment Session facilitated by EDIAR Manager                                                                                              |
| October 25                 | ILS Advisory Circle                                  | Visioning Session Facilitated by EDIAR and ILS team                                                                                         |
| November 5                 | Principals, APs, Managers and Directors              | Structured Listening Sessions                                                                                                               |
| November 13                | Board of Trustees                                    | Visioning Session Facilitated by Manager of EDIAR and to Chief Superintendent                                                               |
| December 12                | Chaplains                                            | Engagment Session co-facilitated by Manager RES and EDIAR Manager                                                                           |
| November/December          | Staff (ATA, OOS, AUPE, UNIFOR)                       | 4 Listening Circles open to all staff who are interested in participating                                                                   |
| October/Novemeber/December | Students                                             | Listening Circles in 3 JH and 3 HS. Choose schools with 2 or more equity serving student groups (BSA, GSA/Braided Journeys)                 |
| January 20                 | Employee Liaison Group Representatives               | Engagement Session                                                                                                                          |
| January 27 to February 14  | Staff                                                | Survey                                                                                                                                      |
| January 27 to February 14  | Students Grade 4 to 12                               | Survey                                                                                                                                      |
| January 27 to February 14  | Parents and Guardians of Students in Grade 4 to 12   | Survey                                                                                                                                      |
| January                    | Family Engagement evenings (Equity deserving groups) | 3 Listening Circles offered with accommodations for equity deserving groups (i.e., Translators, confidential safe space, large print, etc.) |
| April/May                  | Data analysis & revised strategy writing             | EDIAR Manager & Executive Director to the Chief Superintendent                                                                              |
| April 30                   | EDIAR Advisory Group                                 | Review of revised EDIAR strategy. Gather final feedback.                                                                                    |
| May 22                     | EDIAR Strategic Plan Implementation Committee        | Review of revised EDIAR strategy. Gather final feedback.                                                                                    |
| June 3                     | Principals/APs/Managers/Directors                    | Presentation of Updated EDIAR Strategy                                                                                                      |
| June                       | Board of Trustees                                    | Presentation of Updated EDIAR Strategy                                                                                                      |
| September 2025             | N/A                                                  | Revised EDIAR Strategic Plan 2025-2028 begins implementation                                                                                |

|            |          |
|------------|----------|
| Leadership | Staff    |
| Family     | Students |

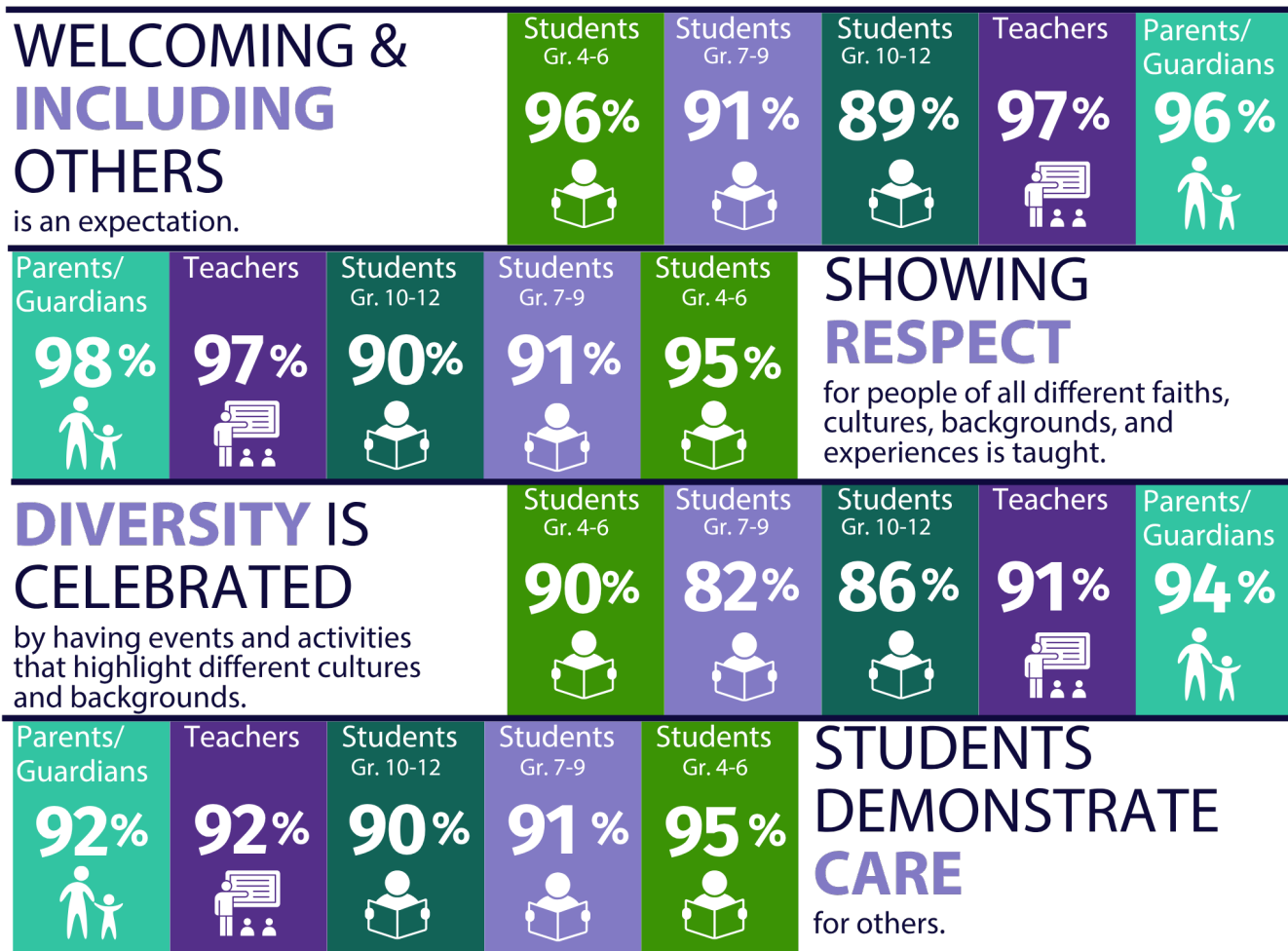
The ability to measure progress is a critical component of the continuous improvement cycle. The **ECSD Annual Survey**, administered to students in Grades 4–12, parents/guardians of all students, and all teaching staff, provides valuable insight into the lived experiences within our school communities. The survey results are thematized to align with the Division's priorities and help inform the development of the new strategic plan.

This year's results are as follows:

**Inclusive and Caring Learning Environment:**  
reflects the Division's priority, Embracing Diversity.

Fostering an **Inclusive and Caring Learning Environment:**

## AT MY/MY CHILD'S SCHOOL...

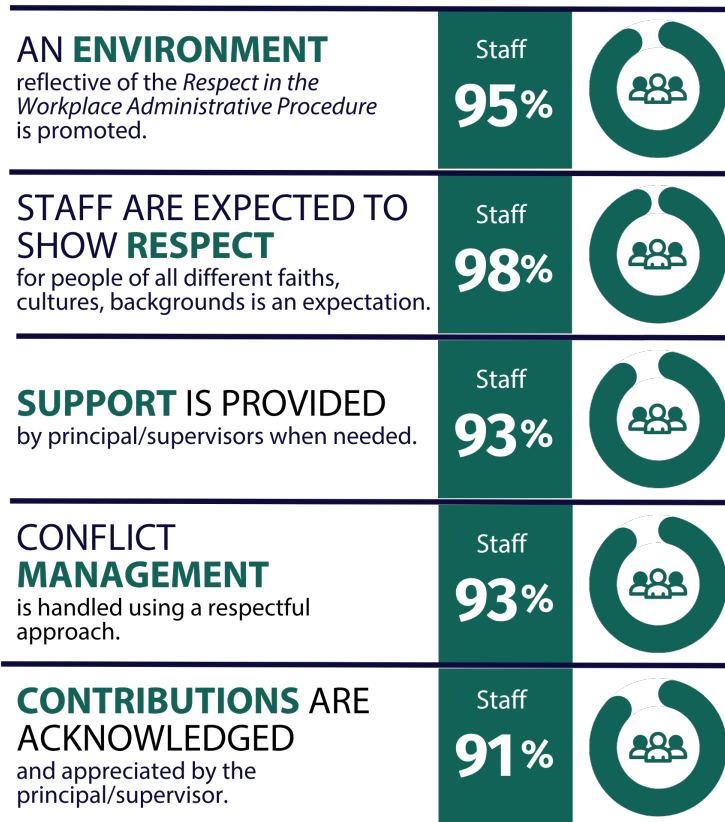




The Division utilizes overall survey results to identify which supports and resources should be developed or expanded for schools to access. In addition, schools receive their individual data and use it to refine their School Plans for Continuous Growth, targeting areas in need of improvement. This data-informed approach directly supports the Division's commitment to advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism (EDIAR) at all levels. The insights gathered from these results also played a key role in shaping the new strategic plan.

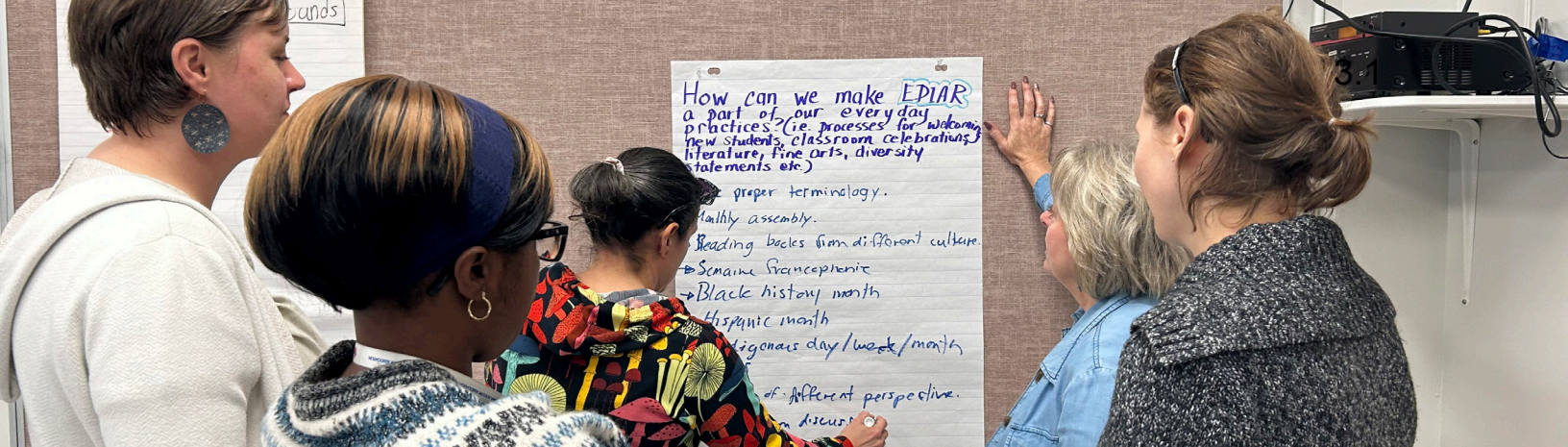
Designed to measure progress in Division priorities—including the staff experience—the **ECSD Systems Excellence Survey** captured key themes related to Embracing Diversity, such as Workplace Culture and Promoting Diversity. This year's results are as follows:

### Fostering a **Positive Workplace Culture:** **AT MY SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT...**



### Fostering a **Workplace that Promotes Diversity:** **AT MY SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT...**





## THEMES FROM STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

The feedback collected across Listening Circles, Structured Listening Sessions, Visioning Sessions, and Surveys highlighted several key themes that reflect the current state of EDIAR implementation within ECSD:

### BELONGING & INCLUSIVITY

Both staff and students emphasized the importance of building authentic relationships to foster belonging.

### DISCRIMINATION & MICROAGGRESSIONS

Concerns about ongoing discrimination and microaggressions. Clear need for continued education.

### CULTURAL COMPETENCE & SUPPORT FOR 2SLGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS

Increase education on cultural competence and bias awareness. Emphasize safe, inclusive environments for 2SLGBTQ+ students and staff through clearer policies and stronger support systems.

### LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

Call for stronger leadership and clearer accountability structures.



STAFF



STUDENTS



The following recommendations are based on insights gathered from Listening Circles, Structured Listening Sessions, and Visioning Sessions. They are intended to guide the next steps in advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism (EDIAR) within Edmonton Catholic Schools and informed the 2025–2028 Creating Communities of Belonging (EDIAR) Strategic Plan.

