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Leading with Equity: Tips for Leading Inclusive School Leadership

We offer some practical strategies for Principals and Vice-Principals to build inclusive, respectful, and equitable environments across BC schools, while reducing harassment and bullying concerns that sometimes result when practices like these are not followed.

- **Listen for Whose Voices Are Missing**

In schools across BC—whether urban, rural, or remote—some voices are easier to hear than others. Checking in with those who may not easily speak up affirms that every member of our diverse communities matters.

- **Use Inclusive Language**

In a province with many cultural, linguistic, and family backgrounds, language choices signal belonging. Phrases like “parents and caregivers” or “all students” help create welcoming spaces.

- **Notice Impact Over Intent**

BC schools are shaped by diverse lived experiences. Focusing on the impact of words and actions, rather than intent, validates those experiences and fosters trust.

- **Acknowledge Power Dynamics**

In leadership roles, even casual comments can carry weight. Across our province, modelling humility and inviting dialogue makes staff and students feel safer raising concerns.

- **Transparency Builds Trust**

Clear follow-up after sensitive conversations—whether in a small school district or a large urban one—shows consistency and fairness across contexts.

- **Celebrate Identity Safely**

From coastal communities to the Interior, affirming identity can be as simple as correct name pronunciation, visible representation, or acknowledging local cultural events. Small gestures reduce the sense of invisibility.

- **Correct Behaviour, Not Belonging**

When addressing issues, frame it around actions (“That comment could exclude others”), not the person. This reinforces that everyone belongs, even when missteps happen.

- **Pause to Prevent Harm**

In a busy school day, pausing a heated conversation to return later shows respect and prevents harm—an approach that models restorative practice across our BC schools.

- **Apply Expectations Consistently**

Equity in BC means fairness in diverse contexts. Hold respectful standards for all, while recognizing local realities so rules don’t unintentionally disadvantage certain groups.

- **Invite Feedback on Inclusion**

Asking questions like, “What would help our school feel more welcoming to you?” invites authentic feedback from students, families, and staff across BC’s varied communities.