

# BCPVPA

## Meet the Executive Director

The BCPVPA's new Executive Director, **Scott Robinson**, has more than 30 years experience as an educator and educational leader.

Scott was a teacher and school-based administrator at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels in School District No. 43 (Coquitlam), before taking on the role of Superintendent of Schools, first in School District No. 39 (Vancouver), and most recently in School District No. 38 (Richmond).

We asked Scott about what drives him in his role, and what he sees in the future for the BCPVPA.

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### What Drew You to Education?

My parents were both involved in public education, so I grew up in a household where our lives revolved around the ten-month school year. I saw and heard about the influence that both my parents had through their roles, which is what got my thinking started. When I graduated from high school, I had no intention of going into public education, but events led me there when I worked in a residential group home for adolescents who were struggling with many aspects of their lives. I was 19 or 20 at the time, and what I discovered early on in that work was that these kids were being blamed for circumstances that had been beyond their control. The adults in their world had not done what they should have done to support them. The outcome was that these kids were really struggling, were not able to live at home, and had to enter into the system of group homes and foster care.



At the age of 20, I was essentially parenting these kids who were 16, 17, 18-year-olds in the group home facility, and I loved it. It triggered something in me. This was what I wanted to do, to work with kids. I saw the difference you could make as an adult who actually advocated for kids, and saw them as individuals who needed our support, rather than pointing fingers at them. I ended up going into public education following that, and I've loved it.

## What Drew You to Educational Leadership?

I didn't have any intention of becoming an administrator, and I wasn't one of those people who set out with that plan. I loved teaching. I had a Vice-Principal who at one point asked if I would apply to be a team leader in our middle school, and I thought, okay, I'll try that. I could still teach full time, and I really enjoyed it. In part, it was that I saw I could have a broader influence over more kids, and that I got to work alongside adults in a different way. That experience was followed by the same Vice-Principal asking if I would put my name forward for a Vice-Principalship. I responded that, no, I wasn't interested in that, and was happy in the classroom. She encouraged me by saying that I could just put my name in, and it would take a few years for my application to roll through the system. Six weeks later, I was hired as a Vice-Principal. It was a bit of a culture shock but, of course, I loved it once I was into it. It was that ability to work with other adults and help influence the way they could influence kids' lives that motivated me. That's a huge part of it for me, spreading the word about treating kids well, and being an advocate for them. The broader the scope of your leadership, the more influence you have over ensuring a positive impact for children and youth.

## How Would You Describe Your Leadership?

In some ways, I don't think that I am a typical leader. I don't like being in the spotlight at all. I've tried to lead from behind, and I take great pleasure from being in the background, removing barriers so that other people can do their great work and so that they can shine. Every time I've moved into a higher level role, it's given me the opportunity to enable other folks to do their good work as leaders, and to see the people I have had the honour of leading become even stronger leaders. There's an exponential effect, which I've really appreciated throughout my career.

## What Brought You to the BCPVPA?

From the time that I was the president of my local Chapter, and then during my time as a superintendent, I've seen the profound influence that Principals and Vice-Principals have on the system. I've had the privilege over the course of my career of working with literally hundreds and hundreds of Principals and Vice-Principals in a variety of roles. I'm always impressed with their selflessness, their care, their compassion, and the dedication they bring to their work every day – it has been a consistent experience. The vast majority of the Principals and Vice-Principals I've worked with are amazing people who come to work every day, set aside their own needs, and do great things for kids and families, and for communities and staff. Their positive influence is enormous.

It's not a job that you can do without putting your heart and soul into it, and I see Principals and Vice-Principals as being the linchpin that holds the whole system together. I want to continue to be part of supporting those people in their work, and I hope I can influence things and remove barriers so that

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Principals and Vice-Principals across the province can do their work effectively, and feel like they're being supported both by their district, and by us as an association.

On a personal level, when I worked as a superintendent in both the districts, I was extremely grateful for the support that I felt from the Principals and Vice-Principals I worked with during some very challenging times. They stepped up not only for me as their 'boss', but as another human being who they could see was facing challenges, for different reasons in both districts. I was grateful for that; they're really good people, and I hope to be able to give back to them on a broader level.

## What Do You See for the Future?

There are a few things that – working alongside the Board of Directors – are really important to me as the Executive Director. The first is continuing to help others in the system to understand the importance of the work of Principals and Vice-Principals, because unless people know someone in those roles, they likely don't have any sense as to the level of challenge, and the level of positive influence, those leaders have. I think that we as an association have to continue to work really hard to make sure that more and more people understand the importance of that work.

Contact:

**Scott Robinson**

Executive Director

604-689-3399

My other hope in the next year is to continue to work with other sector partners, and with the Ministry of Education and Child Care, to address some of the big issues and challenges that are facing our members. Among other things, we have staff shortages, equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, Truth and Reconciliation, and mental health issues that are facing our members and the folks that they work with in their school communities. We have to continue to work with our partners on addressing those things; we can't just sit back and say, 'things are hard and that's just the way it is'. We have to do something about it, take a constructive approach, and come alongside the Ministry and our sector partners to make a difference.

I believe that public education is a reflection of society as a whole, and all of the issues that I just mentioned are part of what is happening in broader society around us. I think that – as an association, if we're doing our job well – we're working alongside districts and the Ministry to equip our Principals and our Vice-Principals to address those issues in school communities, which will then create a positive impact in society. I see a large part of the association's work as making sure that we're providing support for and giving tools to the Principals and Vice-Principals who are doing this work. There has already been lots of great work done and I'm honoured to be joining this journey alongside the Board and BCPVPA staff.

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