

LEARNING

BC's Ministry of Education,
Unpacked

CONNECTING

Coffee, Conferences
& Committees

INSPIRING

Mindfulness
& Moving Forward

LISTENING

Andy Hargreaves on
Moving

LEADING

Your 2020-2021
Board of Directors

SOURCING

What Guides
our Practice

Leading

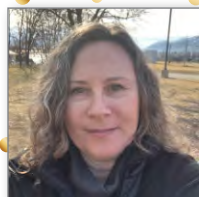
BACK TO SCHOOL

bcp  vpa

BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

September 2020

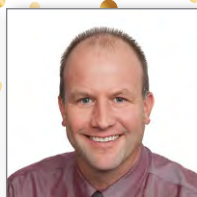
Congratulations to the 2020 graduates!



Rebecca Bayda
Kindergarten Teacher
Okanagan/Similkameen



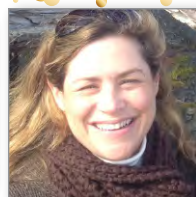
Jody Billingsley
Principal
Delta



Kent Brewer
District Principal
Kamloops/Thompson



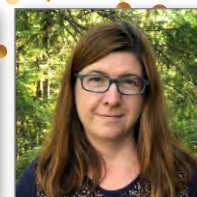
Cory Carmichael
Principal
Kamloops/Thompson



Claire Clancy
District Principal
Delta



Nader Dhillon
Assist. Superintendent
Surrey



Brooke Douglas
Principal
Richmond



Roberta Edzerza
District Principal
Prince Rupert



Terri Farnden
Vice Principal
Delta



Nina Ferguson
Principal
Central Okanagan



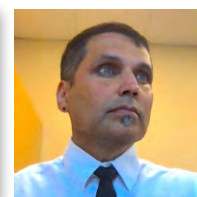
Christine Franes
District Principal
Prince Rupert



Lindsey Hamilton
Vice Principal
Central Okanagan



Stephen Hardy
Principal
Surrey



Michael Jaswal
Principal
Richmond



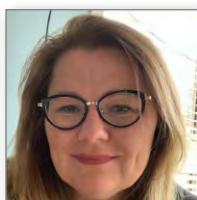
Brenda Kirsch
Principal
Central Okanagan



Brad Kuhn
Vice Principal
Central Okanagan



Sheryl Lindquist
District Principal
Kamloops/Thompson



Joanna Macintosh
Vice Principal
Delta



Tamara Malloff
District Principal
Kootenay Lake



Victoria McAllister
Principal
Kootenay Lake



Pete Nuij
District Principal
Surrey



Jill Reid
Principal
Coquitlam



Grant Reilly
District Principal
Kamloops/Thompson



Shauna Ross
Director of Instruction
Surrey



Andrew Samoilo
Superintendent
Prince Rupert



Rachael Sdoutz
Principal
Kamloops/Thompson



Rena Sweeney
Principal
Van. Island North



Braunwyn Thompson
District Administrator
Richmond



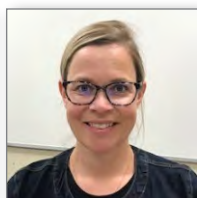
Janet Thompson
Adolescent Learning
Coordinator
Delta



Tim Van Brummelen
Principal
Central Okanagan



Jacquie von Schulmann
Vice Principal
Delta



Monique West
Principal
Central Okanagan

See what this year's grads have to say
about their experience:

telp.educ.ubc.ca/telp-grads-2020

WHAT IS TELP?

The UBC Transformative Educational Leadership Program (TELP) is designed for leaders in the K-12 system and connected sectors, who are ready to engage with and transform education and significantly improve student learning.





Courtesy Alex Geerts_unsplash.com

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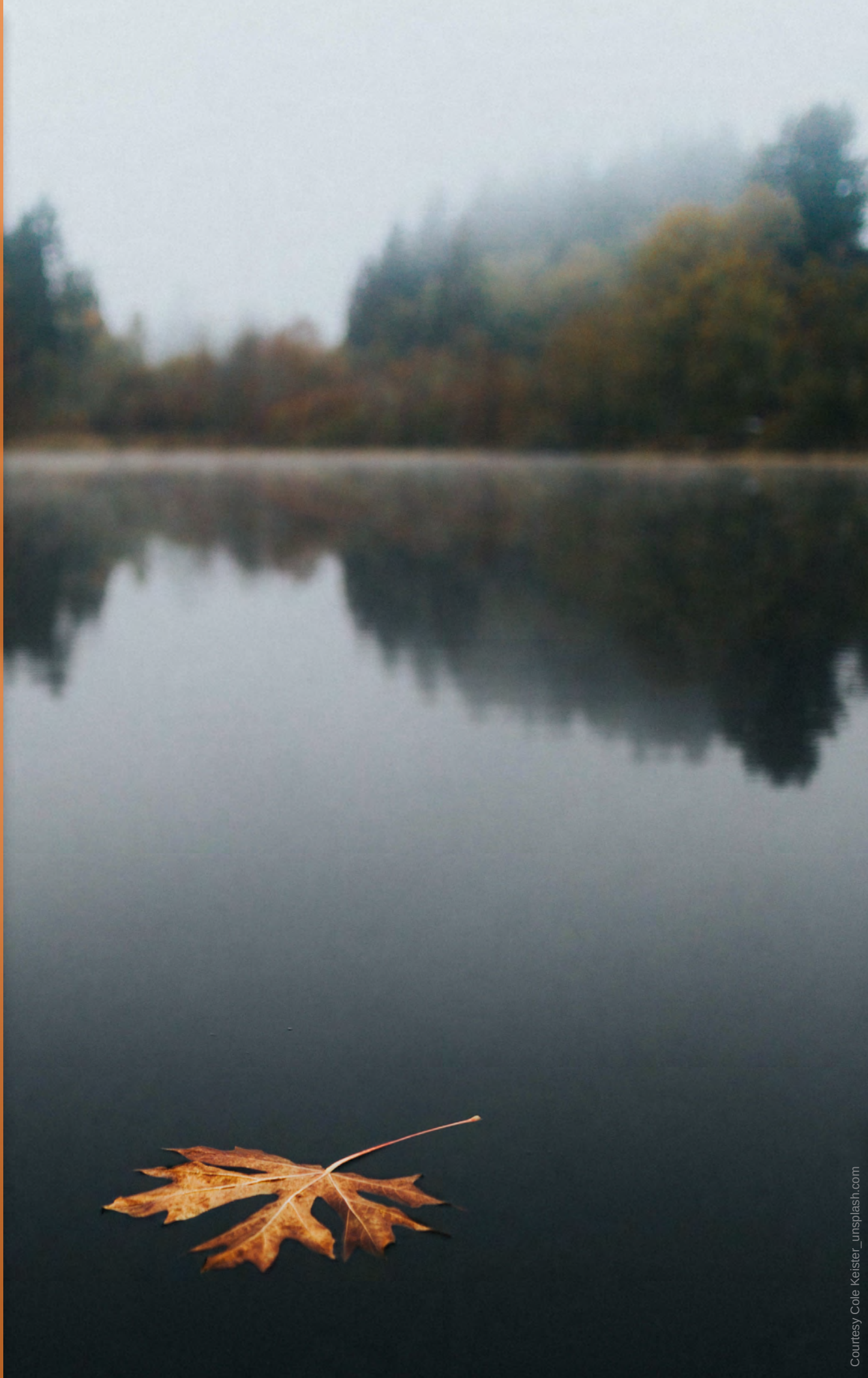
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leading



Turns Out ... I'm A Country Mouse.

In my transition of identity and geography, I took some time to reacquaint myself with Aesop's fable of the two creatures. The metaphor holds true for me personally, as I come out of my relatively protected home community to engage 'the city'. I've always thought of myself as a creature of the city, even though I left Vancouver many years ago to start my career in BC's interior.

Like City Mouse, I love the vibrancy and the bustle of activity, the endless distractions on offer and the stunning natural beauty. Vancouver is amazing, with such splendour and scope. But, as I said, it turns out I'm more country.

In the fable, Country Mouse returns to the simple yet secure life, leaving the city with its anxieties and hazards behind.

I can connect with the greater sense of security that blankets smaller centres. I hail from a community whose entire population will fit inside the large secondary schools of our urban centres, so it is easy to view the populated cities with anxiety and trepidation ... and it becomes easier to empathize with families and staff who express concern for a return to classroom learning in full force.

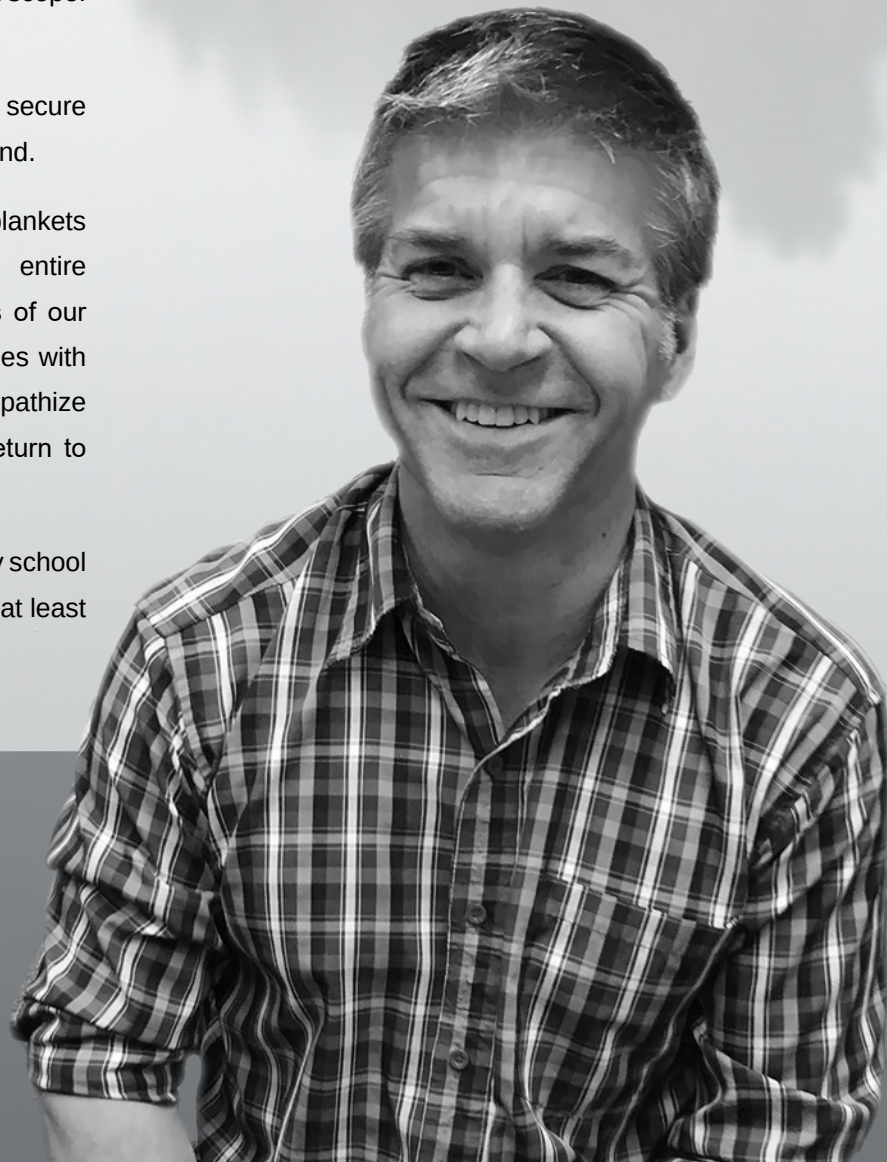
In fact, I believe in our present circumstances that many school leaders are feeling the draw of a simpler existence, or at least one that we recognize.

by

Darren Danyluk

President,

BC Principals' & Vice-Principals Association



Remember when you knew the score? Remember when September was a familiar script, all the design, routine and ritual was like muscle memory. Every Fall was a new game with new players, but it was one we had trained for, reflected upon and practiced. And now the year ahead is one with only one certainty: our schools will need the leadership of BC's Principals and Vice-Principals like never before.

"The principalship is a demanding job right now ... nearly an impossible one. And yet knowing that, there are thousands of principals who not only show up to school every day, they put everyone else before themselves."

(Peter DeWitt, 2020)

Of course we do.

The year ahead is difficult to imagine, much less see. The BC Restart Plan continues to be a work in progress, with challenges for the application of learning groups and the considerations for timetable platforms and divisions. Secondary timetables that were so carefully developed in the Spring are being significantly reconfigured, impacting elective course design and offerings.

An objective of the BC Restart Plan is clear and consistent: the return to school for as many students as possible for as much time as possible, the default being 100% of students 100% of the time.

It is an understatement to say that both meeting this challenge and remaining true to the objective is hard. Principals and Vice-Principals, with their district teams, are digging deep and building creative alternatives and structures in order to address the challenges of our restart.

October is completely obscured at this point, invisible behind the substantial work immediately before our members. But that does not mean that we are without vision.

For most of the Principals and Vice-Principals in BC, Friday the 13th is a more infamous day in the calendar than it was before COVID-19. In all the days that followed, throughout

the Spring and into June, our school leaders were called upon to forge pathways, foster innovation, support connections, and preserve security. BC Principals and Vice-Principals envisioned a new design for education in the province and pulled their teams together to build it. Now again, and in the months ahead, our vision and our perspective will be key to a successful restart.

This episode in our history began with calls for kindness and tolerance and care: let us not lose these qualities as we move forward. As Simon Breakspear has urged, let us capture, cleanse and weave in order to adopt the best parts of the new normal, and to adapt our practice for the benefit of all. And let us not lose sight of our own needs, for in times such as these our school leaders place self-care well down the priority list.

"Leaders are the ones who are willing to give up something of their own for us."

Their time, their energy, their money, maybe even the food off their plate. When it matters, leaders choose to eat last."

(Sinek, 2014)

Insist on nourishment for yourself and look to your networks for support and assistance. Our team in Member Support Services is ready with connections and resources to assist our members in the weeks and months ahead. And don't hesitate to connect with me directly at ddanyluk@bcpvpa.bc.ca.

I am a Country Mouse who now has chosen to live in the city with all it brings. Whether rural or urban, we are connected in this global event. And we are connected in our need of each other, and the compassionate reassurance that this pandemic is not forever ... but it is for now. A young woman I met recently offered an excellent summation, which is appropriate as I close:

"I'm looking forward to 'precedented' times..."

Yes. We all are.

2020-2021 BCPVPA Board of Directors

The BCPVPA Board of Directors represents school-based and district leaders in BC's public school system.

The 2020-2021 Board will continue to guide the BCPVPA in providing advocacy and professional development support for our members who are employed as Vice-Principals, Principals and District Principals in BC's sixty school districts.

And, in this challenging and changeable year, the BCPVPA will continue to support our members as they lead the operation of their K-12 public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, and will continue to collaborate with government and education sector partners to better support leaders and their development at all levels in public education.

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ddanyluk@bcpvpa.bc.ca

Past-President David DeRosa
(Kootenay-Columbia)
dderosa@sd20.bc.ca

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(Victoria)
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Director Jacqueline Taylor
(Vernon)
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Director Heidi Grant
(Nechako Lakes)
hgrant@sd91.bc.ca

Director Sally Zryd
(Kamloops-Thompson)
szryd@sd73.bc.ca

connecting

Board of Directors Meetings

August 19-21, 2020
October 2-3, 2020
November 19-21, 2020
December 4-5, 2020
February 18-20, 2021
April 9-10, 2021
May 7-8, 2021

Board videoconferences:
September 2020, January 2021, March 2021

Chapter Council Meetings

November 20-21, 2020
Presidents/Chapter Council

February 19-20, 2021
Chapter Council

May 7-8, 2021
Chapter Council

Contract Advisory Chair Meetings

October 29, 2020
January 22-23, 2021

Professional Learning & Development Rep Meetings

October 5, 2020
January 31 - February 1, 2021

BC Student Voice Rep Meetings

October 16, 2020
April 16-17, 2021

What Our Members Said ...

"Coffee Connections has been such a personalized way to learn with and from each other."

T Carleton, Vice-Principal

"Coffee Connections gave me a broader perspective. Through hearing others' stories, I was able to relate to potential solutions to similar yet unique challenges."

N Roberts, Vice-Principal

"Coffee Connections gave me the ability to connect with people that I don't usually get to talk with. The diversity of the groups from across the province provided me with new learnings about a specific topic in a live and dynamic way."

J Borosa, Principal

"Coffee Connections is an ongoing way to connect with others in a short snappy format that is accessible and easy to join with quick take-aways for immediate integration into your practice."

R Hislop, Principal

"Coffee Connections was extremely valuable to me. I looked forward to connecting to colleagues around the province who I otherwise had no connection with before. While I enjoyed all of the discussions, I was most appreciative when we went into secondary / elementary rooms. The format was excellent and the time of day perfect for the situation."

H Grant, Principal

Join BCPVPA President Darren Danyluk, Executive Director Kevin Reimer and Staff Directors to share a morning coffee or tea along with rich conversation to start your day!

UPDATE YOUR FALL CALENDAR!

Coffee Connections was introduced in Spring 2020 in response to the many new challenges our BCPVPA members experienced during COVID-19.

The weekly 30-minute Zoom chats provided an opportunity for Principals and Vice-Principals to share their current concerns, ideas and plans. Coffee Connections offered the benefit of touching base with colleagues, and a chance to start the day with togetherness, sharing and learning.



THURSDAYS 7:30 - 8:00 AM

August 27

September 3, 10, 17, 24

October 1, 15, 29

November 12, 26

December 10

Watch for your meeting invitation!

The BCPVPA Connecting Leaders Conference is held annually each October in different regions of the province and features compelling keynote speakers, interactive workshop sessions and no shortage of networking and collaboration with colleagues. For the first time, in accordance with public health guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Connecting Leaders Conference will be a virtual experience.

The virtual Conference will still be hosted by the energetic and innovative planning committee of the Northern Region Chapters who had originally planned a dynamic event to take place in Prince George. The event will be accessible to members and friends in BC and beyond, who can attend as individuals or in small group gatherings — Hubs of Learning — where possible.

The spirit of the Connecting Leaders Conference has always been about learning together: experiencing presentations from inspiring speakers and workshop leaders, and taking the opportunity to informally connect with colleagues between sessions, over a meal or late into the evening at local social venues.

So how do we create that experience virtually?

We recognize that we can't faithfully replicate the face-to-face experience. But through the Zoom platform with enhanced technological support specific to this conference, we can provide rich learning that will incorporate real-time interaction with colleagues. We will provide opportunities to connect virtually in random small groups, through private and public online chats

and attendee polls. You will be encouraged to introduce your own space and place through a sharing platform.

Yes, this conference will look different, but rather than mirroring the online meetings and webinars that we've all become accustomed to this year, it will offer variety and movement, along with presenters who understand both the medium and the importance of engagement. And we haven't forgotten the importance of *your* time together: we are excited to invite participants to social times where you can relax with a beverage and join in virtual conversations with folks from around the province.

There will be swag-bags. And draw prizes!

And, we will continue our support of a local Prince George charity through our donations, and through fundraising opportunities within the virtual context of the conference. We will have the privilege of world-class keynote speakers who are beyond excited to be on this journey with all of us, homegrown workshops led by your talented colleagues from around BC, and learning resources that will be accessible and shared with participants.

We recognize that in these strange and changing times, connecting with colleagues is more important than ever. So, we hope you will join us for this opportune event, gather mindfully with your local colleagues, and share in this provincial opportunity to learn from each other as we explore the '*Changing Nature of Leadership*'.

Bringing Together Members

Program

Registration



From Across the Province

BCPVPA Connecting Leaders Conference 2020

The Changing Nature of Leadership

Thursday October 23 & Friday October 24

THERE ARE VIRTUAL MEANS OF

bringing leaders together from across BC ...

sharing professional learning and development ...

hearing from world class speakers ...

participating in workshops offered by our peers ...

expanding our networks ...

by

Elizabeth Bell &

Jessica Antosz

BCPVPA Directors,

Professional Learning & Development

BUT THERE IS NO REPLACEMENT FOR

... being in the same room around a table, six feet apart

... chat time in the coffee or lunch line

... the casual story-telling and spontaneous laughter

... the kind words of support shared face to face

SO

WHAT ARE SOME CHAPTERS PLANNING?

To individually register for the virtual Connecting Leaders Conference and — where possible — to create a **Hub of Learning!** Groups of Principals and Vice-Principals will come together in their schools or other regional locations to take in the 'mainstage' and keynote presentations on a projected screen, and to form face-to-face breakout rooms in situ, all while maintaining their physical distance. Each participant will have their own device so that they can participate in individual Workshops, and then gather again for the final keynote.

Some Chapters will bring in lunch for the Hub, and some will socialize after the sessions in various local locations.

DOES

EVERYONE NEED TO BE IN A HUB?

Not at all!

That is the advantage of the virtual model: everyone can choose their own environment, and have the full experience of the Conference. Virtual breakout rooms will welcome you into conversation with colleagues from around the province, and keynote presentations and workshops will be accessible to all, along with the opportunity to join social conversation groups on Thursday and Friday.

There is something for everyone this October.

We're breaking new ground with our 2020 virtual Conference and we look forward to this great opportunity for BC school leaders to learn together.

Event Program

Register Now

Until September 1

\$225.00 (plus GST) + Swag-bag

September 1 – October 1

\$275.00 (plus GST) + Swag-bag

October 1 – October 16

\$275.00 (plus GST) no Swag-bag

bcp  vpa

THANK YOU TO

save  foods

Going the extra mile

PLATINUM PARTNER

2020 BCPVPA CONNECTING LEADERS CONFERENCE



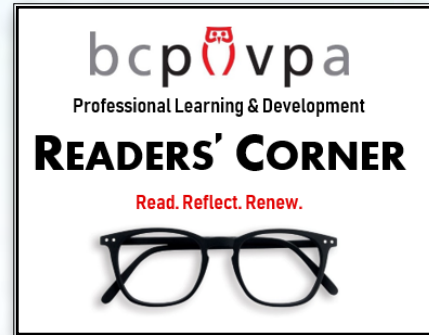
CONNECTING LEADERS

L♥ve to Read?

We've got you covered!



We are excited to have Wendy Briggs SD 23
(Okanagan) lead our Fall 2020 Book Club
with conversations on
[The Yes Brain: How to Cultivate Courage,](#)
[Curiosity and Resilience in your Child](#)
by Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson.
Watch for dates and times in eNews this Fall.



Readers' Corner returns
this Fall, with a new article
posted in BetterEducate
every second Wednesday.
We look forward to your
conversations about these
compelling curated articles.



COMING SOON

**A Spring series of *Article Chats*,
sponsored by the
BCPVPA Professional Learning &
Development Advisory Committee**



Connect with Member Support Services

The three Directors of BCPVPA's Member Support Services (MSS) – Don Boyd, Magdalena Kassis and Ellen Roberts – have between them almost 100 years of school and district-based leadership experience that they draw upon when assisting members on a variety of topics.

The MSS team is well supported by both Administrative Assistant Emily Rogness, and Rochelle Morandini who provides invaluable support to BCPVPA members involved in the Long Term Disability (LTD) program.

The Member Support Services team likes to tell members that their membership in the BCPVPA is 'all-inclusive': members are encouraged to access support whenever they have a question they can't answer, or encounter an issue that they need help resolving.

While there is no question is too big or too small for the MSS team, there are some common reasons why members reach out for support:

Personal Services Contracts

The team does extensive work on contracts. Members are encouraged to share new contracts with MSS so that they can ensure that there are no errors or omissions, and to highlight potential issues. On occasion, significant variations in contracts – particularly for new administrators – are identified within a district. MSS can apprise the Chapter's contract team to ensure that fair process has been followed in making those changes.

MSS provides advice to Chapters on how to approach local contract discussions in their districts, including how to respond to and – when necessary – dispute proposals from their Boards. When negotiations fall short of 'good faith' processes, MSS can make suggestions in support of moving discussions forward. They will review draft contracts and suggest wording for clauses that Chapters want to embed into contracts in order to strengthen the language. They can provide for consideration comparable language that is drawn from contracts in the same region or other regions in the province. Contract discussion workshops are held upon request with local Chapters, and both supervisory staff and Trustees are welcome to attend, as BCPVPA believes that single team issue-based discussions bring the best results.

Contract Advisory Council (CAC)

In addition to working with individual Chapters, MSS hosts meetings twice a year for the regional representatives of the Contract Advisory Council (CAC) in order to discuss issues related to contracts, negotiations, and other employment situations. They share data and relay information to the CAC reps who can take that knowledge back to their regions, and the reps provide to MSS the valuable perspective of the regions they represent. In the last year, topics explored at CAC have included:

- Developments at the Ministry and impacts on Principals' and Vice-Principals' work
- Contract language and negotiations around the province
- Pension information, and updates on changes to the Teachers' Pension Plan
- Total compensation for Principals and Vice-Principals; regional placement of Principals and Vice-Principals on the grid
- Benefits package updates
- Investigations involving administrators
- Overall issues with employment relationships across the province

At least once every two years, MSS gathers the Contract Chairs and additional representatives from all 60 districts for our 'Contract Seminar' to have discussions about compensation, benefits and the employment relationship. Speakers are invited to address this group on a number of employment-related topics to enhance the representatives' knowledge and confidence as they respond to questions from their Chapter's own members.

by Ellen Roberts
BCPVPA Director,
Member Support Services



L to R, Ellen Roberts, Magdalena Kassis, Don Boyd

Investigations

The MSS team dedicates time to supporting members facing harassment or misconduct investigations at the district, Teacher Regulation Branch, WorkSafeBC or Human Rights Tribunal levels. As representatives for BCPVPA members, MSS assists with preparing documents, preparing for investigation interviews, and accompanies members to all meetings and interviews associated with the investigation. They encourage members who face such situations to contact BCPVPA

immediately so that the team can be involved from the beginning in any investigative process.

Long Term Disability (LTD)

The BCPVPA manages the provincial LTD plan to which all members belong. The MSS team, including Rochelle, supports members who require the benefits available through Short Term Disability (STD) or LTD. With support and guidance from the plan administrator, Morneau Shepell, and through a collaborative working relationship with the plan provider, Desjardins, MSS ensures that members are well cared for in their time of need.

BC Student Voice

BCPVPA has facilitated this leadership opportunity for students for more than 30 years, and MSS has been central to the organization of the program. Approximately 40 students representing all regions in the province gather to participate in two BC Student Voice forums each year. These forums provide students the opportunity to share their voices on timely issues with representatives from the Ministries of Education and Health, and to gain valuable leadership development skills through cooperative learning sessions presented by engaging and knowledgeable guest speakers.

BCPVPA Student Scholarships

The BCPVPA provides 20 scholarships annually to deserving graduating students across the province, and the scholarship process is adjudicated by MSS. The scholarships recognize the community service – both local and global – and the academic excellence of graduating students. Ten scholarships are awarded to applicants whose parents are members of the BCPVPA, and the remaining scholarships are awarded to non-member applicants, including two for Indigenous students.

Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP)

BCPVPA members are part of the Teachers' Pension Plan. One member of the MSS team sits on the Teachers' Pension Plan Advisory Committee, participating in quarterly meetings to discuss the plan and to learn about and share with the membership updates and trends in the plan.

Learning Opportunities

MSS offers several workshops to members across the province.

Retirement seminars address the steps in preparing for a successful and happy retirement, including detailed information on the TPP and benefit options available to members upon retirement. The seminars are presented both onsite and virtually.

The team also delivers 'The Legal Side of Leadership', a presentation that focuses on the range of legal and regulatory foundations of the work that Principals and Vice-Principals do in schools. The presentations are customized for the different districts, ensuring that language in contracts, collective agreements and district policy are all taken into account to represent the local context. Other workshop presentations include 'Leading in a Unionized Environment' and 'Teacher Evaluation'.

Challenging Situations

When members are faced with challenging situations in their work that may impact their employment status, the MSS team is available to assist. This may involve attending meetings with a member or talking through strategies to resolve a situation. MSS can point members in the right direction, and provide confidential guidance and support.

BCPVPA encourages members to reach out for guidance, support and information as they navigate the many aspects of their leadership role as Principals and Vice-Principals.

MSS looks forward to hearing from our members!

604-689-3399

Don Boyd – don@bcpvpa.bc.ca

Magdalena Kassis – magdalena@bcpvpa.bc.ca

Ellen Roberts – ellen@bcpvpa.bc.ca



[Download your copy of the BCPVPA Leadership Standards](#)

[Download your copy of the BCPVPA Leadership Standards Workbook](#)

Pick up your digital copy of the **BCPVPA Leadership Standards for Principals and Vice-Principals in British Columbia** in both English and French

[Téléchargez votre copie des Standards de leadership de la BCPVPA.](#)

[Téléchargez votre copie du Cahier de travail des Standards de leadership de la BCPVPA.](#)



"I'm so glad I was able to participate in this program. It helped define the beginnings of the administrative phase of my career and was able to provide opportunities to effectively work on the key areas of my leadership that I identified for growth."

(2020 Mentee)

"Being able to talk through scenarios and get feedback and advice from an experienced administrator was very helpful."

(2020 Mentee)

"It has opened up my eyes to see that student success can look so different in each class. Instructional Leadership is such a fluid thing, as each teacher needs something so specific to their own practice."

(2020 Mentee)

"This has been an amazing and fulfilling experience for me. It has made me a better leader and listener. It has made me reflect deeply on how to ask better questions and how to allow my mentee to own the experience."

I was so glad to be a part of his learning."

(2020 Mentor)

"We have very similar values; shared experiences; and both love learning and growing as leaders."

(2020 Mentor)

"Being able to set aside time to talk with my mentor has greatly increased my confidence in all areas of leadership. My mentor's knowledge of the Leadership Standards, experience as an administrator, and overall positive attitude has made a huge impact on my confidence as a leader."

(2020 Mentee)

"Well-being in my first year has been a struggle, but just having someone to check in with, lay out what's going on and get some real, productive feedback is important."

(2020 Mentee)

"My mentee has developed specific opportunities that have increased student health and understanding which will definitely impact her students. She has also been working through a district audit process which has challenged her to examine how her community meets the needs of its most vulnerable students."

(2020 Mentor)

"I have found it valuable to learn from someone outside my district, in an authentic way. The real-life experiences of my mentor put my theoretical learning into perspective."

(2020 Mentee)

The third year of the BCPVPA Mentorship Program was an impactful experience for both mentees and mentors

In the 2019-2020 school year, the program grew to include 30 mentoring partnerships, comprised of 57 participants (27 mentors and 30 mentees) which was an increase of six partnerships over the previous year.

Matching was completed in early October 2019 and maintained the principle of partnering each mentor and mentee across districts and urban, suburban and rural locations. As much as possible, mentors and mentees were matched for similarities in elementary and secondary environments, and for compatible areas of professional focus.

Of the 27 mentors participating this year, 18 were actively working Principals and 9 were retired Principals. The mentor and mentee participants represented

employment in 30 British Columbia School Districts, which demonstrates the effective outreach across the province.

This year, mentors and new mentees were able to meet in person at the program launch in October 2019. The workshop was well attended, and the BCPVPA continued to touch base with both mentees and mentors during the year through virtual sessions and collaborative learning opportunities that allowed for sharing both the benefits and challenges of the mentorship process.

The end-of-year celebration of learning was held virtually on July 3 due to the COVID-19 restrictions on gathering. Participants gained valuable insights into their mentoring experiences, and recommended ways to strengthen the ongoing BCPVPA program.

**100% of mentors confirmed that participation
as a mentor is a valuable experience.**

89% of mentees confirmed the program is meeting their expectations.

100% of mentor and mentees responses agreed there is adequate support provided by the BCPVPA for their participation.

**Mentee comments repeatedly affirmed a primary benefit of the
mentorship was growth in their confidence in decision-making.**

Applications are now open for both
Mentors and Mentees for the 2020-21 school year.

Applications close: September 30, 2020

bcpvpa.bc.ca/mentorship

[Mentors](#)

[Mentees](#)

Are you a practicing or retired Principal?

You can make a difference in the journey of a new leader, and have an amazing experience along the way. Join us as a Mentor for 2020 — 2021.

learning



Inside the Ministry of Education:

Division and Executive Team Overview

Our world has changed a great deal in the past few months and looking back, it can be hard to grasp all that has happened to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. While there were many challenges during this crisis, there were also many accomplishments across the education sector. A crucial part of the success we have seen so far is due to the strong leadership Principals and Vice-Principals have provided their schools and communities.

Throughout these challenging times, Principals and Vice-Principals have demonstrated heartening resilience, leadership and strength. We know the role of school leaders is critical for students' success, and during the pandemic, strong school leadership also provided vital support to teachers, students and their families.

Government remains focussed on our mandate to provide an educational experience that allows every learner to maximize their potential. Translating this vision into action is complex and involves the work of every division, branch and individual in the Ministry of Education. To understand how the Ministry is organized, here is an overview of our divisions and an introduction to the Executive Team that leads them.



Scott was appointed Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Education in July 2017. He began his career as a teacher with the Vancouver and Victoria School Boards before joining the Ministry of Education in 1992. Scott has built extensive leadership experience in British Columbia's education system and broader public sector.

The Deputy Minister's Office (DMO) is the primary liaison office between the Ministry and the Minister's Office (MO), rights holders and partner groups, and central government and is responsible for overseeing the strategic and operational business of the Ministry with each Assistant Deputy Minister reporting to the Deputy Minister. The DMO is also instrumental in coordinating with our COVID-19 response team to provide guidance and information to the sector during the pandemic.

Scott MacDonald, Deputy Minister



Education Programs Division

Melanie Stewart, *Assistant Deputy Minister*

Melanie has 13 years' experience in the BC Public Service, first joining as a senior policy analyst in 2007. During her diverse public service career, Melanie has held progressively senior positions in a wide variety of ministries and has held five Assistant Deputy Minister appointments.

The focus for the Education Programs Division (EPD) is the movement to increasingly personalized learning, which is enabled and supported by quality teaching and learning, flexibility and choice, and high standards. EPD plays a central role in maintaining curriculum, classroom assessment, reporting and the ongoing large-scale assessment programs, as well as a targeted focus on career education and supporting students to learn how to effectively manage their life journey toward preferred future possibilities.

Keith is an entrepreneurial and trusted leader with over 15 years' experience in public policy and strategy for organizations internal and external to government. As an experienced change leader, Keith has dramatically improved the use of evidence-based decision-making in public sector organizations. He also serves on the board of the BC Public School Employers' Association.

The Governance and Analytics Division (GAD) is responsible for the following business lines: legislation, workforce development, education analytics, continuous improvement, teacher certification and discipline (including the BC Teachers' Council and the Commissioner for Teacher Regulation), as well as independent schools and international education. This includes being the lead on strategic policy, sector governance matters, partner relations and labour relations. GAD also provides expertise in economic, statistical and social evaluation of education data to inform decision-making and to guide directions that shape the delivery of educational services across the province.



Governance and Analytics Division

Keith Godin, *Assistant Deputy Minister*



Learning Division

Jennifer McCrea, Assistant Deputy Minister

The work of the Learning Division reflects the diversity of B.C. students. The Division provides leadership and support to school districts and independent schools in the areas of Indigenous Education, Early Learning, Libraries, French Education, Inclusive Education, Student Wellness and Safety and Mental Health. The Learning Division enhances program and service delivery for all students, with a focus on equity to ensure consistency in outcomes and experience for all.

Before taking on her current role with the Ministry of Education, **Jennifer** served within the Ministry as Director for Strategic Human Resources, and Director of Communications for seven years as part of Government Communications and Public Engagement. Prior to joining the Ministry of Education, Jennifer worked with the Ministries of Aboriginal Affairs, Small Business, Tourism and Culture and Government's central policy office.

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Reg has been in the public service for over twenty-five years; starting in 1992 with the Ministry of Finance, Superannuation Commission and progressing through many levels of the public service to Executive Director, Banking & Cash Management Branch with the Provincial Treasury and then Assistant Deputy Minister with the Ministry of Children and Family Development. He received his chartered professional accountant (CPA) designation in 1998.

The Resource Management Division (RMD) provides operational and capital funding for school districts and monitors financial accountability and compliance of boards of education. The Division also provides a wide range of corporate functions for the Ministry, including budgeting and financial support services, strategic human resources, workplace and facilities support, and risk management and emergency preparedness.



Resource Management Division
Reg Bawa, Assistant Deputy Minister and
Executive Financial Officer



Services and Technology Division
Eleanor Liddy, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister

Through her career with the provincial government, **Eleanor** has managed the implementation of MyEducation BC, the student information service, across the province and was also Director of Open School BC, an award-winning e-learning and resource development unit. Prior to joining the Public Service, Eleanor was an educator for over 20 years, beginning as a high school science and math teacher, and helped to implement the province's first online secondary program.

The Services & Technology Division (S&T) houses Education's service centre for students, the sector and the public, providing information and technology services which enable all stages of the K-12 journey: from the provision of a provincial high-speed internet network and Student Information System, through to learning supports, provision of results and transcripts, and access to scholarships and the BC Training and Education Savings Grant. The division also provides a wide range of IT services and systems to support the operations of the Ministry.

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The BCPVPA Leadership Planning Guide is a reference document that should be found on every Principals' and Vice-Principals' computer desktop or shelf throughout BC.

How did this valuable resource evolve?

by

Jessica Antosz & Elizabeth Bell

BCPVPA Directors,
Professional Learning & Development
with Lisa Slater, DLA Piper

The BCPVPA Leadership Planning Guide was written to replace the Start Smart Binder, a document originally created for participants attending the BCPVPA/UBC Short Course I. The intent of the Start Smart Binder was:

- 1) to support the Organizational Leadership domain of the Leadership Standards; and
- 2) to recognize that Principals and Vice-Principals needed a comprehensive resource that would support the skills, knowledge and information in their leadership and management roles.

The original handbook created by past BCPVPA President Les Duskowski provided a wealth of information on the various tasks and duties that Principals and Vice-Principals are responsible for in the day-to-day operation of their school. This document essentially addressed the question *'what do school leaders need to remember to do in their role?'*

The binder was seen as a valuable tool for newly-appointed Principals and Vice-Principals attending Short Course I. In fact, it was so valuable that seasoned Principals and Vice-Principals who were involved as Short Course I facilitators kept asking the question: *'why not update this information binder and turn it into a Leadership Planning Guide that can be accessed by all Principals and Vice-Principals throughout British Columbia?'*

The BCPVPA staff responded by inviting a committee to rewrite the binder into a Leadership Planning Guide. The committee was comprised of BCPVPA staff, practicing Principals and Vice-Principals representing various BC school districts, and members of the BCPVPA Indigenous Leadership Advisory Committee.

Order a print copy of the BCPVPA Leadership Planning Guide (\$55.00) or download your free digital copy.

This group of enthusiastic educators came together in the Spring of 2018 with the sole purpose of recreating the binder as a Leadership Planning Guide that could be available for Short Course I in 2019.

The committee worked diligently for ten months, researching, rewriting, creating new sections and ensuring that the content of the Guide was current and relevant to the work of Principals and Vice-Principals. Committee members returned again and again to the question *'have we covered everything?'*, with an awareness that the answer would always be *'no'*.

The resulting Leadership Planning Guide focuses on key areas that Principals and Vice-Principals face in their role. The Guide is divided into eight sections:

- School Information
- Students and Culture
- Indigenous Education
- Parents and The Public
- Legal: What Guides and Directs Us
- Professional Learning and Development Resources
- School Task Lists
- Appendices

The Guide is intended to be generic in nature, and it is context-dependent — Principals and Vice-Principals must also adhere to the policies and regulations of their school districts. The richness of ideas, wide range of information, and breadth of examples provided by the writers make this Guide an excellent resource tool. With the independent character of school districts, the transforming nature of education and shifting global changes, the Guide is a living document that will be reviewed and amended annually.

The first edition of the Guide was published in June 2019, and the second edition in June 2020. The second edition was first made available to participants of our BCPVPA *Essentials for New School Leaders* program who reviewed the Guide as part of their learning experience, and shared their comments:

"I really appreciated the collaborative contributions from leaders in the Indigenous Education section – i.e. 'everything i needed to know...'"

"Excellent resource – despite great local leadership and organization, I wish I had this last September."

"The checklists are helpful, no matter how many start-ups you've been through."

"Health and safety – key resource."

"The Indigenous Education section is impressive, I'm really happy to see that there are great resources in there!"

"My group wanted to delve into monthly tasks. Noticed big district differences."

"Excellent but scary-- now we *really* know how much we don't know!"

"The Indigenous Education Guide language is beautiful, and this is such a useful tool for admin."

Use the BCPVPA Leadership Planning Guide as a reference point in your work, and remember that the role and the work of the Principal and Vice-Principal is complex and always changing. One cannot remember everything on a daily basis; however, you do have a comprehensive resource nearby to support you in your work.

The BCPVPA would like to thank members of the BCPVPA Leadership Planning Guide committee and others who have contributed to producing this guide.



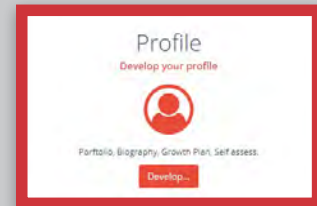


CREATE

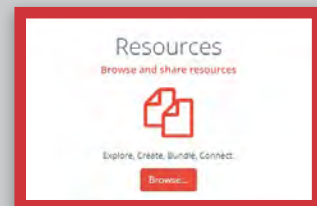
- one-stop access to resources shared by other educators, in your district and province-wide
- share resources directly with students and families: no passwords required
- record Zoom or YouTube instructions, and set meeting times for feedback and check-ins

COLLABORATE

- work with multiple creators in one space
- chat with other educators and explore ideas
- use topics and tags to categorize resources
- create resource bundles
- use easily on all devices, and integrate the platforms you choose



Create a personal profile with your biography, photo and experience



Create, co-edit & share resources, share existing resources using topics & tags



Search, connect and network with other educators, collaborate, explore and discuss



Recording ● Conversations

...Is It Legal?

by Don Boyd
BCPVPA Director,
Member Support Services
with Lisa Slater, DLA Piper



We often receive calls from members when they find out that their conversation with a parent has been recorded. They ask what their legal rights are, and we must advise them that there is no known law that prohibits a person from recording another person, whether it is a telephone conversation or a face-to-face conversation. While one would hope that a person would ask for permission to tape their conversation, they do not need to. Oftentimes, there is a challenging situation at the school level and a parent records their conversation with the teacher, Vice-Principal or Principal without notifying them.

What Does the Law Say?

We asked **Lisa Slater of DLA Piper** to share the legal perspective:

The law respecting admissibility of a recoding into evidence is generally as follows in a family law proceeding:

- (a) If the information is relevant, the identity of the parties known, and the recording trustworthy, then the general rule is that the evidence by way of taped conversation should be received;*
- (b) Discretion to exclude the evidence is limited if, in the circumstances of the case, the best interests of the child militated in favour of admitting the evidence;*
- (c) The test for admissibility is three prong: relevance, identification and trustworthiness, including taking into account:
 - (i) Completeness of the recordings, i.e. complete conversations are included or portions;*
 - (ii) Accuracy of transcription;*
 - (iii) Does the recording begin "in the middle of the action" so that the court is left to question what preceded a bit of conversation, how a topic came to be introduced, whether there was coaching or manipulation of the conversation, or prompting;**
- (iv) The recorder will have to give evidence about the recording including who made the recording, how and when.*
- (d) The question of fairness and the effect on the reputation of the administration of justice of allowing evidence of this kind may be considered;*
- (e) The judicial exercise of discretion involves a balancing of competing interests which can be usefully viewed as assessing the probative value of the evidence as against its prejudicial effect.*

If the three tests, listed above, for admissibility are not satisfied, it is not admissible, in addition to the fairness and justice factors.

A chambers application proceeds on the basis of affidavits and so a recording transcript may be admitted and given weight providing the above tests are satisfied. The accuracy and completeness of the transcript must be established as well as the veracity of the original recording.

It is preferable but not necessary that the transcription should be done by a certified transcriber and not the party himself or herself. The recorded person can say that it is incomplete or not accurately transcribed, or that the recording may have been edited, if that is the case. If requested, the original recording or a true copy of it should be produced to the requesting party so they can either get their own transcript, if they think it was not accurately transcribed or if a whole, rather than partial, transcript should be included.

It is often the case that a witness tries to put into evidence a 'partial' transcript rather than the whole conversation and the person recorded may feel that additional statements were made that are relevant, but were not transcribed, or that an excerpt's meaning is distorted if taken out of context of the whole conversation.

It is also possible that there may be additional evidence to put the conversation in context, or to provide explanation for statements made.

There is no known law that imposes an obligation to give notice to the person being recorded, either that a transcript has been made, or that it will be used in court or at a hearing. The other party to the proceeding could have contacted the Principal or Vice-Principal to inquire if the transcript was an accurate reflection of the conversation, or may have obtained a copy of the recording and been satisfied as to its accuracy.

How Do You Ensure that You Are Not Being Recorded?

There is no guarantee that you will not be recorded in future conversations. However it is advisable that, during conversations with parents, students, staff or others, you conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times. Do not use inflammatory language, keep your conversation as factual as possible, and always follow up the conversation with an email stating the salient points of the conversation that you had with the individual.

As a Precaution ...

If you feel that the conversation is going to be challenging, or if there is a history of conflict with the person and your intuition is telling you to be careful, you could always ask the following question before getting into the conversation: *"Is the conversation that we are about to have being recorded?"*

It does send a message to the individual, who may think twice about proceeding with a recording, or may inform you that they intend to record the conversation.

Note that they are under no obligation to inform you that they are recording the conversation.

The best advice?
Remain calm, and
stay professional
at all times.



Redefining Challenging Behaviour

Working
Collaboratively
With
Students to
Change Behaviours

by Michael Carlyle

Principal, Alice Brown Elementary,
Langley, SD 35

'Kids do well if they can and doing well is preferable' is a comment you will hear Dr. Ross Greene say at every one of his workshops or presentations. It's a key theme in his books and life work supporting children with emotional and behavioural challenges. His approach to working with children – **Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS)** – creates a model in which we work collaboratively with children to solve their unsolved problems that are causing them difficulty when meeting expectations in the classroom, on the playground, at home and really anywhere in their life due to lagging skills. Acting with the belief that 'Children do well if they can and doing well is preferable' is – in my opinion – a far better way to approach supporting kids who are struggling, rather than assuming that they are manipulative; they are choosing to be disrespectful; or they like the attention (*or, insert any other reasons adults assign to children who are not meeting their expectations*). I'm not sure there is a greater time than now to look at how we will support our students who are struggling to meet school expectations as they return to school during this challenging time of COVID-19.

As a high school Vice-Principal early in my administrative career, wearing the 'Principal hat' when dealing with student behaviour was mainly comprised of adult-imposed consequences based on the 'decisions' students made. Even as I write that now, it still doesn't

sit well with me. Students who were already struggling to meet the expectations the school placed upon them were now missing even more school and losing connections, and our relationships struggled as a result. As I learned quickly, imposing our will on behaviourally-challenging students often results in more challenging behaviours.

Needless to say, my reason for writing this article is to share with you a better way. In my opinion, it really should become *THE WAY*. The best comparison I can offer is if a Grade 1 student is struggling to read, we don't send them to the Principal's office for a telephone call home. Instead, we find the strategies that will work to support the student in learning that skill. So, why do we take a different approach with student behaviour? Meeting the expectations that a teacher or a school creates is a skill that many of our children learn as they progress through school. If students struggle to meet expectations, then isn't it our job to teach them the lagging skills they need in order to meet the expectations and be successful? If 'kids do well if they can and doing well is preferable', then it isn't a choice on the part of students to not meet the expectations we place on them. They simply need some help.

My first year as an Elementary Principal was a steep learning curve. The biggest piece of learning I encountered

was through a book study of *Lost and Found – Helping Behaviorally Challenging Students (and While You're At It, All the Others)* by Dr. Ross Greene. When I arrived, the school community I was serving was struggling to support a few students that had impacted the school in less than positive ways. Staff were looking for a new way; I'd even say that staff **needed** a new way. My resource teacher – Ms. Christine Thygesen, who just recently joined our Association – brought forth *Lost and Found* as a book study, and off we went.

For those who have not read Dr. Greene's books (*The Explosive Child, Lost at School, Lost and Found, Raising Human Beings*), his mantra 'Kids do well if they can, and doing well is preferable' is woven through his writing. The work starts there. We no longer view behaviour as

a choice, but as the result of a student failing to meet the expectations that a school or adult has placed on them. The behaviour is a manifestation of the child's struggle to meet the expectation, and it is our job – to paraphrase Dr. Greene – to look as far upstream as possible to find out what it is about the expectation that the student is finding difficulty in meeting, and then work collaboratively with the student to solve the problem. Hence, the process is called Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS).

Two and half years into this model, our school has implemented CPS throughout all grades in our school and students are now receiving support though CPS to meet previously unmet expectations or solve previously unsolved problems. It is part of our school's ethos and daily programming.

Dr. Ross Greene (*Lost and Found*, 2016)
helps readers understand three approaches
we use to dealing with behaviour:

Plan A, Plan B and Plan C.

- Plan A is the adult imposed, unilateral consequence, *done to the child*
- Plan B is the collaborative, problem solving process *done with the child*
- Plan C is making a conscious decision to let some behaviours go right now, as we will address them at a later date. This is not 'ignoring' the behaviours, but could be because we can't deal with behaviour in the heat of the moment, or because we have 'bigger fish to fry' (Dr. Ross Greene likes this term).

Plan B conversations are where the magic lies, and involve three steps:

Empathy Step:

The aim of this step is understanding what the child's experience is, and what is making it difficult for them to meet the expectation. It begins with an empathy question to initiate the conversation, "*I noticed that you were having difficulty (insert the unmet expectation), what's up?*" And then the adult 'drills' for upstream information about what is causing the student difficulty in meeting the expectation, using a number of drilling strategies to determine the child's biggest concern.

Adult Concern Step:

The adult gets their turn to give their biggest concern, which begins with the words "*My concern is...*"

This concern will likely explain how not meeting the expectation is affecting the child or others.

Invitation Step:

Both concerns are placed together, and the student gets first crack at the opportunity to try to solve the problem. However, it is a collaborative effort as the adult and the student engage in respectful discussion while they seek a solution to the problem. The solution must be both mutually satisfactory and realistic **for both the child and the adult**.

The adult would say "*I wonder if there is a way (insert child concern) and (insert adult concern) ...*" then the problem solving ensues.

It is important to note that this model begins with a strategy to identify empathy step questions through the use of an ALSUP (Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems).

ALSUPs, Plan B cheat sheets, drilling cheat sheets and support information about CPS can all be found at livesinthebalance.org/paperwork

The outcome of a Plan B conversation is the creation of a plan to move forward for that student to begin to meet the expectation that has been placed on them. They feel listened to, respected and valued in the process. They are learning skills of empathy, understanding other points of view and the impact their actions have on others, and learning agency to solve their own problems (with support).

Finally, I was able to find a way to support students who are struggling with meeting school expectations without destroying relationships in the process. We move away from reactive, adult-imposed, unilateral consequences, and instead work *with* students to identify what is causing them difficulty in meeting an expectation; we come up with a plan together, collaboratively and proactively, and help students learn the lagging skills.

Lost and Found (Dr. R.W. Greene, 2016) and CPS will formatively change the way you view behaviour, and the strategies you approach to support behaviourally-challenging students.

Let me share with you some successful examples, and how we approached students who were not meeting expectations by using CPS.

Example #1

A lunch-time playground hockey game results in a Grade 5 student (H designation) engaging in unsafe actions towards others, throwing and smashing his stick on the pavement and swearing at adults and students.

(On the following day – not in the heat of the moment)

Empathy Step: *"I realized that you are having difficulty playing hockey safely at lunchtime yesterday, what's up?"*
The student's biggest concern is that no one knows the rules, so he is getting frustrated and angry.

Adult Concern Step: *"When you are not playing safely and getting upset, someone will get hurt."*

Invitation Step: *"I wonder if there is a way that everyone would know the same rules, and that no-one would get hurt?"* The plan created by the student is that we could create a set of rules that we would put up in the hockey box so that everyone would know and follow the same set. Problem solved. The student now has the ability to meet the expectation, and no suspension or relationship was destroyed in the process. See Image 1. We have had zero hockey issues with this student since the rules were put up in the hockey box.



Image 1

Example #2

A Grade 1 student is hiding under his desk, upset during writing center in Daily 3 and continuing to draw pictures instead of writing three sentences in his journal.

Empathy Step: “I realized that you are having difficulty writing three sentences in your journal during daily 3, what’s up?” The student’s biggest concern is that he doesn’t like the way his letters look because all the pencils aren’t sharp enough (who would have guessed that?)

Adult Concern Step: “When you are not writing, Ms. Smith does not see how your writing is progressing and where she can help you.”

Invitation Step: “I wonder if there is a way that you could have sharper pencils so that your letters would look better and, that Ms. Smith could see how well you are progressing in your writing”. The plan created by the student was to have his own pencil sharpener and to sharpen the shared pencils on the desk before writing. I know this plan seems a little simple, but this is a student who has big emotions and was on his way to a behavioural assessment. See image 2 and 3 for the before-and-after Plan B conversation evidence. *Magic.*

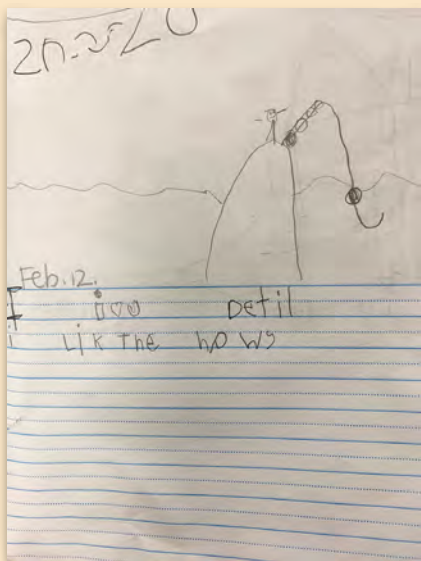


Image 2

To be honest, implementation of CPS is challenging as it is a process-oriented approach. One must show fidelity to the process for positive results. It takes time and practice to support CPS and to be confident in the process. I truly believe it is worth the effort. It has formatively changed the way that I approach student behaviour, and subsequently my relationships as a Principal. If you have the opportunity to read *Lost and Found*, which describes a roadmap for CPS in your school, or to participate in Dr. Ross Greene’s three-day advanced training workshop, I would strongly recommend it.

I think the following quote from *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child’s Developing Mind* (Daniel J. Siegel and Tina P. Bryson, 2011) said it best: “We can impact the future of our world by caring well for our children and by being intentional in giving them the kinds of relationships we value and that we want them to see as normal” (pg 127). Having collaborative, respectful conversations with students will show them that we care, we value their perspectives, see how their actions affect others and recognize that they have the ability to make school better for themselves. Respect, empathy and self-efficacy skills are developed in the process, skills they can use to improve their relationships. CPS gives you the opportunity to model and build positive relationships with kids who are struggling to meet the expectations of school, even the most behaviourally challenging students.

We all have students who struggle to meet the expectations placed on them. Sometimes we feel that we have tried everything and that all hope is lost. If you have not implemented CPS, then I know there is still hope.

I have recently completed Dr. Greene’s 24 week certification training and now I am a trained provider of CPS <http://www.cpsconnection.com/providers>. I would gladly provide any support you need. Please reach out if you have any questions: mcarlyle@sd35.bc.ca

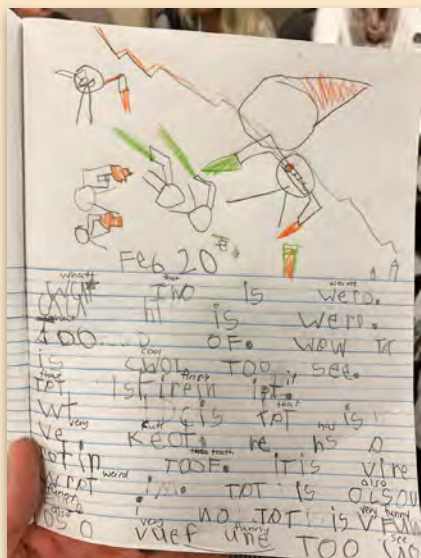


Image 3

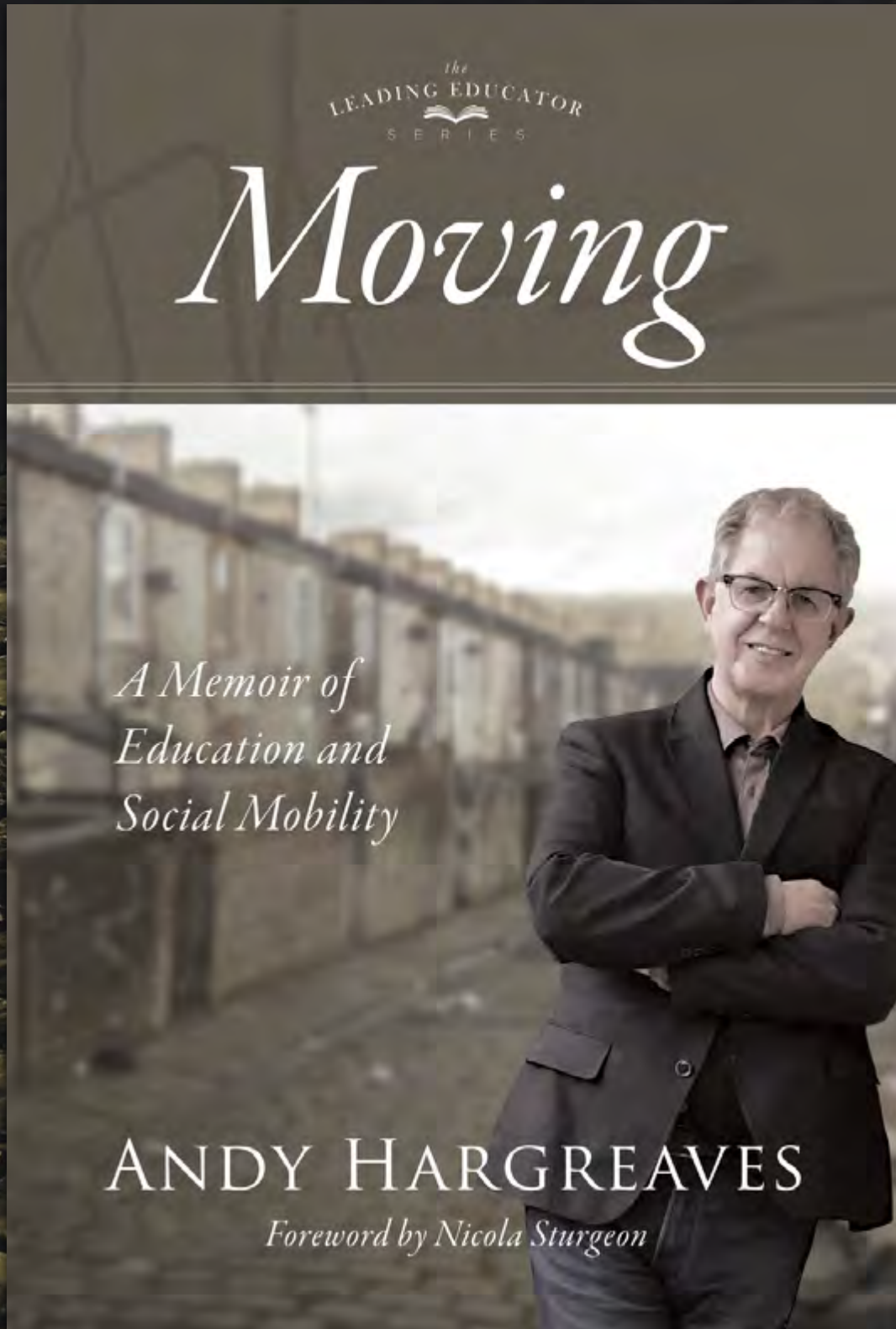
listening



Social Mobility:

the chance, through education, to achieve
greater success than one's parents.

We spoke to author Andy Hargreaves about his new memoir,
the obstacles for socially mobile students and
strategies for addressing both mobility and equity.



Why a memoir? And why now?

AH: As one of Ernest Hemingway's characters explained his bankruptcy, this thing came upon me slowly then all of a sudden. For the longest time though, it never occurred to me at all. In the book, I refer to "my unremarkable life, a life that was never worth keeping a journal for, because who would possibly be interested in it? In the working-class culture I grew up in, we thought of ourselves as 'nothing special'. We had dignity and self-respect, of course, but we didn't feel we had any standout features that could put us on a pedestal above anyone else". Slowly though, in my 50s and 60s, I began to insert small excerpts from my own experience that seemed to connect with the issues I was writing about, to give them a personal grounding. Academics would now call this addressing one's 'positionality'.

But if there was one defining moment when the impetus for a memoir really began, it was sitting with my 93-year-old Mum for nine whole days in hospital when she was unconscious during her last days. My Mum had lived a 'respectable' working class life, widowed at 43, working three jobs cleaning, in shop work and looking after other people's children, while she raised three boys then collapsed under the strain and had to survive on welfare for a while. This is how I describe that moment in the book.

"Over many hours and days, I wrote a short piece about her life – the stories she told, the experiences she had, the things she did – at first, just for its own sake, and because, as a writer, I knew it was one of the few things I could usefully do.

The narrative took on a shape, and I sent it off to the Lancashire Telegraph that my Mum used to have delivered every day. I submitted it not as an obituary but as a tribute to my Mum and also to a way of life shared by women and families like her throughout the region.

The editor wrote back and announced they would publish it as a major feature. Just a couple of days before Mum died, when all the fluid had practically gone from her body, I leaned right over her with family members gathered around. I had no idea whether she could still hear.

"Mum," I said, "I've something to tell you. I've written a piece about you for the Lancashire Telegraph. They say they are going to publish it as a double-page spread

complete with pictures. It's all about you and your life, Mum. A double-page spread. Here's how it starts."

I turned to my text. "Here's the headline"—the one the editors had assigned to it—"How a Loving Accrington Mum Scrimped and Worked for Her Family."

And then I began, "Doris was born in a commode at the back of a sweet shop in Accrington, two years after the end of the Great War . . ."

Barely two sentences in, something happened that we thought was no longer physically possible. From the corner of my Mum's eye, out of a tiny frame that had received no fluid in over a week, a single tear fell slowly down her cheek. Then I stopped. She understood. She knew. And so did I. This life, these lives — lives like ours — are absolutely worth writing about, as many people appreciated when they wrote back to me about the piece in the weeks that followed".

**"This life, these lives — lives
like ours — are absolutely
worth writing about ..."**

From this moment, I realized I had something important to say, not just as an act of nostalgia, or keeping a record of things before I got too old, but as something that would be useful to other people, ordinary people, who had struggled hard, given something up, given up a homeland or taken on extra jobs to support their own children's education.

But it was not initially a memoir specifically about social mobility. It was really just about growing up in a working class community. One chapter was focused on social mobility but in time I came to see that other aspects of my past were connected to this theme also. So even after a first draft was done, it took about two more years of writing to establish a tight connection in the narrative between my own experience of mobility and associated issues, what the literature at the time said about them, and how all of it related to people's experiences of mobility and immobility now.

What would you consider to be the greatest obstacle to achievement for socially mobile students?

AH: Now, it's simply the reduced objective chances of being upwardly mobile compared to the golden age when I was able, despite all the struggles, to benefit from the chance. University was free for me. It's not now. Inequalities of income and wealth are much greater. There's less room at the top, and the middle classes (including those who were upwardly mobile themselves) angle for advantage to secure the scarce opportunities that are there: extra tuition, moving to a more elite neighbourhood and set of schools, more afterschool and summer camp activities, more travel and volunteering (which they can afford to support) to add to the CV, greater likelihood of getting a lucrative internship from a relative or family friend, etc. When I grew up, most of your opportunity rested on your raw academic achievement, not also on the expanded CV that's much easier to build in a privileged family.

The other major obstacles are cultural which I describe below.

What was your own greatest obstacle on your path?

Your greatest inspiration?

AH: The greatest obstacle was coming from a working class culture on one side of town and going to a selective middle class high school with an alien curriculum on the other. How did this play out? Trying to manage, keep, and keep apart two sets of friends with different interests and beliefs. Staying connected to the neighbourhood kids in the evenings and then starting homework at around 10pm afterwards. Dealing with the local gang (involving insults and violence) once I was almost the only boy left on my side of town still going to school. Doing all this, working three part time jobs, and missing a lot of school to take care of the house when my Mum eventually had a breakdown. Having a school that couldn't engage with or respond to just basic well-being issues that were getting in the way of my studies and that saw my maths achievement plummet from top to nearly bottom of my class (resulting in lifelong lack of confidence in algebra, etc). And a school curriculum – especially in history – that

was elitist and alien and that I only overcame the second time around by teaching myself the social and economic history of ordinary people, in the evenings, at the local library.

“The greatest obstacle was coming from a working class culture on one side of town and going to a selective middle class high school with an alien curriculum on the other.”

My greatest inspiration was my final year teacher in primary school, Mary Hindle. She was an experienced innovative teacher who engaged with her students, including me, as whole children, who got us involved in collaborative projects, and who knew how to get the best out of me as a creative but sometimes difficult (and very ADHD in current terms) student. In 2004, when I was asked to return to my old primary school in what was one of the most deprived postal codes in the UK, and lay the foundation stone for the new building, I was delighted to be able to invite her (by then well into her 80s) to do this with me, so that now, her name and mine are inscribed together on the entrance to the school.

One of your big-picture recommendations towards enhancing social mobility is to ensure that students' learning is engaging and often connects with their lives.

Tell us why that's important.

AH: My colleague Dennis Shirley and I say a lot about this in our in-press book with Solution Tree on *Student Engagement: beyond relevance, technology and fun!*

You can get achievement without engagement through stoic endurance or sheer grit and there was a lot of that in my high school days, but especially when kids have many other things in their lives not going their way,

engagement as a basis for achievement is essential. There are many ways to get engagement – being inspiring, creating a sense of awe and mystery, conveying excitement about your own subject, etc. Relevance is a big part of this – though not always (think Harry Potter). This is what culturally responsive teaching is about – though remember that the white working class, indeed all the working class as a social class, needs culturally responsive teaching too. Some of this is about culturally relevant content in literature, social studies etc. But this isn't just about fitting curriculum content to the overall or assumed characteristics of a demographic population (though it is partly that). Kids, all of us, have intersecting identities – you can be FNMI and two spirit, immigrant yet affluent, white but poor, etc. In the end, teachers together (not merely alone) have to understand the whole child, their interests and identities, and find ways to connect the curriculum to them – even with texts that may initially seem strange and alien like Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. The point is to get beneath any surface culture of a text and find the deep themes that a great teacher can connect to the cultures and identities of all students in their class by fully understanding their students as well as the curriculum. It's not just about choosing the right texts or topics, it's about pedagogically connecting everything to a student's own prior knowledge and experience and for that you have to know your whole student.

What do you hope that educators and others will draw from this book?

AH: I've already started to receive correspondence from readers of the book – family, friends, colleagues, reviewers, and total strangers. Their long letters and messages usually begin with a few kind words about the book itself and then set out many paragraphs about their own experiences in their families, relating to their parents, as children, and now subsequently as adults. Because my memoir is not about shocking, almost unbelievable, struggles of overcoming upbringings that were downright abusive, desperately poor, or straight-out criminal, people who have experienced more everyday yet very common struggles of their own with things such as hardship at home or being mistreated at school have been able to unlock something in themselves. Many of these, of course, are teachers – one of the professions that receives many members who have moved up from the working class.

“It's not just about choosing the right texts or topics, it's about pedagogically connecting everything to a student's own prior knowledge and experience and for that you have to know your whole student.”

I'm grateful for this. What I also hope is that in reflecting on these struggles, sufferings, and strivings of their own or by their parents (for reasons not only to do with social class), they will be able to draw on them more explicitly to identify and empathize with the struggles and strivings of others, especially their students and their families. There are also signs that they have thought more deeply about the challenges our schools must face of introducing students to new knowledge, cultures and identities without their journey of 'moving on up' meaning that they have to leave a big part of themselves and their culture behind.

Lastly, of course, I also hope people enjoy reading the book as literature. Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is an avid reader and wrote the Foreword for it. People say it is moving, poignant, funny, and insightful and connects everyday experience to big picture issues today. It zooms in and out like a movie. The Director of one of Canada's largest book festivals told me it was one of the best books he'd ever read. It's also got a great rock and roll playlist – from The Dixie Chicks (now, The Chicks) to Leonard Cohen and The Barenaked Ladies! And somewhere, in the last two chapters, it also has a bit of a love story!

You have famously said that “We need fewer initiatives and more initiative.” What initiative should school leaders focus on?

AH: They should focus on their own initiative, and the initiative of their teachers. During the pandemic for example, I have seen too many teachers held back by overly-cautious or controlling bureaucracies in provinces, school districts and sometimes even teacher unions,

from going ahead and making prompt and urgent contact with their most vulnerable students they are most worried about. Teachers were made to wait two weeks and sometimes four weeks in some cases before they were permitted to make the contacts they know are so desperately needed. Of course, there are legitimate reasons behind the caution – treating all students equitably and reaching all of them (including ones with special needs), or ensuring safeguarding so that teachers aren't contacting young kids who might be in inappropriate situations, for example. But these things can be solved quickly by teachers and by school leaders who already work together effectively and responsibly and using their professional judgment to respond to the kids they know best. Firefighters and health workers are usually effective collaborative responders during a crisis. But we have not always enabled and empowered teachers to be effective first responders to their kids. Teachers and leaders need to be given more initiative and also to take more initiative. That is what a strong profession is all about.

What is a particular skillset that school leaders could focus on, and develop, when tasked with leading their schools during a pandemic?

AH: It's the same skillset we've seen from our most effective political leaders globally. Communicate clearly and often, show empathy, work collaboratively, pay attention to the evidence, then be decisive. Be transparent, don't pretend you know more than you do, accept your imperfections, be OK that you'll feel out of your depth sometimes (everyone else is feeling like this too), acknowledge mistakes, learn from them and move on, and don't neglect your own wellbeing either. In the end, it's not about being the leader you want to be; it's about being the leader you need to be.

“In the end, it's not about being the leader you want to be; it's about being the leader you need to be.”

What advice would you give to school leaders about how to best lead from the middle?

AH: Understand your own school, community and people. Be responsive to them. Build relationships. Then network with other schools – physically and virtually – to support each other, share and move around expertise, and take collective initiative and responsibility for each other's improvement and success.

What advice would you give to school leaders on how to best build professional capital?

AH: There are three elements of professional capital: human, social and decisional (or decision-making/judgment) capital. Human capital is about individual talent. How do you attract the best talent you can to your school? Build strong partnerships with teacher education providers. Involve teacher candidates in all aspects of the school and its work. Talk to them routinely and casually about how much you enjoy the work and show them why. Treat them royally. Become a human capital magnet that they and others will be drawn to. Social capital is about building collaboration. Value it and develop it, concentrating on the power of the relationships of trust and support as well as on the problem solving capabilities of teamwork. Take an interest in your teams but don't hover over them all the time – including virtually during the pandemic. Last, decisional capital is about judgment and developing it – the best ways to do this are through excellent coaching and mentoring processes, creating a culture where nobody pretends they have got everything perfect, and modeling being a continuous learner yourself by participating in professional learning with your staff, for example (rather than just watching them get professional learning from the corner).

What is your special connection to the Burnley Football Club, and what do school leaders need to know about performing beyond expectations as a leader?

AH: I have supported Burnley Football Club since 1960, when my immediate hometown club went bankrupt and

folded for 40 years. Burnley was one of the next nearest clubs. It's a community club and, in a basic sense, sports support is following your team through good times and bad. Ask any Toronto Maple Leafs fan!

In 2007, I received funding to do case studies of organizations in business, sport and education that were unusually high performers given circumstances of modest size or minimal funding, for example. Burnley fit the criteria and they agreed to let us study them. Coincidentally, this all happened in the year that it became the smallest club ever to enter the English Premier League. Our results were published in a business book: *Uplifting Leadership*. Through this work, I have come to know the Deputy Chairman and the former Chief Executive quite well. When I get the chance to travel back to England, I will always try and find a way to go and watch them.

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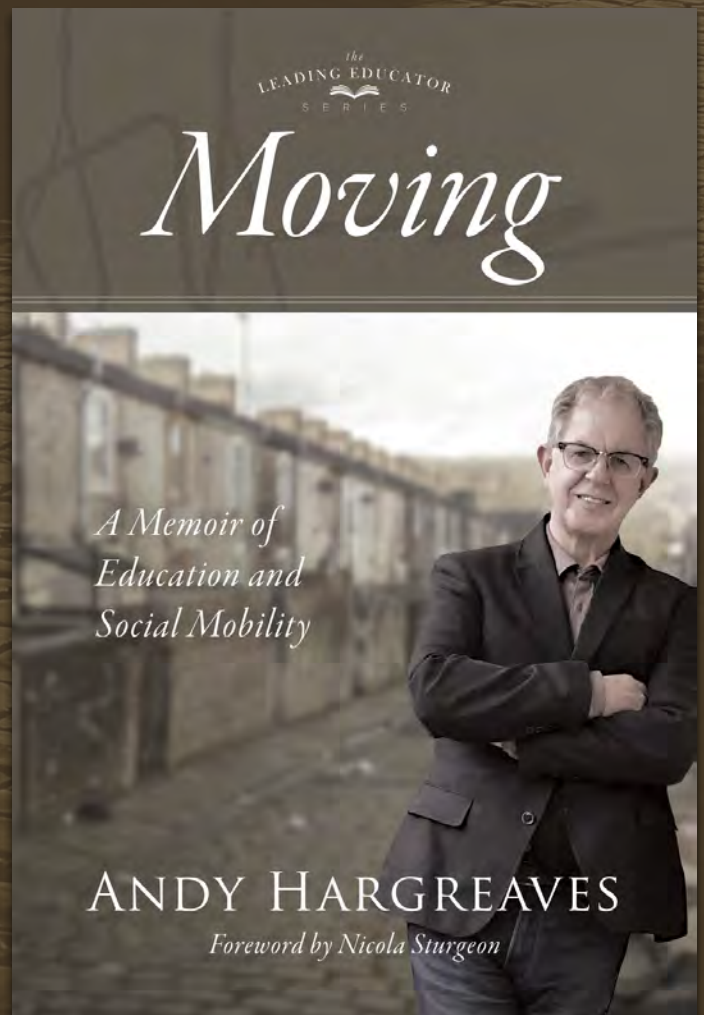
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The Pandemic Practice

We learned, we grew, we changed



**First Year VP
Kasha Kikkert Duff**
shares her learning adventure

“Mom! Are you in a call?”

These words came regularly out of the mouths of my three children – aged 9, 7 and 4 – as I attempted to move my Vice-Principal work home in March. Having spent almost twenty years in classrooms all over the Surrey School District, it was exciting to have a new position for the 2019-2020 school year as Vice-Principal at Fleetwood Park Secondary, but I never guessed how my first year would end!

This year as a VP had been filled with new challenges and the steep learning curve that goes with the move from classroom to administration. Nothing could have prepared me though, for the changes and challenges of COVID-19. My husband started a new job in early March and needed to be in the office regularly, so I took over the childcare full-time. Luckily, we were encouraged to remain at home and the kids and I quickly developed a schedule that worked as well as it could. We kept our regular waking

time and did their schoolwork first thing, with my husband and I working together to support completion of our kids' school assignments. When he left for work, I tried to get through emails while my kids played, usually with their LEGO. We always got out of the house around noon for a walk or scoot around the neighbourhood, and then I was in online meetings and making and receiving calls in the afternoon, while my kids got tech and more learning time. We would get out as a family in the evenings again, and when our kids went to bed it was time to get caught up on the emails I had been receiving during the day.

As it is the 25th year since my own grad, I was excited to take on grad preparations. My Admin team had many discussions with PAC, Dry Grad Committee, students and staff, as we planned for a special COVID-19 Grad. We heard 'loud and clear' that parents wanted to be part of whatever we planned. All three Admins at our school are parents, and we knew it was imperative that parents



by Kasha Kikkert Duff

Vice-Principal, Fleetwood Park Secondary
Surrey, SD 36

be there to watch their children walk the stage at the commencement. So, we planned an event for our 330 Grads that would involve both them and their parents.

Our commencement took place over June 10-12 from 2:00 – 8:00pm daily and included 20 mini ceremonies, each in a 45-minute time slot. We set up a stage in the gym and had it decorated. We recruited staff volunteers – all eager to assist – to hand out gowns and caps earlier in the week, and then manage the parking lot and ‘waiting area’ during the ceremonies. Allowing Grads to pick their own commencement time made each ceremony more fun and personal, as groups of close friends chose times together.

There was an incredible energy in the school when each group arrived for their ceremony. We allowed 15 Grads per time slot, and each Grad could bring two guests. Grads entered the cafeteria area where volunteers from our staff checked names and numbers. We set up a photo area with 2020 balloons for photo ops. When it was time to get started, Grads lined up – socially distanced as groups – entered the gym, and sat up front as their guests sat in the bleachers.

We pre-recorded the speeches from our Assistant Superintendent, Trustee and Principal. Our MC did our land acknowledgement and introduced our Grad anthem singer, who was also pre-recorded. Students then lined up and walked the stage as our MC read a prewritten statement about each of them, and they received their scholarships and awards. No handshaking, but our

Principal was on the stage to pose for photos with the students. We also organized videotaping of each of the three days, and sent out the digital download of the edited ceremony the week after.

Our Valedictorian did a remarkable speech that he filmed over two days in the school. It highlighted all of the classes and extra-curricular activities we have. This entertaining speech was played at the end of each ceremony. Then Grads and guests left out the backdoor of the gym and we cleaned for the next group.

As each group left the gym, they expressed their sincere thanks to us for the ceremony. As an Admin team, we were exhausted by the end of the week but felt the wonderful positive energy and warmth from our school community.

My first year in administration has been an exciting learning adventure. There have been many challenges – both personally and professionally – but as I sit here on my last day before holidays, I am thankful for all of the experiences. I learned daily, and grew more confident in my leadership capabilities. I appreciated the extra time with my children during lockdown, and also enjoyed getting closer with my Admin team. Coming back to the school in June was invigorating: I realized how much I had missed the staff and our students, and I am very hopeful there will be many more students back to school in September. We have a fabulous community of caring and committed learners at Fleetwood Park, and I am proud to be a contributing member!



GROWING ● together



How the seed
of an idea
grew and
blossomed
during COVID-19

by Wanda Salewski

Principal, Jessie Wowk Elementary
Richmond, SD 38

The Pandemic Practice

We learned, we grew, we changed

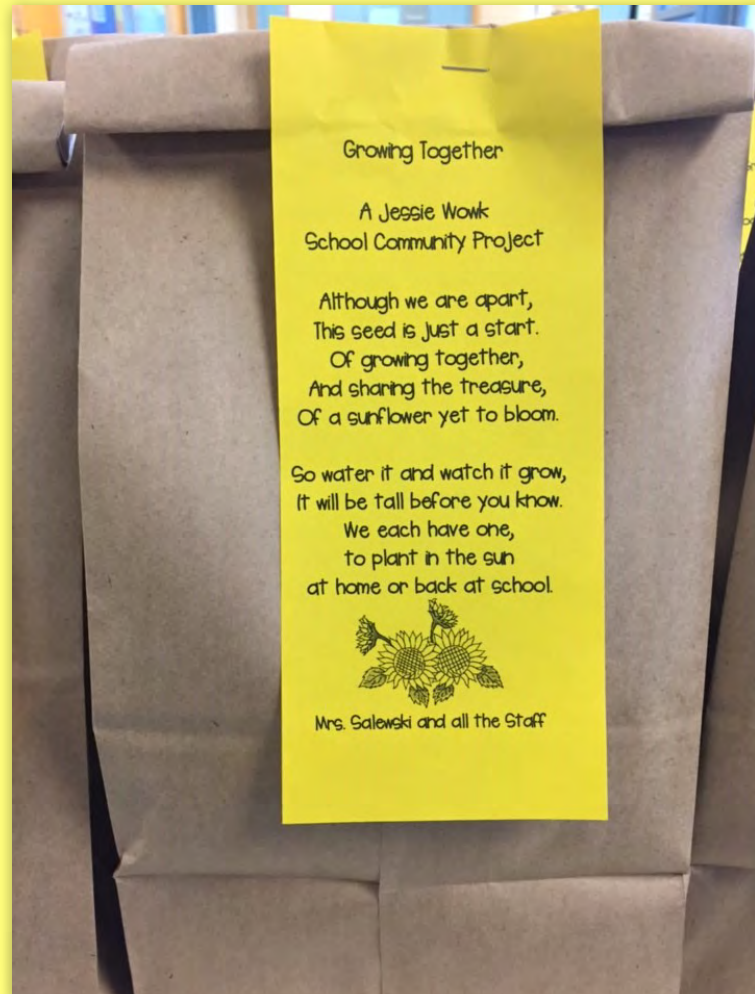
How do you maintain connections with your school community, even when you are apart during a global pandemic?

I was new to Jessie Wowk Elementary School, having just arrived at the beginning of February, and I wanted to find a way to connect with the community that had welcomed me so warmly. When I thought about our newly-created outdoor learning area, I envisioned a cycle of planting and growth that could create a connected and shared experience. We decided to invite families to grow sunflowers at home and then bring them back to school to grow in our garden. From Kindergarten to Grade 7, every family got involved, imagining the time that we would spend learning together, and the welcome sight of plots of sunflowers come September.

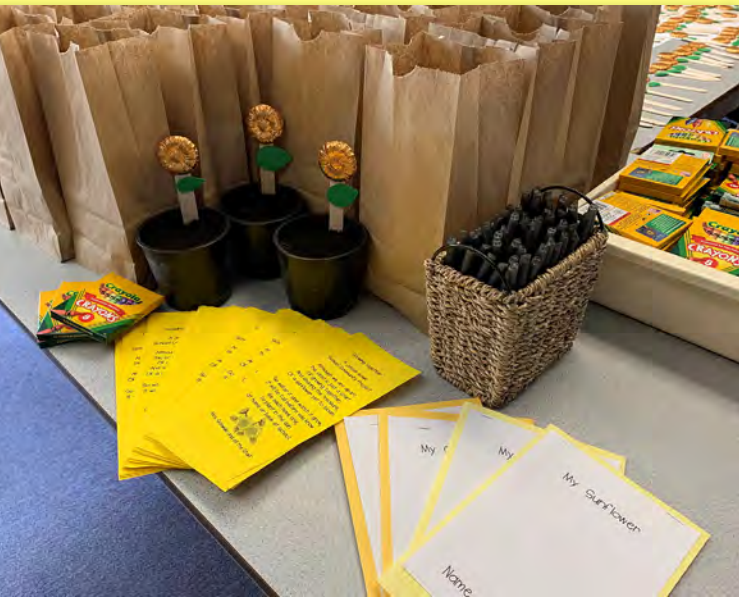
More than 200 seeds were planted, and my staff and I connected personally to each student and their family by bringing them their own gift bag that included a planted sunflower, a booklet to document learning and an inspirational chocolate sunflower already 'planted' in the pot.

Every student would have a sunflower to care of and, at some point, that sunflower would be brought back to school and planted in the garden plots in our outdoor learning area. Many students ended up planting their sunflowers in their own gardens, while others did come back to school to plant theirs in our school garden. We filled the remaining plots with sunflowers that were planted by students who came back to school on June 1st. Although during the pandemic we were apart, we were growing together and felt connected.

To give the project continued life, I posted reminders and activities on our website each week asking students to measure their sunflowers, document the changes, and take photos of themselves with their sunflowers. I was overjoyed at the number of photos and kind comments sent by our families. When I returned to school after delivering the sunflowers, my inbox was already filling up with many positive comments about how touched families



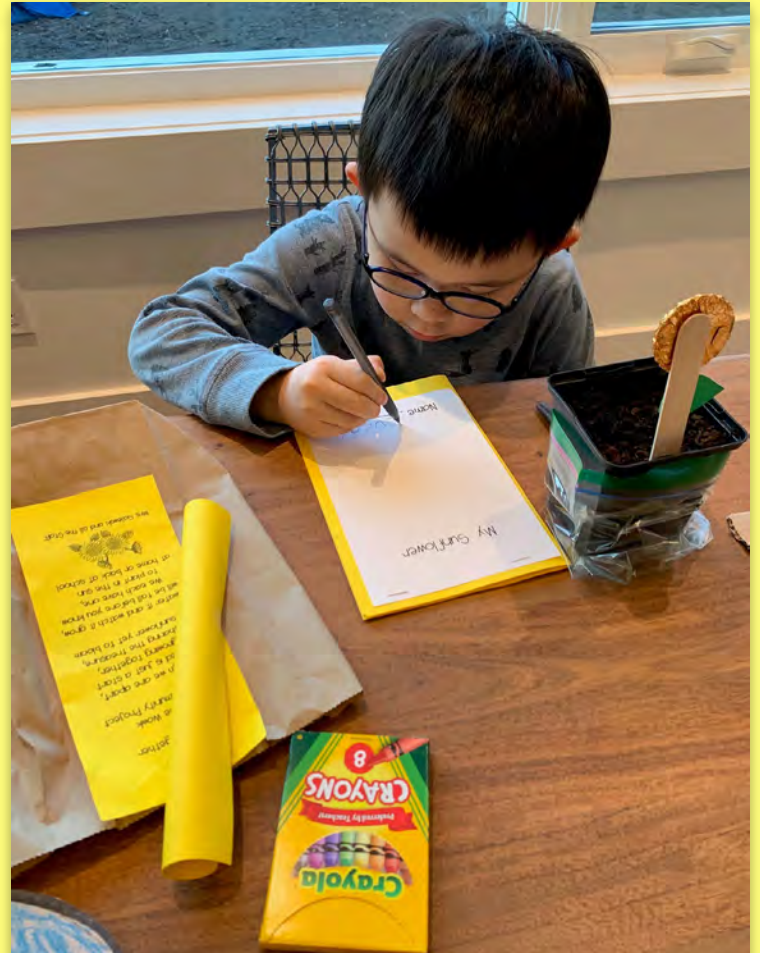
Watch the sunflower project video



were to have a bag filled with a learning opportunity, delivered right to their door by teachers and the Principal, and how this project brought them a feeling of optimism.

As the weeks progressed, the project took on a life of its own as everyone was eager to contribute. Families asked to share their learning and to be featured in the 'Wowk Weekly'. One teacher – an avid gardener – created videos that detailed transplanting and caring for sunflowers, and these were posted on our website. Another teacher – a retired music teacher – wrote a song about the project, taught it to students via Zoom and then recorded the students singing. He then surprised me with a video, complete with students' art, and I posted it online as our year-end celebration. Intermediate students painted signs that are now in our garden. Articles were written about our project in the two local papers. During this summer holiday, families have even offered to water the garden.

It melted my heart to see how one seemingly small initiative could connect an entire school community, and will continue to do so as we enjoy our plots of sunflowers well into the Fall.



To find out more about the sunflower project, visit wowk.sd38.bc.ca

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Consistent Contact with Students

Checking-in with students regularly (telephone calls, emails, chat messages, etc.) provides students with a sense of belonging to the school community. The Email-Out and Homework modules enable clear communication with parents and students on a regular basis.

It's taking some time to catch up with Chris Horton these days: he's a busy guy.

In the middle of the 2019-2020 school year, Chris transitioned from his Vice-Principal role at Sa-Hali Secondary School in Kamloops SD 73 to become the Principal of Brocklehurst Middle School in the same district. While still a Vice-Principal, his team was required to do some intensive leading through critical incidents at his school. And as he took on his new role as Principal, the repercussions and extreme life changes of the COVID-19 pandemic hit us all. But anyone who knows Chris could predict that he's navigated it all with enthusiasm, a positive outlook and good humour. And that it would take more than a global health crisis to compel him to give up on a dream project.

Chris first approached the BCPVPA in the Fall of 2019 with an enticing offer: he would do the legwork to produce and host a BCPVPA-branded podcast if the Association could help with the platform and promotions. The show would feature interviews with Principals and Vice-Principals from all over the province, and would focus on the zigs, zags and occasional straight lines of the leadership journey.

While the pandemic slowed our progress in launching the series, we came out of the gate with The Princip(ed) Podcast on June 1, 2020 with a captivating conversation between Chris and outgoing BCPVPA President and current Past-President, David DeRosa. The candid interview centred on Compassionate Systems Leadership, relationships and self-awareness, and the tools that leaders need most in order to lead during a crisis. Episode Two in July featured Anneli Duncan, Principal of a small rural K-7 school that serves two First Nations bands in SD 59. Anneli revealed her deep learning in transitioning to a school with many vulnerable learners, and reflected on the eight years that she has spent encouraging calm, creating a school vision, and working to prepare students for high school. Episode Three dropped on August 1 after this interview was taped, and features Kamloops Principal Barb Hamblett.

You may be asking yourself why a busy Principal would add just one more project to his plate: we asked Chris the

same question. "I've been listening to podcasts for quite a while. I'm part of a professional Learning Network that meets once a week, and it's run by my friend and mentor Daniel Bauer who hosts the podcast *Better Leaders Better Schools*. I've been listening to that podcast for three or more years, and it is inspiring. However, when you look at the vast podcast landscape, there doesn't seem to be anything that is focused on the amazing work of BC's school leaders – we're one of the top educational systems in the world, and we're not talking publicly about what our school leaders are doing. We aren't sharing the impact that our leadership has on our schools, our teachers and our students, or the impact on the system as a whole. I felt like this was an opportunity to work with the BCPVPA to do something that highlighted that."

"... when you look at the vast podcast landscape, there doesn't seem to be anything that is focused on the amazing work of BC's school leaders ..."

Chris continues, "That's one big piece of it; another big piece was a little bit selfish. I gain a lot from listening to podcasts already, but very few are within our BC context. I felt like I could gain a lot of insight, advice and experience from other people who work within our system, and learn how I can become a better leader. I think the final piece was the opportunity to provide that kind of professional learning opportunity for all of our membership – and potentially beyond our membership – but really, my hope was that our membership would hear what other great leaders are doing within our system, and take away things that they can apply to their own leadership, to become better leaders."

Chris recognizes that it's important to listen to the experiences of other leaders. "It's easy for us to be in silos, even as we talk about moving teaching out of silos. I think leaders have their local networks, or maybe a few people that we connect with at a BCPVPA event or another professional learning event. But it's about expanding your network with provincial contacts. If we are hearing what other people are doing, or what someone has learned

from a mistake, I think that's really important because we can become very contained within our own small system and not think differently. We can get caught in the busyness of everything that we're doing, and not get that opportunity to hear a totally different approach or way of leading that we never thought of. I believe that podcasts in general do a good job of opening your world to other potential ideas or ways of doing things."

So far, Chris has interviewed a half dozen members for the podcast, and he's reaching out to more contacts each month. We asked him what he's learned so far. "With every leader I've talked to, there's something that I've taken away: with David, it was Compassionate Systems, and how we can create a system that has those pillars as a part of what we do. Even if I don't take on the whole Compassionate Systems framework in my leadership, I can still take little pieces that



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podcast

will impact how I interact with people or how I lead staff meetings, for example. With Anneli, it was the connection to your community, and how important it is to move out beyond the walls of the school. Every person has a big idea or a little nugget and – no matter if it's a similar context or not – there's something that everybody can take from every episode."

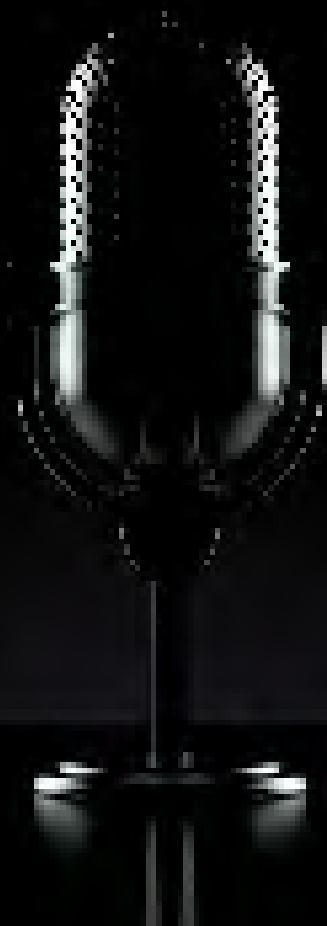
At the beginning of each podcast, Chris describes himself as the 'lead learner on this project.' One of the themes that has emerged in the episodes so far is something that he's hoping to better embed in his own practice. "We all work to get better at this, and it's something that I've had my mentors point out over the years, and it's to speak less and listen more. To not go in with your own agenda or your own biases, and to hear what people have to say. Sometimes that's really hard to do in the craziness, because you want to get things done and that's what you're being paid to do. Just slowing down and listening, actually hearing what people are saying and not passing judgment, and giving them the opportunity to share their story and a bit of themselves – people are going to value that. I'm very fast-paced, and I think over the years I've become better at listening, but it's still a journey." Chris laughs. "And I will never say that I am 'the best' at listening, because you can ask my wife and she'll assure you that's definitely not the case."

Chris is someone who is very comfortable with technology, programs and apps, but a podcast requires a steady hand when it comes to interviewing: that was a new challenge for this lead learner. "How do you create a conversation that engages the people listening to it? The most challenging thing has been the listening, of course, along with learning how to interview. We have conversations, but interviewing is not something that we do in our work. I think this project is helping me to consciously listen to what my guest is saying – to hear what they're saying, and to be curious about what they're saying. I have to be so intentional about that listening. It's been a really interesting journey."

"... the podcast is giving me the opportunity to talk to exceptional leaders across BC ..."

"I've also been really grateful for the collaboration with the BCPVPA on this project. It's been hugely beneficial in keeping me accountable for moving things along, and also for the conversations we've had about the process and what we want to achieve for our members – that's been great support."

Beyond the learning, what Chris has most enjoyed about producing the podcast is the connection that he has made with people through their deep conversations. "An example of that would be my interview with Darren Danyluk, the new President of the BCPVPA. Although I know him peripherally, I don't know him very well, and our conversation (*available September 1, 2020*) really gave me a very deep appreciation for his experience, his leadership approach, and what he's done through his career. It's incredible the people that we have in our system and the work that they're doing, the way that they think, the way that they approach people and problems. The podcast is giving me the opportunity to talk to exceptional leaders across BC for a reason, but I also get to build a bit of a personal connection with them where I know that I could reach out to that person about something down the road – support, information or advice. I believe that anybody listening to the podcast now has that opportunity as well."



Chris hopes that listeners will learn something from each of the podcast episodes. “If every leader can take away one nugget of information or a new idea from each episode, and then apply that to their leadership, it makes them a better leader which makes them have a greater impact on their staff and on their students. That’s my ultimate goal: helping our leaders be better. The quote that my friend Danny Bauer is constantly saying is that ‘Everybody wins when a leader gets better, everybody wins when you get better.’ I truly believe this is the case.”

“Think of that one little piece of information that makes someone a better leader, that’s going to impact their little system. If you extrapolate that, all of those nuggets of information and all of those leaders, it’s going to impact so many different systems all over the province. Think about the capacity of the leadership within BC if we’re able to – just one piece at a time – build out all of our school leaders to be just that little bit better. Think of the impact that will have on our students and the life outcomes of our students. There’s such potential for ripple effects – it’s like a ‘pay it forward’ kind of approach where that one little thing could make a huge difference.”

“Think about the capacity of the leadership within BC if we’re able to — just one piece at a time — build out all of our school leaders to be just that little bit better. Think of the impact that will have on our students and the life outcomes of our students.”

“At the end of the day, the number of listeners is not important. The purpose of the podcast is not to accumulate ‘listens’ or to create a personal profile for myself. It’s about sharing our power as a provincial Association, as provincial leaders, a place we can share our stories and talk about what we do so well. We can learn so much from each other, and other jurisdictions, countries and leaders around the world can also learn from our work.”



Do you know a
BCPVPA Member
with a compelling
leadership story?

Or would you like to
share your own story
with your colleagues
through an interview on
The Principl(ed) Podcast?

Contact Chris Horton

chorton@exc.sd73.bc.ca

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BRAIN STRAIN

MENTAL HEALTH 101 - Part Two

Dousing the Heat of Burnout



by Rochelle Morandini

Member Health and Well-being
BCPVPA



In the second installment of Mental Health 101, Rochelle Morandini talks to Dr. Kourosh Edalati, the Clinical Director of the Elumind Centres for Brain Excellence, about the causes, diagnoses, physiology and treatments for burnout.

RM: *What causes someone to burn out at work?*

Dr. Edalati: When it comes to burnout, work-related burnout is one of the areas that has received the most research.

There are many reasons someone may burn out:

- People feel neglected at work
- They do not feel they have control of their work
- They are working hard without any end in sight
- They receive little recognition for what they are doing

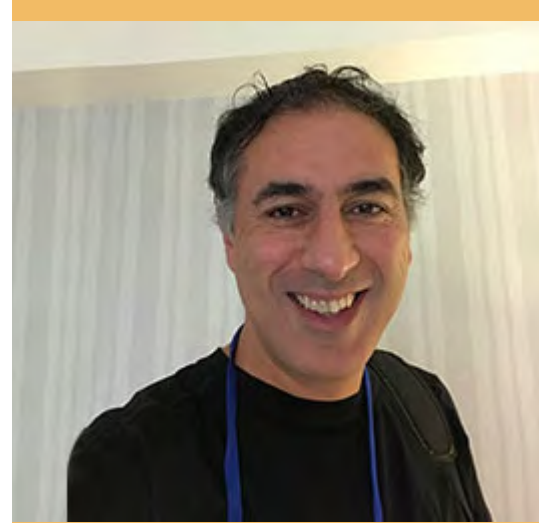
I look at my own staff and try to see what makes them look tired. They look tired when they are not challenged. They want to be constantly stimulated in their work. If they do the same thing over and over without being taught anything new or being asked to do something they have not done before, they get fatigued.

When days are 'go go go' with high pressure situations, and I am pushing my team to get things done, this also leads to being tired. These are the situations where there is limited structure to the day, there appears to be chaos, and everyone is super stressed out. This can lead to burn out if these high stress situations are repeated without self-care and without times to calm down. So, I always keep an eye on the level of fatigue of my staff when we are super busy and connect with each person constantly to make sure they can express themselves.

Another thing to watch is if my expectations are constantly beyond their abilities. If someone feels they are unable to regularly achieve what is being asked of them, they get a feeling of helplessness that they are not doing their job.

So, in summary, burnout can be prevalent where there is too much expectation, not enough structure, high pressure work, no real help for someone doing their job, and a lack of control that makes an individual feel helpless in their work environment.

An individual by the name of Christina Maslach did a lot of research in the 1970's and 1980's on what type of people burn out. Those with Type A personalities – a prelude to burnout – often need to be in charge and/or take on too much. They need to know and respect the boundaries of their job or they just keep going. They tend to do it all, as they do not believe another can do the job as well as they can and they tend to take on more responsibility. Sometimes, they are perfectionists and will go over something again and again. This results in a feeling of non-accomplishment. Just being perfectionistic, a form of Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder, can destroy both themselves and their relationships due to the 'perfectionistic' personality.



Dr. Kourosh Edalati
Clinical Director,
Elumind Centres for Brain Excellence

Dr. Edalati began his journey in holistic brain health as an immunology student at McGill University. He observed that foods had a major impact on his own immune system. His improved immune system not only kept him away from illnesses, but also turned his brain into a calm and happy one, to the extent that people around him nicknamed him the "Zen dude".

Later on, Dr. Edalati started to look at clinical hypnosis and mindfulness-based psychotherapies with other psychological interventions as part of his psychiatry training. His conclusion was that these treatments — when combined with proper nutrition — can have a far greater impact on the health not only of people's minds but also of their bodies.

After observing the connection between the domains of biology, psychology, spiritual beliefs and social networks, Dr. Edalati decided that addressing just individual domains (such as biology through nutrition) when treating patients was not enough and a more comprehensive philosophy of healing the brain — and therefore the body — was needed. With this intention, he founded the Elumind Centre for Brain Excellence.

Dr. Edalati is a psychiatry graduate from the University of British Columbia, and his private practice works with a variety of mental health conditions. He worked at BC Children's Hospital in the Child and Family Clinic specializing in PTSD in children and adolescents, and was a clinical instructor for the Department of Psychiatry at the University of British Columbia.

You also bring your interpersonal factors to the workplace. For example, you have no supportive relationships in your personal life or have limited social networks, and consequently, you cannot unclutter yourself from work and let go. You may be a single parent with young kids who does not get enough sleep, on the go at home and on the go at work, day after day. Basically, you burn out when you are living in two places of high stress and not getting enough sleep.

RM: *Is burnout a specific diagnosis?*

Dr. Edalati: Yes and no. In North America, we use The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM–5) to diagnose mental disorders. There is no specific diagnosis for burnout in the DSM-5 but the World Health Organization (WHO) considers a diagnosis of burnout if an individual presents with symptoms defined on the WHO checklist:

1. feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
2. increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
3. reduced professional efficacy

DSM contains descriptions, symptoms, and other criteria for diagnosing mental disorders. It provides a common language for clinicians to communicate about their patients, and establishes consistent and reliable diagnoses that can be used in the research of mental disorders.

RM: *Does burnout lead to other health conditions?*

Dr. Edalati: Interestingly, in a 2019 review of all the data out there related to burnout, depression, and anxiety, it found that there was no conclusive evidence [to solidly link] these three conditions. Keep in mind that the research in this field is still very new and in its early stages – especially as it pertains to the explanations based on neurobiology. There are many parallels between burnout, depression, and Post Traumatic Symptoms Disorders (PTSD), however where there is a causal versus a co-current relationship needs to be answered better.

When someone is depressed, they have high levels of cortisol in their system, just like they do for burnout and

anxiety. High levels of cortisol result in:

- no motivation
- a lack of interest in doing things that normally give someone pleasure
- disinterest in relationships
- feelings of hopelessness
- apathy

What happens biologically is that when cortisol levels are high, there is a reduction in physical and mental energy which can lead to problems with weight gain. Again, these symptoms are very similar between depression and burnout. With anxiety, although burnout causes a reduction in energy and anxiety increases energy, both can lead to little motivation or feelings of helplessness.

To me it makes sense that burnout and psychiatric conditions are very close. Burnout can lead to those conditions in the long run in terms of symptoms. They are, however, very separate issues – sort of like the chicken and the egg. Does someone have depressive symptoms first and then burnout appears, or vice versa?

Burnout parallels three conditions:

- **PTSD** – emotional numbing, being dysfunctional, disassociated with those around you
- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder** – feeling helpless, fatigue and body tension
- **Depression** – lack of motivation, apathy, irritability

RM: *How would you describe what happens in the brain of someone who experiences burnout?*

Dr. Edalati: An acute stress response is when we see a threat, such as the fear of seeing a dangerous tiger coming at us. Our brain activates the amygdala which activates the hypothalamus, which in turn, impacts the sympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system triggers the adrenal glands to produce adrenalin so our breathing increases, our heart pumps faster, and we run quicker to enable us to flight or fight. When we have responded to the danger and the threat is gone, our body creates a negative feedback loop due to too much adrenaline in our system. This triggers our parasympathetic nervous system which calms everything down in our body back to normal stasis.

In modern day times, the dangerous tiger is now replaced by chronic stress. In chronic stress, the secondary

system – the “HPA” axis – gets activated on a chronic basis. When this happens, your hypothalamus starts to lose sensitivity to the negative feedback loop messages to kick in the parasympathetic nervous system. Just like when you enter a grocery store, you first hear the background music. However, after some time, you do not notice it anymore. In a very similar vein, the negative feedback loop is supposed to shut off the hypothalamus, but because you have chronic stress, your hypothalamus does not shut down. There may still be a response, but not to the same level.

HPA Axis: We have two master glands: the hypothalamus and the pituitary. The hypothalamus gland produces the corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH) that stimulates the pituitary gland, and the pituitary gland produces the adrenocorticotropin hormone (ACTH) that stimulates the adrenal gland, which sits on top of your kidneys and produces cortisol.

This chronic phase produces cortisol. Cortisol takes a slower path through the HPA which causes more chaos in our body and has a detrimental impact. Cortisol produces the burnout machine.

Now, say a stuffed-animal tiger appears at the door. Normally, the pre-frontal cortex tells me that this is not a threat, and thereby would not normally trigger my amygdala, the anatomical part of our brain that triggers our fight-or-flight response. My pre-frontal cortex is like a brake for my amygdala and says, “Stop! No need to react, all is fine”.

During burnout, the amygdala starts to fire regularly. The amygdala connects and communicates with the pre-frontal cortex, the part of our brain which has multiple important jobs including executive function, emotional regulation and cognitive function. The connections between the amygdala and pre-frontal cortex become thin, the brakes fail, and sensory stimuli goes through, unnecessarily triggering the amygdala. Over time, the amygdala actually grows in size from this constant firing. So now, with poor brakes and a large amygdala, more stimulus is getting in. Because of these physiological changes in the brain, you basically have difficulty regulating your emotions and paying attention. These are some of the biggest issues with people in burnout due to their pre-frontal cortex starting to thin out. They start to experience collateral

damage, such as difficulties with short-term memory, concentration, and other executive functions.

This creates an ongoing cycle that keeps going and there is no stopping it. A lot of cortisol is produced, and the adrenal glands become exhausted as they are under so much pressure. This scenario creates secondary issues. The stress hormone has a bad effect on your body’s sugar metabolism, mood, and immune system. If you are always under stress and are anxious, the immune system will not respond well and you may get sick. Cortisol starts to work on your blood sugar metabolism which can lead to increasing fasting blood sugar levels, weight gain and damage to blood vessels. Sleep may be impacted. Finally, this high level of cortisol in your system affects your mood. High levels of cortisol are also known to be the precursors to depression and anxiety, and therefore will start to have mental health impacts.

RM: *What type of interventions are often prescribed to help those with acute burnout symptoms to cope and to recover?*

Dr. Edalati: The first thing we need to do is to have someone identify that they are burning out. For example, Type A personalities are the best deniers – they just keep



Courtesy Ian Espinosa_ unsplash.com

going and going until it gets dangerous. In our office, my staff have key performance indicators (KPI's) for self-care – they get points when they take care of themselves.

Ideally, an employer can create a template and identify those individuals who are Type A, who are perfectionists, who feel they have to prove themselves, and who work obsessively. These are the staff who will be affected the most. Identify these individuals. They are the ones that never say 'no'. Those who say 'no' can continue to work for you longer term, and do not have to prove themselves.

Look at individuals who are neglecting what they need to do at the cost of working more. Are they putting their personal lives on hold by staying at work late? They will be at risk of burnout – they are withdrawn from life and may even show signs of substance abuse as they finish a bottle of wine each night trying to find a way out of feeling hopeless. This is pretty telling for us therapists.

“The first thing we need to do is to have someone identify that they are burning out.”

Once an individual has been identified, they need to see their family doctor to make sure nothing else sinister is going on. Often a first step will be to give an anti-depressant, but this is only temporary help. Family physicians are limited in how they can help individuals address burnout.

Then, they need to identify the causes of their burnout: personality traits, financial distress, etc. What are the things that are pushing this individual to be a go-getter? This can be done through counselling (through funding from Extended Health Benefit (EHB) plans) or life coaches. We encourage our staff to use their EHB, as people often don't see counsellors because they do not have the money or this is not their priority.

Individuals should work with their counsellor or coach to find the stressors and learn to eliminate them. Where are you at with your daily routines? For example, what do you do on weekends? In the evenings? How are you spending time away from work? Are you still working, or do you turn off? Identifying where you are spending your time each day is helpful. As for other interventions, it depends on

where we are in the stages of burnout.

We have to determine if someone is in full burnout syndrome. In my office, we have a questionnaire designed by Maslach that identifies three domains that indicate that you are positively burnt out. If someone scores as positive, then they need some time off to go and get help.

The burnout inventory (Maslach) can be filled out on the spot in a therapist's office, and if there is a positive result, a visit to the family physician is a necessary first step.

Treatment looks like:

- Time off
- Help in determining the types of activities to do during time off from work. *(Some people have worked so much of their lives that they don't know what to do when not working. Outside of work, they may have ignored or neglected their relationships and/or not have invested time in developing social connections.)*
- Help in discovering things that are interesting for you, or working with a counsellor to explore these options

If someone is past the early stages, they are shut down, their system is exhausted and often all they want to do is disappear into bed. We believe in encouraging a wellness plan that includes time for the self, sleep, hygiene, meditation, yoga and mindfulness practice.

The healthcare system is very limited in what it can offer. Your family physician or an endocrinologist can do a variety of tests to measure cortisol levels, thyroid function, reproductive hormones and so forth. These hormones are all impacted, and can show up as someone with a hypothyroid, low libido, low testosterone or reduced progesterone.

If these actual biological signs and symptoms of burnout are present, then specialists need to get involved, such as a functional medicine doctor who can work symptom management. Unfortunately, due to limited resources, our medical system is more focused on alleviating symptoms rather than going after the cause.

We focus on nutrition, sleep, social relationships and increased activity and try to improve these. MSP solutions tend to come in the form of drugs to relieve depression and thyroid function. Your doctor may prescribe you vitamins for your poor immune system.

While access to help is very limited, we can still maximize our efforts by getting the family doctor to prescribe lifestyle changes, which can often be a great addition to medications in combatting symptoms.

RM: *On average, how long would it take for someone with acute burnout and the right treatment to begin to show signs of recovery?*

Dr. Edalati: It depends on the stage of burnout – easily months. If a person is in burnout syndrome stage – 1 to 3 years.

RM: *Can someone fully recover from burnout?*

Dr. Edalati: Yes and no. Yes, you can recover because these are basic body functions that can be restored.

However, no, in that if you don't change the personality type and deal with the causes, you are at a high risk of relapse. Individuals who have already burned out have a lower threshold. If they do not change, the root causes of their condition will continue. For example, if they continue to be a pleaser, to have low esteem, this continues the cycle. You need to be careful to go after the true cause, or else this will become a recurring theme in your life.

RM: *What tips do you have that can help someone avoid burnout and/or not regress once they have gone through successful treatment?*

Dr. Edalati: Know yourself. Don't settle for just being in the 'rat race' to make it. So many people have become slaves of the money machine and are not recognizing who they are and their own values. What is important to you? The heart of your self-esteem – how can you value yourself unless you know yourself?

“Individuals who have already burned out have a lower threshold. If they do not change, the root causes of their condition will continue.”

I recommend keeping a diary – each day write down what is important to you, and what is affecting you. Then identify patterns to take to your counsellor or life coach.

To prevent burnout is to find the causes. On the surface level:

- Put aside time for yourself.
- Have some structure in your life.
- Make sure you have reasonable expectations of yourself, and communicate these to your boss: for example, that you will not be there until midnight working for them.
- Reduce your stressors in your life that are unnecessary. For example, you may have neighbours in your life that are not that challenging to deal with, but you are constantly setting yourself up for stressful times with these neighbours. Being easily insulted by small, insignificant events is an example. You make small issues significant. This will build up.
- Have a realistic sense of who you are – and what you can do. If you move faster than you are ready to move, or you jump steps, this often leads people to a sense of helplessness. You get too focused on the end result versus the journey. Enjoy the journey – see how far you have gone in life to date, versus where you are at today.
- Do an annual audit of people who are draining your energy – this could include friends. But when you do this as an audit, you can see how these people either add or take away from your life.
- Take care of yourself. Exercise. Have hobbies.

Overall, the most important factor – #1 – is self-esteem. If you value yourself, you will do all of these things. If you learn who you are and appreciate who you are – all else will fall together. If you love yourself, you will take care of yourself.

Read Part One of Brain Strain: Mental Health 101 - Feeling the Flames of Burnout

Look for Part Three in the November issue of BCPVPA Princip(ed) Magazine

sourcing



From government regulations and district policy to professional standards, Principals & Vice-Principals need to be familiar with their rights and responsibilities.

What guides & directs practice?

Fall is a perfect time to review and refresh your knowledge: follow the hyperlinked titles to find out more.

BCPVPA Leadership Standards for Principals and Vice-Principals in BC

Revised in July 2019, the Leadership Standards is designed as a guide to hold student and adult development, engagement, and learning central to all leadership practices, and to foster continuous professional learning and development in working towards effective leadership.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is part of Canada's Constitution. The Charter protects every Canadian's right to be treated equally under the law.

Codes of Conduct

Every school has its own Code of Conduct: a set of rules or guidelines that everyone in the school is expected to follow to ensure an environment of fairness, respect and safety.

General Standards of Care

Principals and Vice-Principals owe a duty of care to:

- protect students from reasonably foreseeable risk of harm
- appropriately supervise students

There are potential employment consequences for failure to supervise.

General Standards of Conduct

Principals and Vice-Principals:

- hold a position of trust, confidence and responsibility
- are held to a higher standard of conduct than the general public

What guides & directs our practice?

Employment Standards Act

The Employment Standards Act sets out BC's rules on hours of work, time off, notice, severance pay and other topics.

Contract

Principals and Vice-Principals currently contract with their school district under a Personal Services Contract. It's important to be familiar with your contract. If BCPVPA members need assistance with clarification or explanation of contract clauses, they can review their contract with the Member Support Services team.

Collective Agreements

BC School District Collective Agreements

for school support staff exist between the districts and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Locals.

Provincial Collective Agreement

for teachers exists: the BC School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) and Teachers' Federation (BCTF).

School Act/ Regulations

The BC School Act is a provincial statute governing primary education and secondary education in B.C. The Act outlines important roles, rights and responsibilities for parents, students and the education system.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

FIPPA sets out the access and privacy rights of individuals as they relate to the public sector, and establishes an individual's right to access records in the custody or control of a 'public body' including access to one's own 'personal information'. FIPPA also sets out the terms under which a public body can collect, use and disclose the personal information of individuals.

School District Policy

Each school district develops their own policies to support the governance function of the Board. It's important to be familiar with the policies in your district.

Professional Standards for BC Educators

(Commissioner for Teacher Regulation)

The Professional Standards, formerly the Standards for Education, Competence and Professional Conduct for Educators in BC, outline the conduct and competence requirements for an individual to be issued and maintain a BC teaching certificate of qualification.

Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (Worksafe BC)

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) contains legal requirements that must be met by all workplaces under the inspectional jurisdiction of WorkSafe BC. The OHSR promotes occupational health and safety and protects workers and other persons present at workplaces from work-related risks to their health, safety, and well-being.



Basic Duties and Fiduciary Responsibilities of a Principal or Vice-Principal

Placing employer interests first

Cooperating with employer: following reasonable and lawful orders and directions

Speaking and acting on behalf of the employer

Exercising care, diligence and skill that a reasonably prudent person would

Unconditionally demonstrating honesty and integrity toward the employer

Ensuring confidentiality

Complying with all statutory requirements and general legal principles pertaining to their duties and responsibilities



With so much uncertainty surrounding the public education system, and with COVID-19 still very much present, it's important to focus on what you and your colleagues can do to best prepare for the 2020-2021 school year. Here are a few guiding thoughts I have which might help you start strong and remain well during the upcoming year.

Stay connected

There hasn't been a more important time than now to stay connected with colleagues and professional peers. With so many situations that are bound to be fluid from school-to-school and community-to-community, it's important to be kept up-to-date and feel you are on the same page. By staying connected, we reduce our uncertainty, better manage our anxiety and are better prepared to address emerging issues and themes. Make a point of establishing communication 'trees' within your school or district, and reach out to your local PVP colleagues to address common systemic challenges or concerns. Try to create consistent 'check-in' days and times to maintain some rigor to your connections. By creating regular check-ins, we can generate a sense of commonality and camaraderie that can go a long way to staving off isolation, misconceptions and unhealthy assumptions.

Maintain vigilance around your health

Many of us take advantage of the Summer to re-establish healthier personal self-care behaviours, and to focus on our well-being. It's no surprise that many are very successful in gaining greater health outcomes given how much flexibility we have over the Summer in focusing on ourselves with far fewer demands and expectations. The trick is to carry that momentum into the Fall and establish self-care plans that are sustainable and realistic. By taking time to identify what activities and behaviours provide the best value, and those you can realistically be consistent with through the Fall, you are more likely to be successful in maintaining the health gains and behaviours you've developed over the Summer. Reach out to the [EIP Program](#) should you need a hand in prioritizing and establishing your 'plan.'

Wishing you a great start-up to
2020-2021 and healthy school year.

Be well.

Jack

Back To School Readiness

Stay in front of your wellness

Maintaining professional connections and attending to your customized wellness plan at start-up provides many administrators with the means to start the year off on the right foot. Yet we all know that the best-laid plans are sometimes not enough to protect us from professional health and safety challenges. If there is one thing I have learned over the years it's that getting in front of emerging health and wellness concerns is paramount. Should you find yourself starting to worry about your health and emotional well-being, reach out. Whether it is communicating with your GP, following up with a counsellor, connecting with a BCPVPA representative or accessing the [BCPVPA EIP Program](#), make a point of connecting with someone who can help you. Many issues and challenges are far more easily dealt with, and worked through, earlier in the process.

YOU GOT THIS

Jack MacNeill is a registered clinical counselor and organizational counselor who has worked in the education sector, specifically with teachers and school leaders, for more than 25 years. He is the founder and president of humanworks consulting group inc



Rochelle

Rochelle Morandini, BCPVPA
Member Health & Well-being

Every day, school administrators face an array of unexpected challenges that require cognitive skills such as strategy, endurance, adaptability, and demeanour. As we restart schools during COVID-19 in the Fall, these skills will be in even greater demand. We know that you are weary, and understandably so, as your Spring and Summer breaks were fleeting and interrupted.

That's why the BCPVPA is launching **ReCharge: Energizing School Leaders**, a new health series for our members, partners and friends. Each month, ReCharge will focus on a specific coping skill or a component of self-awareness. The objective of ReCharge is to help you to get to know yourself, and to renew your energy, enhance your fortitude and build up your coping competency so that you can better navigate the complex systems you lead.

Monthly Breakdown

Week 1

The 'Where': Leader-ometer

Week 2

The 'What': Self-Assessment Exercise

Week 3

The 'Why': Research, Science and Information

Week 4

The 'How': Building up your skill



Stay tuned for
**ReCharge to
launch on
October 2nd!**

bcpvpa.bc.ca/recharge

Curious about a certain topic?

Suggest any topics you feel would help energize your overall well-being!

THE bcp vpa

LEARNING BRAIN

Links, tips and resources for your health

A few of the topics we cover:

coping during a pandemic

loving someone with a mental illness

the importance of play and laughter

calming a reacting mind



Read the complete series of articles:

bit.ly/TLB_2020Series

Individual
articles are
available for
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our [website!](#)



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Principal Health and Well-being

TIME TO MOVE BEYOND SELF-CARE

by Gail Markin &
Dr. Fei Wang

Much research has shed light on Principals' intensified work and its impact on their health and well-being. The pandemic has undoubtedly further exacerbated the situation. Many Principals are relying on self-care to improve their health and well-being, but the existing and lingering effects of the pandemic can make their individualized self-care endeavour even more difficult. This raises a timely question about how to better support health and well-being of school Principals in the days to come.

In the article [Principal Stress and Burnout: Why You Should Care](#) for the EdCan network, we detailed the research on Principal stress and burnout and why everyone involved in K-12 education should care about this. This article and others highlight the importance of the well-being of our leaders to the health, happiness and success of our school communities as a whole. Research shows us that there are many areas of Principals' work that contribute to their well-being and work satisfaction, such as information sharing, health and well-being benefits, continued professional learning and adequate resource allocation. There are also areas that are contributing to stress and burnout of Principals, particularly work intensification, including long work hours, increased volume and complexity of work, multiple responsibilities, and conflicting



“... despite the fact that we’re increasingly more aware of the importance of social emotional skills like self-awareness and the need to practice self-care, many school leaders have not been taught these essential skills. More importantly, leaders often assume that they can’t possibly worry about themselves since they’re tasked with taking care of everyone else. However, it’s good to be reminded of the simple truth that we’ve learned from air travel, which is that it’s not only important – but essential – to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others.”

***- Principal Stress and Burnout:
Why You Should Care***

demands. The outbreak of the global pandemic has created more disruption and uncertainty in education and added extra pressure on Principals' work. It has also created an opportunity for education to re-create itself as a system.

So, if we are having to re-think education in light of this pandemic, then perhaps now is the time to create a system that embeds well-being at its core. How do we move towards well-being in a practical way, without adding yet another layer of work to an already overwhelmed system? What if we started by looking at ways to address the very real and impactful issue of work intensification?

One of the things that may help us with this is the understanding that workplace well-being has three interconnected parts that work together to either enhance or undermine well-being.



Individual Actions

What we often do here to focus on the individual to take care of their own well-being, and of course that is important as we all have responsibility for our own health. What is very hopeful and encouraging in this area is the shift towards a more holistic understanding of self-care. Self-care includes the more traditional focus on nutrition, exercise and other physical and mental health initiatives, but we are also now including social and emotional skills and practices like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship development. These

types of leadership skills and practices enable Principals to respond effectively to stakeholders' demands and develop a sense of control amid intensified work conditions. Principals would like to focus more on these practices, but often find that other work gets in the way. It is also important to note that we must be careful not to get stuck in the individual responsibility part of this triad, because individual self-care – although necessary for workplace health – is not sufficient.

Collaborative Actions

The same could be said for the collaborative actions of groups of educators and school teams. Principals are keenly aware of the impact of relationships on both their health and well-being, and that of their school communities. There are some promising and creative practices that promote and support these important success factors of connection and belonging in school teams. Unfortunately, work intensification is a factor in the success of these types of initiatives as well, and so many of these important connection activities and practices are competing with more urgent demands that are part of the every-day work of school leaders.

Collective Actions / Systems Change

That leads us to the collective action or systemic piece, and the specific issue of work intensification that is getting in the way of some of the most important and rewarding parts of the role of school leader. We have to address and consider all three inter-connected parts, but it is often tempting to avoid this one as it seems like too large of a task or something that we don't have the power to impact. The risk of ignoring the larger system and how it impacts well-being is that we run the risk of treating only the symptoms and missing some of the causes of problems.

“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river.

We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in.”

- Desmond Tutu

How can we use this re-structuring of education as a positive disruption point to address the work intensification of school leaders, and find ways to free them up to do the

instructional leadership and to build the relationships and communities that will support the health and success of all learners? The good news is that we have the research-based evidence to support us here. Workplace well-being research is clear about the impact that staff well-being has on health, productivity and student success. We also have research on Principal well-being that shows us that this is an important topic worth tackling, and health, productivity and success are jeopardized if we don't try to restructure. One of the things that can get in the way of looking at systems change is the lack of a sense of efficacy to bring about this change, but remember that systems are systems of people, and that we are those people. As we re-develop our systems going forward, let's re-consider the role of school Principal and Vice-Principal. What could we change, re-distribute or let go of in the role?

It will take courage and creativity to look at our systems in a different way, and it is important to name that this shouldn't be seen as a criticism towards – or the responsibility of – any one person or group of people, but rather a responsibility and opportunity for everyone. As we are making decisions and developing new ways of working and learning, we have the opportunity to do so through a well-being lens. Well-being is both an individual endeavour and a collective commitment, and as we move through this necessary re-set in education, we will definitely need both. So, let's start with our leaders, and move beyond self-care of school Principals to look at ways that our collective practice can support them to do the important and impactful work of school leadership. Now is our opportunity!

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“The smallest meaningful unit of inclusion is the school.”
– Melody Musgrove (2015)

In the Spring of 2019, SET-BC – the Ministry of Education Provincial Outreach Program (Special Education Technology) – launched a new project called the Inclusive Schools Initiative. The focus of this initiative is to explore the question, ‘What would a truly inclusive school look like?’

SET▶BC

Inclusive Schools Initiative

by Darren Mitzel

Provincial Coordinator, SET-BC

On this journey, SET-BC sought to strategically partner with districts and schools in a multi-year initiative to collaboratively investigate ideas around inclusion at the school-wide level, with the goal of more deeply developing the scope and impact of inclusion in B.C.

The purpose of the initiative is to support school teams who are seeking to pursue the development of skills and strategies that will enable their schools to be as inclusive as possible of all learners. We recognize that all schools will be at different stages in their inclusion journey, and seek to meet schools where they are at in the process of becoming fully inclusive.

There were six successful schools chosen across the province for this initiative: A.D. Rundle Middle School in Chilliwack (SD33), R.L. Angus Elementary in Fort Nelson (SD81), Signal Hill Elementary in Pemberton (SD48), North Glenmore Elementary in Kelowna (SDS23), Gold River Secondary School on Vancouver Island (SD84) and Lake Trail Middle School in Comox Valley (SD71).

The Principal at Lake Trail Middle School, **Gerald Fussell**, has taken this project to his staff with full enthusiasm and support. Through an initial Design Sprint with SET-BC staff, the project is well on its way in prototyping and testing the many aspects of inclusion and Universal Design for Learning supported by the SET-BC team in year one.

1. Prior to this project, what was the inclusive status of your school?

Gerald: Beginning in 2016, our school community took a deep dive into our work. We used the Spirals of Inquiry as a framework for this exploration, and participated in broad-based consultation for the scanning process. We identified inclusion – in the broadest sense – as one of the areas most needing improvement. One-third of our students had Indigenous heritage; however, you wouldn't know that when you entered our school. Reading levels in each class ranged from Grades 2 through 12, and numeracy wasn't far off. In the Ministry's Student Learning Surveys, many of the key indicators showed that our students were not connected to their learning.

So, we began to address these discrepancies in our planning that Spring, and over the next year-and-a-half we made great strides investing in professional development, collaboration, and improved school structures. One of our teachers, Jana Baker, identified as part of her master's work that inclusion was still a challenge for many of our students, and that we needed to improve the work we were doing. That reflective report became the impetus for our application for the SET BC Inclusive Schools Initiative. We had a staff that believed in the work, were working hard and who were very open to extra support.



Gerald Fussell
Principal, Lake Trail Middle School

2. What were your goals for your school in applying for the SET-BC Inclusive Schools Initiative?

My primary goal in applying for the SET-BC Inclusive Schools Initiative was to provide more supports for the work our teachers and education assistants were doing in order to meet the very diverse needs of our students. We wanted to address the barriers to meaningful access for our students. And, we wanted to both embed sustainable inclusive practices and to have our staff engage in cycles of reflective inquiry around inclusion.



3. What are some of the challenges in trying to build a fully inclusive school environment?

One of the biggest challenges to building a fully inclusive school environment is figuring out where to start, and how much to take on. I think we are very good at identifying deficiencies, but we often struggle to agree on paths of remediation, and to resource them appropriately.

John Eckert's work identifies seven constructs that are necessary for developing the kind of collective leadership necessary for this kind of work. The first is having a shared vision and strategy. Our staff had a shared vision – in the macro sense – and then relied on collective work to identify strategies to achieve that vision. Our administration team was very supportive of teacher leadership, and really saw our role as providing logistics and resources to support the work our teachers were doing. Teachers need to have the capacity to do this work and we were very fortunate to have a very strong staff with many leaders. We also have a staff that is passionate about improvement and who work together on professional learning.

The fourth area is work design and structure. This is an area that we were able to support with the way our school was set up, and with support from the SET-BC team. However, we struggled in one of the key areas, and that was developing our skills in collaboration. Our staff get along very well, but we struggle in spots to have the deep, meaty conversations necessary to move learning forward collectively. We can often decide on the challenges, but have different perspectives about what the solutions are. While everyone's hearts are in the right place, prioritizing collective strategies based on data can be challenging. We believe our staff have collective and individual efficacy, and are all focused on improvement. Consequently, we have the pieces in place to become a fully inclusive learning environment, but we need the time, framework, and collective agency to achieve this.



Insect Challenge: Top-Creates Trogans

Challenge: Create a caterpillar that can move like a real caterpillar. Use the materials provided to create your caterpillar. The caterpillar should be able to move forward and backward. It should also be able to crawl over the edge of the table. The caterpillar should be able to hold its body up. The caterpillar should be able to move like a real caterpillar. The caterpillar should be able to move forward and backward. It should also be able to crawl over the edge of the table. The caterpillar should be able to hold its body up. The caterpillar should be able to move like a real caterpillar.

Materials:

- 1. 1 piece of paper
- 1. 1 piece of string
- 1. 1 piece of tape
- 1. 1 piece of paper
- 1. 1 piece of string
- 1. 1 piece of tape

Procedure:

1. Cut a piece of paper into a long, thin strip.
2. Roll the paper into a tube.
3. Tape the ends of the paper together to form a tube.
4. Cut a piece of string into a long, thin strip.
5. Roll the string into a tube.
6. Tape the ends of the string together to form a tube.
7. Attach the string tube to the paper tube.
8. Test your caterpillar.

Notes:

1. The caterpillar should be able to move forward and backward.

2. The caterpillar should be able to crawl over the edge of the table.

3. The caterpillar should be able to hold its body up.

4. The caterpillar should be able to move like a real caterpillar.

4. What were some of the ideas that you prototyped and tested with SET-BC support?

One of the most powerful activities we did as a staff was to work in our teams on class profiles. Much like when we were learning to work with Ross Greene's ALSUP (Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems), as we focused on structures to clearly understand what was getting in the way of student success, we found that there were things we had missed. Many reading this will find this obvious, but sometimes one needs to make the time to go through the process in order to fully appreciate the value and power of it. I think we were in that camp. From this work, we were able to identify some UDL strategies to use, and we focused in on some tools to increase engagement for our students. We also clarified some of our thinking around executive skills, which became even more focused during this Spring's COVID-19 learning.

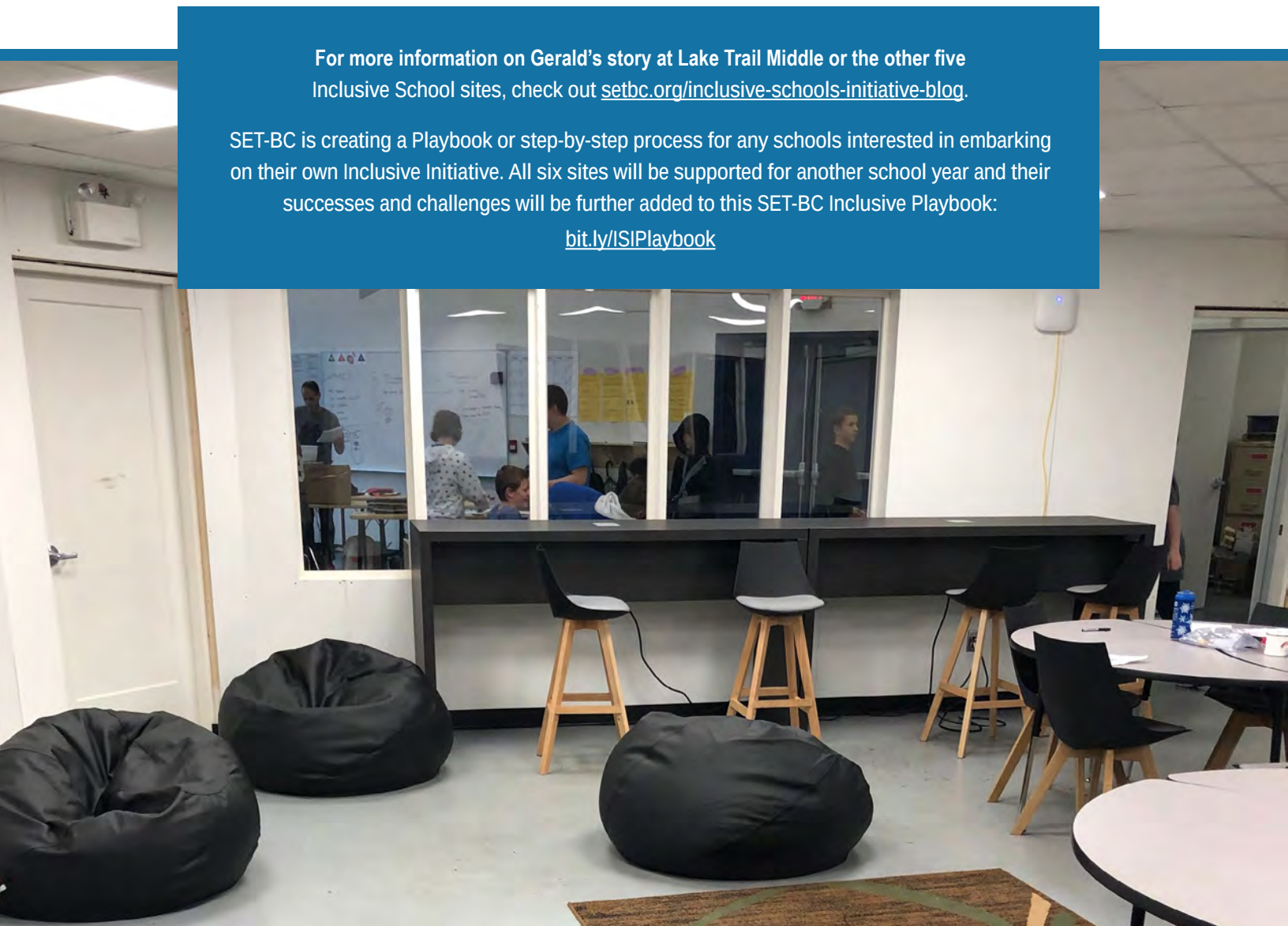
5. Where are you hoping this project will lead your school?

We are hoping that this work will lead our school to be fully inclusive. Regardless of where we end up, we are significantly further ahead than we were when we started. I can't remember who said it originally, but I believe we can achieve anything we focus on in education. This is our focus, and it is filtering through many of the lenses we use. For example, we are actively trying to find ways to increase how inclusive we are with our whole staff. We have heightened awareness of the different ways students and parents might not feel included. We are increasing our understanding of the many blind-spots we have, and the involuntary assumptions we make. We move into a new school in September 2021 and we want the building, actions, and beliefs to be authentically inclusive.

For more information on Gerald's story at Lake Trail Middle or the other five Inclusive School sites, check out setbc.org/inclusive-schools-initiative-blog.

SET-BC is creating a Playbook or step-by-step process for any schools interested in embarking on their own Inclusive Initiative. All six sites will be supported for another school year and their successes and challenges will be further added to this SET-BC Inclusive Playbook:

bit.ly/ISIPplaybook





PLAY:

A Way to Prepare for Learning and for Life

by Leroy Slanzi

Principal,
Merritt Secondary School
Merritt, SD 58

The global pandemic has made one thing more evident: resilience and the ability to adapt to difficult situations is crucial for students and educators alike.

It has never been more necessary to embed the Core Competencies of our curriculum to ensure students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 are equipped with the skills to communicate, cooperate, collaborate, think creatively, problem solve and express themselves with cultural awareness and sensitivity. Doing so will give us every reason to believe that our students will be well prepared for learning and for life, now and into the future.

Additionally, increasing our commitment to developing the personal and social competencies of our children is the best pathway to improving and protecting their mental health and well-being. Is this necessary? Well, I'll let the numbers do the talking.

- 13% of Canadian students have anxiety disorders (Kutcher, 2014)
- 10% have disruptive mood disorders (Kutcher, 2014)
- 90% of teachers report that mental health issues are their biggest classroom concern (Canadian Teachers Federation Survey, 2015)
- 95% of Principals feel that a child's mental health and well-being is one of the most important factors to plan for in their schools (Lunn, 2015)

About 5 years ago, Merritt Central Elementary School went headfirst into Carol Dweck's work around Growth Mindset. We used it in conjunction with the following promising programs: Zones of Regulation – Mind-up – Friends – Roots of Empathy.

These programs were undeniably helpful, but our students needed more and we needed something to tie it all together. Our students needed a hands-on, engaging way to acquire the social and emotional skills required for learning and life – a way to habituate them by physically and interactively practicing them.

The teaching staff needed this as well because too much teaching time was being lost to the one-to-one placation of students who too frequently lost control of their behaviour. Thankfully, I had a compassionate and professional staff who were willing to give students this time, and who needed no reminders that relationships and connection were always the priority.

When our kids were calm, they could easily identify how

they were feeling, or what soothing strategy to pull out of their tool belts, and some students were indeed able to transfer the skills learned in Zones and Mind-up into many situations in the classroom, hallway or the playground. The majority, however, could not.

“Our students needed a hands-on, engaging way to acquire the social and emotional skills required for learning and life ...”

Almost by chance, two of my senior teachers happened to go to a Play Is the Way® workshop and couldn't stop raving about how it just brought everything together and had the perfect framework for developing all the characteristics we wanted to see in our kids. Importantly, the Core Competencies aligned directly with the Play Is the Way® behaviour education philosophy, theory and practice.





I do not believe anyone can argue the point that play, as a catalyst for learning, is the 'holy grail'. There is nothing better at engaging kids in their own growth and learning than play.

The Play Is The Way® difference is that it is not free play, but rather a purposeful play that utilizes unique games and activities with the aim of developing 'empathetic, inclusive, independent, self-managing and self-motivated lifelong learners'.

Play Is The Way® changed the culture of our school and made behaviour a subject to be taught and not a problem to be managed. Within ten months, Play Is The Way® brought us from roughly 30 referrals a day down to almost none.

For the first time in ten years of being an administrator, I had complete confidence in the social emotional well-being of my students. I also had teachers who were more relaxed, motivated, and generally happier.

“For the first time in ten years of being an administrator, I had complete confidence in the social emotional well-being of my students ...”

Fast forward to 2020, and Play Is The Way® has been having the same impact in schools all over the province, from Fort St John, Sparwood and Kelowna, to Vancouver, Prince George, Duncan and beyond. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, I had workshops planned in Alberta and Manitoba, while I was in the initial stages of working out a plan for a school in Nigeria! Play Is The Way® is thriving in Australia and New Zealand for the same reasons.

I am most proud of the Indigenization of the Play Is The Way® methodology. It is inclusive of all Ministry and Federal expectations in terms of Truth and Reconciliation education, and fully meets all professional development requirements in B.C. I worked with a local Aboriginal artist to develop our Aboriginal Key Concept posters, along with elders and resource people to incorporate stories and teachings around inclusivity and character development. It has been a humbling and deeply rewarding journey, and I thank all those who have contributed to my education in these matters.

As you can tell, I am impressed and uplifted by the impact this Australian behaviour education methodology had on my former Elementary school (and now my high school – yes a high school!), and I believe that it can be of equal or greater benefit for schools throughout this great province and beyond.

A silhouette of a person is shown in the lower-left corner, looking up at a vast, starry night sky. The sky is filled with numerous stars and a few streaks of light. The overall tone is dark and contemplative.

*Go
Be
The
Principal,
Please*

by Jim Allison

District Administrator
Richmond School District
SD 38

After serving seven years as a Vice-Principal and 19 more as a Principal in six secondary schools, I recently transitioned to a role as a 'District Administrator'. I have been reflecting on my experiences and have captured some thoughts on the complex role of school administrator. For what it is worth, I have never liked the title 'Administrator' or worse, 'Administrative Officer' or 'AO'. Good Principals and Vice-Principals are so much more than efficient administrators, managers and organizers; they must also be influential models, mentors and leaders. If any of what I have written resonates and you are currently a Vice-Principal or Principal, thank you for all you do. If you are a teacher, consider applying to become a Vice-Principal: our schools will always need thoughtful, innovative and courageous leaders who are not afraid to take responsibility for positive change.

“Good Principals and Vice-Principals are so much more than efficient administrators, managers and organizers; they must also be influential models, mentors and leaders.”

It is not a coincidence that excellent public schools have exemplary Principals and Vice-Principals. After initially struggling in the role, and even considering resigning during my first year as a VP, I grew to love being on school admin teams. I also had a lot of fun as I embraced the joyful energy of interacting with over a thousand teenagers and the people who care deeply about them. If you are considering school administration as respite from working with students every day, you will not be effective. Indeed, our core purpose is to always be grounded in what is in the best interest of students, and you can only know this by knowing them.

Serving as a Vice-Principal or Principal of a large public secondary school is important, complex and challenging work. As a formal leader of the school, you are ultimately responsible for the learning and working experiences of every student and staff member, and your effectiveness can impact the confidence that thousands of parents have in the school and in public education in general. I believe that most school leaders never imagined they would become Vice-Principals or Principals when they first entered the profession as teachers. Indeed, they laugh knowingly when the role is lampooned in television and movies, where the Principal is often portrayed as

an inflexible taskmaster or a buffoon that kids mock and teachers do not respect.

Good Principals were involved, dedicated and reflective teachers who were committed to refining their practice while also busy coaching and sponsoring kids, serving on committees and working collaboratively to build the professional learning community in their schools. They merely evolved from informal to formal leaders.

Good school Vice-Principals and Principals do not define themselves by their title, take themselves too seriously, nor believe that they are the boss. They understand, value and respect the work of all the educators in the school, yet also take responsibility for asking difficult questions to help the school continuously grow and improve. They also accept that if they are doing the job well, not everyone is always going to like them, so it really helps to have a clear vision, grounded self-awareness and a healthy sense of humour.

It is important to understand the limitations of the 'system' we work in. In many districts, Principals are moved from school to school every five years or so, despite evidence that it takes longer for a leader to build trust and create positive change. Various stakeholders – students, teachers, support staff, parents, district staff, trustees and the Ministry of Education – have different and, at times, conflicting expectations of the school Principal, and this can pull you in many directions.

Secondary schools are very busy places. There are many long, eventful days filled with complex student and family crises, incidents requiring thorough investigation, as well as evening meetings and events, and these require energy and enthusiasm. Public education often faces funding challenges and schools are scrutinized and 'ranked' using incomplete and invalid criteria. Decades-long tensions exist between the provincial government and the teachers' union and every few years this discord can leave lingering distrust that can detract from creating ideal learning and working environments. Prescriptive – and at times inflexible – language entrenched in different collective agreements provides the Principal with little latitude in staffing and hiring decisions.

The mandate of schools continues to grow. Curriculum learning standards focused on 'knowing' have shifted to an emphasis on 'understanding' and 'doing', while developing cross-curricular competencies in our students. Schools are responsible for teaching digital literacy,

personal finance, physical and emotional well-being, and both social and personal responsibility. Societal trends such as increases in adolescent anxiety, depression, substance use and cyberbullying are added to the list of things we want our schools to solve.

I believe in the critical role that public schools play in sustaining a healthy, pluralistic democracy, and I embrace the challenge of our expanding mandate; nonetheless, it would be easy to become overwhelmed. While remaining current on best practices and new initiatives, the Principal must be clear on the school's vision and core purpose, be able to differentiate between what is urgent and what is really important and – above all – maintain a positive perspective.

Despite the complexity and challenges of the role, going to a modern, well equipped school every day with 1,200 or more capable adolescents and scores of dedicated educators is exciting, engaging and rewarding work. To persistently lament roadblocks to improvement is not leadership. Instead of focusing on what we cannot change, an effective leader looks for ways to build community, improve structures, processes and capacities with the people and capital the school has. The key to being an influential leader is to view all challenges through an appreciative lens by wondering, 'what are we doing now, why are we doing it, and how can we make this better for students?' Together, we are the system, and any positive change we hope to see is in our hands.

The Principal is responsible for understanding the professional work of all teaching and support staff. Influential staff will have worked at the school for many years before you arrived – and most know that they will be there long after you have departed – and this can be an obstacle to change. With very little formal or line authority, the currency of influence for Principals is effective communication and relationship building. To support meaningful growth, the Principal needs to understand the context of the school and constantly look to develop the capacity of others. Before they can influence innovation, Principals must earn trust and credibility by managing the school effectively, and the myriad and mushrooming list of organizational tasks can take enormous amounts of time and energy to do well. However, our role is not merely to manage an efficient school and keep everyone happy, but to gently yet persistently move the organization forward by asking good questions and, when necessary, have crucial conversations about our practices. This can be

challenging in a well-established place with a reputation for being a 'good school' and some will actively or passively resist.

“To support meaningful growth, the Principal needs to understand the context of the school and constantly look to develop the capacity of others.”

The Principal needs to be cognizant of the level of professional engagement and quality of work of each staff member, yet also have realistic expectations. It may be true that the further removed Principals are from the classroom, the more innovative we think we were when we were teaching every day. We must be mindful of the incredible challenges involved in preparing for and teaching seven classes and 200 increasingly diverse learners, day after day, for ten months. All educators are on a continuum of growth and the Principal must be aware of what is going on in individual teachers' lives. Some staff may need support to make it through each week while others need authentic opportunities to flourish as leading innovators in the school. All staff need to know they will be cared for and supported through personal or family crises or illness and that their Principal has integrity, is trustworthy and reliable. At the same time, the Principal must be willing to confront unacceptable practices and address those who are not meeting professional standards. Finding the right balance between kindness and directness, between caring and pushing, can create tension, but this is the very heart of the role and the art of effective leadership.

Serving as a school leader can seem lonely at times. Your relationships with some staff will change, and the complexity and volume of student and staff issues can seem overwhelming. In smaller elementary schools, Principals may not have Vice-Principals and this makes leading even more isolating. I have been fortunate to work with many very thoughtful admin team partners and together we shared ideas, strategies and the workload. Honest, daily conversations helped clarify our thinking and supported all three of us in our development as school leaders. Just the same, to gain new insights and perspectives, school-based administrators need to look beyond their immediate context for opportunities to connect with other educational leaders.

In our district, the secondary Principals and the Vice-Principals meet regularly, and these diverse and wise groups are a great resource and collective sounding board. Similarly, our district hosts monthly meetings that are open to all school-based and district administrators from all schools and sites. The agenda at these monthly meetings balances professional conversations with management topics and the gatherings foster a sense of connected community, shared purpose and vision across the school district. We have a local school administrators' association that includes elementary and secondary leaders together. The association represents the interests of all of us with the Board, and hosts regular study groups, professional development dinner meetings and a biennial retreat.

Finally, technology has opened up an expanding source of professional learning for school leaders. Every educator should consider connecting and engaging with a professional learning network on digital platforms in order to reflect on their practice with others around the province and the world. Our current global context has clearly shown that continuous improvement and integrating technology into our schools are important and, as leaders, we must model this in our own professional practice.

As school leaders, our role is to collaborate with others towards a common purpose and to build capacity – of individuals and of the professional culture of the organization – so that we plan for our own obsolescence. I have always believed that the mark of a truly effective Principal and leader is not that the school or organization struggled after their departure, but that it flourished. The work is important, challenging and complex and the conditions are rarely ideal, but this is the norm in every profession, and we are never alone. Ongoing dialogue and reflective work with our staff, our admin team partners, as well as other Principals and district leaders, are keys to developing our capacity to lead. I work in a community that places a high value on education, and with remarkably capable students who are interested in learning and engaging in their own success. Overwhelmingly, the colleagues I work with are dedicated, professional educators who care about students and are genuinely interested in being the best they can be. When viewed through this appreciative lens, serving as Vice-Principal or Principal and one of the school leaders is an honour and a privilege, every day.

***P.S.** The most important and influential people in education are those who spend their days interacting directly with our students. In my new role, I will strive to remember this and support their work, every day.*

Read more from Jim Allison at
[Expand My Thinking](#)



by Kristi Blakeway

Principal, Laity View Elementary
Maple Ridge, SD 42

Ten years ago, while working as a Vice-Principal in Coquitlam,

I was approached by student leaders who wanted to extend their reach beyond our school and make a positive difference in the community. Together, we decided to give back by helping marginalized citizens living on the streets in Canada's poorest neighbourhood, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. We began by collecting food and clothing to distribute. Days before our scheduled trip, the *Vancouver Province* ran an article outlining the many service agencies that provide basic necessities, especially during the winter season. I decided to cancel our trip.

The disappointment our students felt led to a reflective conversation about our purpose, and why we wanted to volunteer. We realized we were searching for that good feeling that comes from giving to others. We wondered if those living on the streets had the opportunity to give, especially if they were relying primarily on handouts for survival. The idea of *Project HELLO* (Helping Everyone Locate Loved Ones) was born. In simple terms, we decided to give something that others could give away. As an avid scrapbooker at the time, I had plenty of extra cardstock and art supplies, so I invited students to make handmade Christmas cards with the idea that we would distribute them along Hastings Street, inviting people to write to friends within the Downtown Eastside community, or possibly beyond. We held on to the hope that at least one person might ask us to help send messages of love to family they had lost touch with. Our fieldtrip took place on November 30, 2009, and was supposed to last for four hours. I had no idea at the

time that this simple day trip would become a labour of love that would profoundly impact my life and the lives of my students.

“In simple terms, we decided to give something that others could give away.”



We quickly realized the streets were filled with untold stories, and people who craved human connection. While the homeless community is often provided with food or makeshift shelter, their emotional needs are often left unmet. We quickly discovered that the people we were meeting were no different than us. They welcomed the opportunity to connect and asked for our assistance sending messages of love to their brothers, sisters, children, parents or long-lost friends. Often, these

messages brought up memories from the past. Many people on the streets have experienced significant trauma. We quickly realized the Downtown Eastside is a very misunderstood neighbourhood and that the drug use in the neighbourhood is often just a band-aid to mask the pain of broken souls. On our very first trip, dozens of individuals reached out and asked if we could attempt to mail cards to their family members. With guarded optimism, we agreed to do what we could to reconnect families. What began as a one-day fieldtrip spiralled into a decade-long student initiative helping hundreds of Vancouver's homeless community to reconnect with family through greeting cards, phone calls and face-to-face reunions.

In 2013, when I moved to the Maple Ridge school district and continued with *Project HELLO*, I realized we needed to go deeper. The five-minute conversations we were



having were only tapping the surface of untold stories. We renamed our project *Beyond HELLO* and made the personal commitment to take a homeless person to lunch each month so that we could learn and share their stories. What started out as a simple act of giving has become the most powerful lesson of my life. The people on the streets have taught my students and me about courage, strength, resilience and hope. There is a wisdom that comes to those who have lost it all. The stories from the streets have taught me about compassion and led me into an unexpected journey of forgiveness, seeing my absent father through a different light, and understanding that he too, had an untold story. I began to blog about our experiences in an effort to spread compassion within our community www.beyondhello.org.

“What started out as a simple act of giving has become the most powerful lesson of my life.”



This year, in an effort to shift the perception of homelessness and teach compassion, I published a

book *Beyond Hello: Rekindling the Human Spirit One Conversation at a Time*. Our book is available at Amazon and Indigo and would be suitable for a Leadership or Social Justice Class. Each book sold pays for a meal for someone living on the streets in British Columbia.

As we head back to school in September, I encourage you all to seek out those who may otherwise be invisible. Every school and every community has people who are waiting to be seen, and whose stories deserve to be heard. In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has given us a better understanding of our own students' circumstances, as we have reached out to support our most vulnerable learners and families. COVID-19 has impacted families in different ways as British Columbians have managed financial struggles, social isolation, health risks and a new education model.

As we return to school, there is no greater time to serve as awakened leaders, truly seeing one another and appreciating that everyone has a story worth hearing. May we all go *Beyond Hello* and connect with compassion.

Have a great start up!



Principl(ed)

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Profiles, interviews,
stories, reviews,
research, learning,
events & moments

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In response to COVID-19, all was paused – what a rare and unique opportunity to really examine our education system and potentially leapfrog change. With not much time for reflection on the circumstances, the education system quickly moved to transition. It was all hands on deck to figure out a new way of being, while remaining mindful of potential repercussions. The fact that change was not optional gave permission for a reimagining and reshaping of existing structures and systems. What quickly surfaced, as represented in the guiding principles from the BC Ministry of Education, was that human lives and equity were the priority.

Equity became a guiding star for the work in transformation moving forward. What an opportunity to explore the creation of a new learning environment, with inclusion and equity in mind right from the start. As the school year drew to a close, there was a finite window of opportunity to scan for impact. The Delta School District (DSD) had been doing a spiral of inquiry on how to make transitions successful for students, a co-created endeavour involving the three strands of the Learning Services department: Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction, Indigenous Education and Inclusive Learning. Brooke Moore, District Principal of Inquiry and Innovation in the DSD, had shared Tilleczek's concept of transitions as "being, belonging, and becoming" (McGregor, 2019, p. 9). Tilleczek frames transitions as being a period of change, rather than a series of distinct events.

**"Equity became
a guiding star
for the work in
transformation
moving forward."**

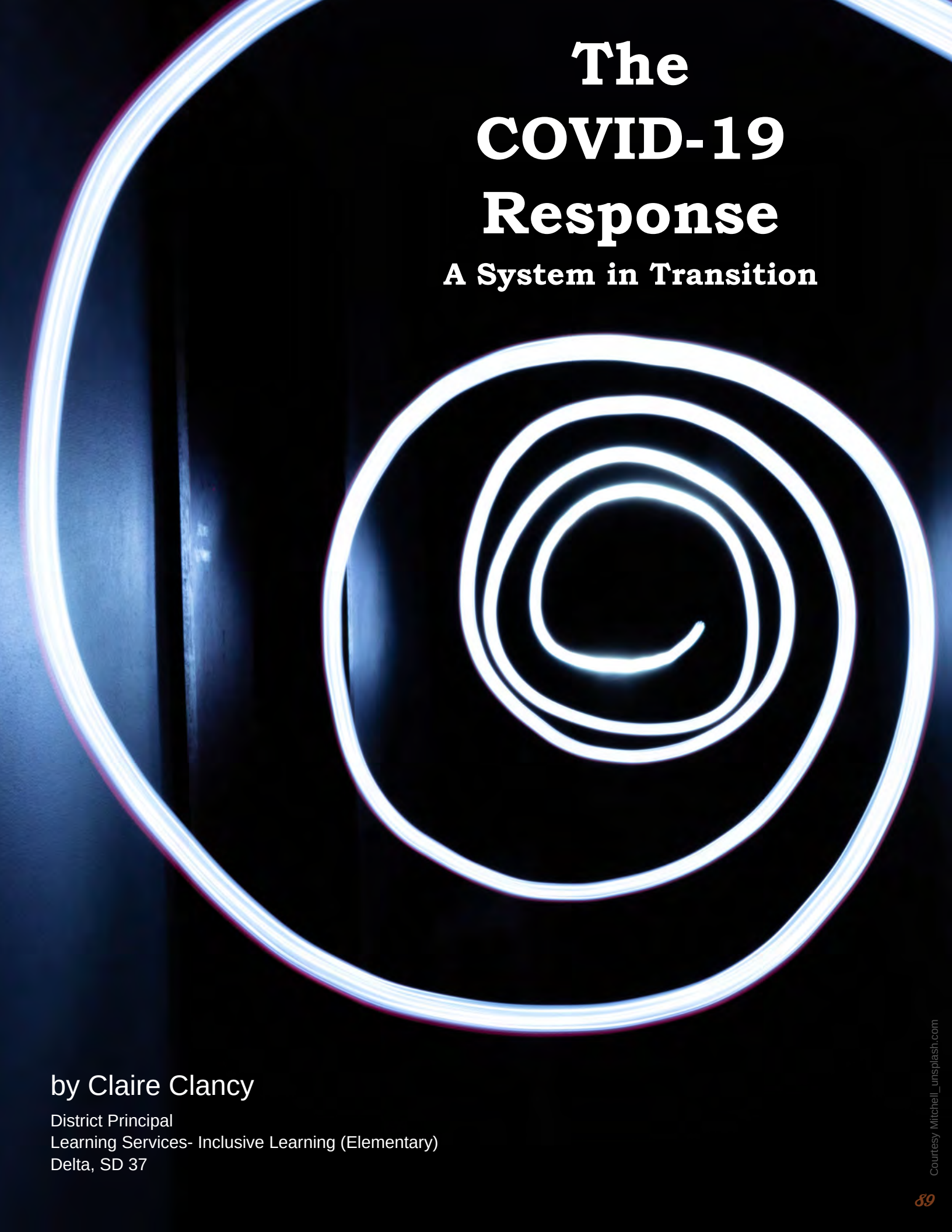
When the district transition spiral group was scanning to gather data on what students need for successful transitions, the first action was to survey. Surveys provide the opportunity to gather large volumes of data from a

diverse range of learners. The difficulty that the transition spiral group found was that while interpreting the data, they were having to fill in gaps with their own assumptions and biases. The transition group had to be cautious that their "... inquiry stance ... was [not] directed toward confirmation rather than disconfirmation of assumptions" (Robinson et al., 2020, pg. 3). In other words, that they were seeking truth, not confirmation of preconceived notions.

A transition spiral sub-group was formed to inquire into their hunch that if they talk to students directly, they could co-create transition plans with students that are more likely to succeed. They decided to interview and dialogue with students directly, and this allowed for the nuance of the narrative to be revealed. As well, through dialogue, each student gained insight into who they are as a learner, and what they need for generative transitions: it was a mutually beneficial process.

As part of the transition spiral, the spiral group did some new learning as it relates to transitions, and discovered that the person collecting the data – or interviewing the student – also impacts the information gathered. The research articles revealed that a connection between student and teacher – or between student and an adult in the building who believes the student will be a success – is critical. Not only did this mean that the dialogue was more authentic, but also that any needs that were revealed could be acted upon because the student and person interviewing had a connection. Through this transition spiral, changes to systems and structures have already begun. One significant system change as a result of the transition spiral work has been a new Grade 7-8 Transition Planning Process. The hope had been to expand this work, and COVID-19 did just that. The transition spiral had revealed that multiple modes, or differentiating data collection, is critical to transition planning success. In particular, listening directly to both students and adults proved significant.

When it came time to scan the impact that the COVID-19 response had on the learning environment, differentiating data collection was again critical, including deep listening to the 'collective voice' of staff, students, parents and community members. The DSD surveyed staff, families and students about 'the COVID-19 experience' but also



The COVID-19 Response

A System in Transition

by Claire Clancy

District Principal
Learning Services- Inclusive Learning (Elementary)
Delta, SD 37

took the time to reach out to have a direct dialogue in order to unearth the true stories. It was important to capture the narratives in multiple modes. As an example, a group Zoom meeting with elementary counsellors was held, and included the opportunity to break out into small groups for discussion about the COVID-19 response. One member of each group recorded highlights from the conversation. The individual counsellors were then offered the opportunity to independently add to a shared document over the next few weeks. It was also imperative to consider which voices may have been missed, and to then create opportunities to reach out in different ways.

The response plans put in place as a result of data collected also need careful examination. A speaker at the 2019 Intersectionalities Conference from Brock University said the 'microspace of equity' is the space between when a [person] speaks and when we answer. There is a moral imperative that leaders responsible for next steps are moving ahead with authentic, unbiased evidence. When examining the data from various sources, are leaders also examining their own beliefs – individually and collectively? Working to build trust is key in building relationships and connections, particularly if a group of leaders will work together to create next steps and solutions.

In the OECD, the Future of Education and Skill: Education 2030 (2018) states that, "In order to help enable agency, educators must not only recognize learners' individuality, but also acknowledge the wider set of relationships – with their teachers, peers, families and communities – that influence their learning. A concept underlying the learning framework is 'co-agency' ... everyone should be considered a learner, not only students but also teachers, [principals], parents and communities" (p. 4). The response to COVID-19 may have moved the system – at a quicker non-linear pace than expected – toward the goals of the OECD 2030 Learning Framework. Perhaps COVID-19 has allowed the system to skip "steps...ending up in a new place altogether" (Winthrop et al., 2018, p. 9).

There is still much work to be done in relation to inclusion and equity in education. As learned through this transition spiral of inquiry, it is through dialogue and deep listening that trust is built. Working to build trust is key in building relationships and connection.

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As Serra, Spillman, Jackson, Davis, & Bray (2018) observed, taking a high expectations relationships stance versus high expectations as a performance agenda (high expectations related to effort, and achievement) may help create the kind of environment that would allow for critical analysis of current contexts as it relates to inclusion and equity. It's not enough to say, 'inclusion is too difficult'. We can't lower expectations, however, seeing high expectations through a relational lens may leapfrog potential barriers and resistance. High expectation relationships create "robust and dialogic environments with colleagues that are conducive to high expectation pedagogy, and strong relationships with parents and [caregivers] that will optimize support for students' educational efforts and aspirations" (Sarra et al., 2018, p. 2). So far, the impact of COVID-19 has shown potential

Clusters of Innovative Pedagogies



in innovative pedagogies such as those captured in the Learning to Leapfrog: Innovative Pedagogies to Transform Education article (2019). Equity is the lens through which the six clusters of innovative pedagogies, as seen in the graphic, have been vetted. As well, student agency is a critical factor in each. Innovative pedagogies that lead to responsive and adaptive teaching to meet the diverse needs of learners, adults and students, is essential to inclusive and equitable learning environments, and the spiral of inquiry allows time to play and explore innovative practice while at the same time continuing to check for impact.

Dr. Sheila Bennet from Brock University spoke at the Intersectionalities Conference at the University of British Columbia in July of 2019. Dr. Bennet shared her experience as a child being educated in a one-room schoolhouse. Inclusion was a way of being: no 'calm down rooms' or 'special programs' to go to – just one school, one room. Everyone belonged and everyone cared for each other. Diversity is the norm: there is no typical or average learner, therefore, one size does not fit all. But, certainly, one school, classroom, community – one world – does. Educators have seen students transform from

being 'challenging students' to 'thriving students'. The key is: no single solution – simply a belief that students can be successful and the imagination of a network of curious and adaptive learners and fellow community members who seek to find ways for student success, purpose, and belonging.

“All has not been lost: there has been good that has come from this COVID-19 experience.”

All has not been lost – there has been good that has come from this COVID-19 experience. Collective voice can lead to collective agency, and hopefully closer to the 2030 OECD goal of individual and societal well-being. As Laura Tait, Assistant Superintendent at Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools - School District 68 (2020) shared, as leaders “let us be learners in front of everybody so that others can take risks ... Let's lead in an Indigenous way with love, respect, kindness and generosity”.

“... let us be learners in front of everybody so that others can take risks ... Let's lead in an Indigenous way with love, respect, kindness and generosity.” - Laura Tait, SD 68

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