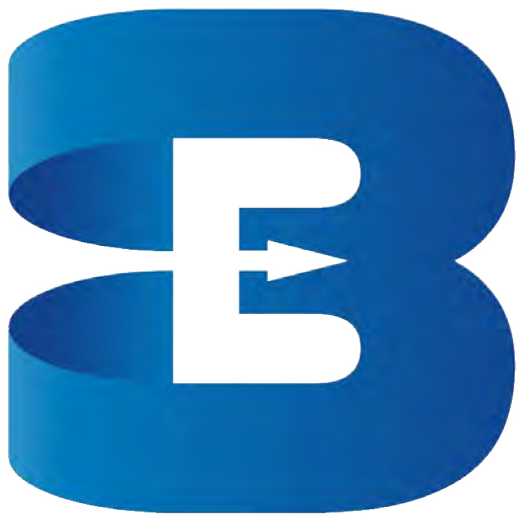




The **BetterEducate** platform helps BCPVPA members and other educators to learn, connect, and share resources.

Christina Lake Principal Shawn Lockhart, and his colleague Adam DeBray, talk about the impetus behind the idea, and how BetterEducate is connecting school leaders.

Shawn Lockhart



"BetterEducate came from BetterCoaches, and that came out of a master's program at UBC when Adam and I coached together", says Shawn. "We had worked together at Baseball BC, and we wanted to come up with something that would be to the betterment of our sport. Most people were doing coaching manuals at the time, and these manuals had huge print costs and were significant to organize; even trying to organize coaches to be at the same place at the same time was challenging, so coming together to create a manual could become a logistical nightmare. I didn't have a web-based background, but Adam was in computer science, doing things

like trying to write code for a spider to move three or four of his legs at the same time. This project wove itself into three or four of our sports marketing and methodology courses. We wanted to take everything, and put it online so coaches could access it. The idea was to try to take the time and space out of people getting access to coaches and coaching content. This was in 2001-2002, when the internet was still in its infancy. We had a leader at the time who bought into the program, he wanted me to create a library for Baseball BC, so we started taping athletes and breaking down the sport: we produced a lot of content. We weren't at the point of trying to network



Adam DeBray

" The idea was to try to take the time and space out of people getting access to coaches and coaching content."

coaches, we were just trying to provide them a place to get hands-on drills. If you can picture a father of a 12-year-old who played little league at that time, he's really got nothing and needs to take one of those old National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) manuals out onto the field and try to make sense of it. Instead, he could watch a video and look at some pictures, and really visualize.

When I left Baseball BC to become a Vice-Principal, I'd still contact Adam to help me with hosting and other things that I didn't know how to do – my technical skills weren't even close to Adam's and never will be! Eventually, Adam and I partnered up with BetterCoaches, and then we got into umpires, and volleyball, soccer, and a bit of basketball. For volleyball, they're still using it in Ontario for their coaches and officials."

"I remember connecting with Adam to say hey, let's do this for education. I thought there was a real need for teachers – and mostly for administrators – to network and learn from each other. That's the best Pro-D I think people can do: it's not necessarily about the content, it's about the strength of your professional network. It's about how many people do you know: when you're stuck, can you call somebody and know that person can help you? That was the philosophy. We had designed it when I attended a Chapter Council meeting. I remember sitting beside (2018-2020 BCPVPA President) David DeRosa. I flipped open my laptop and he looked over and said, "What IS that, Lockhart?" And I told him it was an idea, and that I hoped we could talk about it later. When we got on the plane, we talked all the way home. That was in the spring and then (Executive Director) Kevin Reimer came out for a Chapter visit in the fall. We visited about three or four schools, and met the superintendent. And then I took him fishing, and we spent hours floating down the river fly-fishing and talking. Kevin shared that at that time, there was a focus around competencies and an intent to have

a space for members to work on their competencies. I was listening to him, and I said, we can do that. I explained BetterCoaches, and it didn't take long for Kevin to put that together and we started the process of really developing BetterEducate. We were already building a platform with teaching resources, and I was doing work with our district because our superintendent was keen to see resources shared. But this was a new level."

"Resource sharing was the original concept with both BetterCoaches and BetterEducate", says Adam, "but it's developed into something more. We've started to tailor things directly towards the members and how they want to use it, whether it's using those resources to develop a growth plan or a school plan, or whatever it might be. People appreciate being able to share resources and collaborate with other members, and both the BCPVPA and more recently the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) have used it to develop specific growth plans and appraisal processes, where they can access the resources that people are posting as part of their plans."

"People can benefit from using BetterEducate in a number of ways", says Shawn. "It's based on your professional growth, and that is tied to compensation. It aligns with your practice. Principals now are working with the BCPVPA Leadership Standards far more in depth than ever before. Even for myself, I can remember not really knowing what the Standards were. I knew there was a lot of work that went into them, but now we can actually, tactically, use that framework, upload evidence, and speak to it."

"The professional network is probably the biggest thing that members can get out of BetterEducate, and

" I thought there was a real need for teachers – and mostly for administrators – to network and learn from each other. That's the best Pro-D I think people can do: it's not necessarily about the content, it's about the strength of your professional network."



Sharing a vision for leadership and what it means to be a leader in York Region District School Board.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Anchors YRDSB Leadership Framework in Human Resource Processes such as Recruitment, Promotion, Retention and Performance.

SELF REFLECTION & GROWTH

Provides interactive tools for self-assessment, reflection and growth planning using the YRDSB Leadership Framework

COLLABORATION

Collaborate with your peers and others in the education community. Learn with each other in real time.

RESOURCE SHARING

Easily browse and search through hundreds of resources organized by educator, organization, level, and category.

PLANNING

Supports system, school and Corporate Management and Professional Staff improvement planning

LEARNING

Aligns leadership learning with system and individual needs



This year, Adam and Shawn worked with the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) on the development of their interactive Leadership Framework tool.

The YRDSB Leadership Framework is designed to:

- Facilitate a shared vision for leadership and what it means to be a leader in the YRDSB
- Play a key role in anchoring other processes (recruitment, promotion, retention, performance)
- Provide tools for self-reflection and growth planning
- Align leadership learning with system and individual needs
- Support system, school, and Corporate Management and Professional Staff Department improvement planning

that's why I ask people to please upload your profile – it's important. Some people don't like to share that, but it's very good to know who to contact. The people are the resources in our building, and the knowledge is the people. And once we wrap our heads around that, we're going to be that much stronger. BCPVPA has taken leaps and bounds with this platform: when it comes to our connection, we're more of a family than we've ever been. Facilitating that professional network, and being a united team or family as administrators in the province? That's big."

Adam agrees. "There are two different parts: you have the members, and how they want to use BetterEducate. They want to collaborate; they want to be able to share their resources. And you have the organizations – the BCPVPA, YRDSB or the districts – and their role, how they are working to help their members or employees. We've been able to provide the tools for them to develop a growth plan or a school plan that is tailored for their needs."

With the return for the 2020-2021 school year, the BCPVPA opened BetterEducate to teachers and other educators to help support their connections and resources for remote learning. "That came about in recognition of a need", says Shawn, "as we all embarked on remote learning. We were lucky in my district because one of my staff members, Kristen Rezansoff, took one look at that program during spring break last year, and then she led our entire school through it. Kirsten was really instrumental in the recent developments; she has done so much work with the Leadership Standards and competencies. We had feedback that teachers felt that this had made their remote classroom experience so much better. People were struggling with Teams, and BetterEducate was easy to use."

Looking ahead, Adam and Shawn have a vision for growth. "We would like to do a 3.0 version of BetterEducate – a visual redesign, with an increase in ease of access," says Shawn. "I'd like to see us be able to share growth plans and school growth plans. I'd like to have a way that people can easily find experts in their network, as that brings our community closer and closer together. There are a lot of people that still work in silos, there are a lot of new administrators that – without sounding too sappy – are working alone,

"The people are the resources in our building, and the knowledge is the people. And once we wrap our heads around that, we're going to be that much stronger."

and that can be a recipe for burnout and depression. Our members are pretty resilient, but we have a lot of turnover, and there's a reason for that. We want people to feel that there's a place they can go, it's like a Rolodex for them to reach out to people that are experts in the field. Sharing knowledge is the greatest power of an organization. I truly think you get the best out of people when they're comfortable and they're feeling good about the work they do, and they're not overly stressed."

"Getting feedback and direction from the users is critical," says Adam. "In my role, I take a lead from the BCPVPA for focus, and it's been that way with YRDSB as well, they've come forward with ideas. They were using it for an appraisal process, and then thought about extending it to another group of people as well."

"When we started out, we thought of having a tool that people could use. And it's changed: it's still a tool, but it's derived from what people want, what the organizations want, and that's always changing. There's always different modules and features that we can add. It's not a static site."

Shawn adds, "Timing is everything. We've done a number of Chapter Councils online now, and they're good. Look at the work that BCPVPA has done to keep everyone together, and look how important that online environment has become. You can't overstate how close Principals now feel if they're attached to the Association. The job is so much easier when you know people. I'm in the middle of nowhere, six and a half hours away from Vancouver, but we built this site over our phones with Reimer and DeRosa. It was back and forth all the time, because we're connected."

bettereducate.com

BCPVPA members sign up with
promo code BCPVPA123