

COFFEE'S ON!



bcp | *Coffee*
vpa | CONNECTIONS

Oct 5, 2021 7:30 AM

Oct 26, 2021 3:30 PM

Nov 2, 2021 7:30 AM

Nov 25, 2021 3:30 PM

Dec 7, 2021 7:30 AM

Dec 14, 2021 3:30 PM

BCPVPA Coffee Connections grew out of the early days of the pandemic, as our Association sought new and different ways to virtually connect with our members.

What began as an experiment – unstructured ‘chat’ time, 100% drop-in, and at an early hour – has emerged as one of the “Gifts of COVID” as coined by UBC’s Dr. Mark Edwards. While our gatherings are often small enough for us to remain in one ‘room’, the connections have been significant with participants reaching out to each other beyond the Thursday sessions. Some of our regular attendees shared their thoughts at the final Coffee Connections of the season in June.

Peter Gajda (SD 10)

I really like Coffee Connections for a lot of reasons. One is being at a school as the only administrator, and in a small rural district where there are only five of us, it's a way for me to connect with people and hear about their struggles and to know that I'm not alone.



I miss getting together with people at Chapter Councils, so It's great to see some familiar faces. I think the real thing for me has been hearing about what other administrators have been

doing to try and deal with changes, and it's nice to get a fresh perspective from another district – either a bigger school or a smaller school – about how they're handling TTOC shortages, or cohort struggles, or transitions around the building. It's been a great place to come to, to share ideas.

I like the 7:30 am start: I'm usually at work anyway, and it's nice to have that pop up in my window. It really makes my day go better, once I've been here. I smile and think about some of the things we've talked about.

Darren Danyluk (SD 6)

BCPVPA President

Coffee Connections is an opportunity that we have for all of our membership – not just Chapter reps or the executive in a Chapter – it's for everybody. It's proven to be such an accessible connecting point – people have frequently joined in their vehicles, on their devices, and listened in as they've driven in to work. We've also been able to offer an opportunity to connect with our Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) colleagues outside of BC when their members have been able to join us for select sessions.



Heidi Grant (SD 91)

I appreciate the connection piece, the opportunity to talk with people I would not normally connect with, and I've certainly reached out to people after these conversations to follow up on some things. The idea of accessibility, of being able to join on multiple devices is so helpful. I would love to sign up for Coffee Connections just once, and have it pop up in my calendar all year, that way I can join or not join. That would make it more accessible for more people.



Sally Zryd (SD 73)

I think one of the main things I appreciate is hearing that people are in the same boat as you, and how they have handled a situation. And not necessarily someone in your district, because it's very interesting hearing the perspective of leaders in other districts, whether they're high school or elementary. We're often dealing with very similar situations with parents, or we're often dealing with similar issues with



one of the unions, so I think that the perspective of hearing that other people may struggle or have better ideas than you is something that keeps me coming. It's been fun all year just seeing your lovely faces.

Jacqueline Borosa (SD 92)

I love seeing everyone and having that consistency. And I love that there is a flexible format to the sessions: for example, right now, we're not automatically going into breakout rooms because 'that's what we do'. It's been nice to adapt as things happen, and when attendee numbers fluctuate. I like that there's a topic to focus on, so that we have a bit of a prompt for our conversation. I sometimes sign up through the Twitter post, but it would be great if there was a place in our new member-only portal on the website where you could just click and join, without even having to register.



The early morning time is not an issue for me, but I have tried to bring a friend and their response has been, "it's at what time?" But if you do it later, the building gets filled up, and at the end of the day people often have meetings. This time works for people who are just trying to get their cup of coffee into their system.

Kyle Timms (SD 71)

I've only joined a couple times this year but I do appreciate the chance to get together. Pandemic or not, professional learning is always best when it's ongoing, so I love to see these tools. Can you imagine a few years ago, sitting all together in our offices having a meeting like this? It didn't happen. We had to go to a conference, twice a year, and it cost a lot more money. So, these tools that are allowing us to collaborate and connect with each other are great.



Jane Arbuckle (SD 82)

I agree with Peter: when you're the sole administrator on an isolated island, sometimes it's nice to know that you're not alone. I think it has been very reassuring to hear what other people were doing, or knowing what's coming down the pipe, or what the Ministry of Education is saying. It's given us some perspective; when you're having a hard day or a hard week or a hard month, and then you hear what other schools are having to deal with, then you can feel pretty thankful for where you are. I really enjoyed hearing about resources, whether its books people were sharing, or speakers, or workshops. It's the opportunity to hear directly from someone who has read the book or been to the workshop or knows the speaker, as opposed to something that just appears in my email.



Peter Johnston (SD 36)

I didn't make every one of them: failure to fills are always the priority. But it has been really nice to connect with people across the province, *and* to *connect* people across the province. And we realize that we're really in a small community and it seems to help us to get through those rough times.

The reality is that even though I'm in a school, and I have three VPs and there are 19 other high schools in the district, and we don't connect. We do a quick Teams meeting, and it's usually on an urgent matter. And you really have to connect, and put Coffee Connections right in your calendar. It will be great to continue this, and to keep connecting. This is something that you could probably do regionally with your local chapters as well, but it's nice to be able to do it on a provincial scale.

