

Through Provincial, National, and International Connections
and a Leadership Academy for New-to-Role Members ...

Educational Leadership

Takes Flight!



Inside



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"... as we wound a course between the lively tables, we heard questions, we heard exclamations, we heard laughter, and we witnessed the province's next generation of educational leaders stepping up, and stepping forward."

BCPVPA Compass Leadership Academy

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"One of the most impactful ways school leaders can support teacher growth and strengthen school culture is through meaningful supportive conversations. These are not simple check-ins or performance reviews — they are relational, reflective dialogues grounded in curiosity, empathy, and trust."

Facilitating Supportive Conversations



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"To grow as a leader — especially in a role as demanding as Principal or Vice-Principal — you need intentional, structured, and ongoing development. And that means carving out time, choosing your learning opportunities wisely, and committing to doing the work between sessions."

Grow Yourself to Grow Others



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"For decades, many of our classrooms mirrored the way we ourselves learned: carefully following steps, memorizing procedures, identifying the right formula for the right type of problem. But as AI grew more capable, we could no longer pretend that procedural fluency alone would prepare students for a world where machines execute algorithms effortlessly."

Beyond Algorithms: Our Journey Toward Building Mathematical Thinkers



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The BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA) is a voluntary professional association representing school leaders employed as Principals and Vice-Principals in BC's public education system. The BCPVPA provides its members with the professional services and supports they need to provide exemplary leadership in public education.

We are proud to have more than 2700 members in the province's 60 school districts, and BCPVPA membership is open to any Principal, Vice-Principal, or Director of Instruction at the school or district level. All school districts in the province have a local Principal and Vice-Principal association recognized as a Chapter of the BCPVPA.

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Perspective

Dr. Shannon Behan
2024-2026 President
BCPVPA



LEADING THE WAY WOMEN RESHAPING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

THE STORY BEHIND THE WORK

My Familiar Landscape

Over the past two years as President of the BCPVPA, I have had the immense privilege of visiting districts and schools across this province — north to south, Island to Interior, rural, urban, and everything in between. Whether I was sitting in the school office in Quesnel, sharing a cafeteria table in Haida Gwaii, or walking school hallways in Vernon, one theme kept emerging for me:

Women are doing extraordinary things in leadership.

And yet, far too often, we are still navigating systems that were not designed with women in mind.

And, as I have travelled BC, colleagues continue to ask, “Why haven’t you written anything about female leaders in education? Why, if the BCPVPA has been existence since 1987, are you only the third female president? Is your experience different than that of your male counterparts?”

In my dissertation titled, *A Study of Female Superintendents Who Administer Public School Districts in British Columbia*, and in reading our colleague Dr. Paula Gosal’s study on female secondary school Principals in BC, the patterns were unmistakable: women continue to carry a disproportionate burden of gendered expectations, while simultaneously contributing to some of the most innovative, relational, and equity-driven leadership in the province.

*“The world needs different kinds of leaders.
Women bring a new perspective — be that.”*

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WHAT THE NUMBERS DON'T SHOW – BUT WOMEN DO

We all know the statistics: the teaching profession is overwhelmingly female. Senior leadership? Not so much.

But numbers don't capture the lived stories — the moments of doubt, the quiet resilience, the uncredited labour, the courage it takes to step into roles that have historically been modelled through a male lens.

Across my research, and through my conversations on district visits, I heard common themes:

- Women who didn't plan to become Principals or Superintendents, but said, “yes”, when purpose and opportunity intersected.
- Women who brought experience from counselling, international education, inclusion, Indigenous education, rural leadership, or ministry work — pathways sometimes dismissed as “nontraditional”, yet deeply aligned to what today's system actually needs.
- Women who learned to navigate scrutiny, politics, or gendered assumptions with grace and grit.

And what struck me most? **Not one leader I met got there alone.**

MENTORSHIP

The Through-Line in Every Woman's Story

If there is a single message I wish every emerging female leader could hear, it is this:

You will need mentors — plural. And you deserve them.

In my own journey, I can name the people who opened doors, who pulled chairs to the table for me, who said “you're ready for this” long before I believed it. Some of them were senior leaders, and some were colleagues; all encouraged me in important ways. Women interviewed in both of the aforementioned academic studies shared this, too. Many had male mentors simply because those were the leaders holding senior roles. But, increasingly, women are mentoring each other in powerful, intentional ways.

The truth is simple: mentorship changes trajectories.

And this kind of sponsorship — someone naming your strengths, speaking your name in rooms you're not yet in — can change outcomes.

GENDERED EXPECTATIONS

The Unspoken Curriculum of Leadership

One of the most candid components of both research studies came from stories that women shared about the “invisible” expectations and phenomena:



- the comments about age, appearance, or confidence
- the expectation to take notes or organize food — “the executive mom” role
- the pressure to avoid mistakes because there is “less room” for women to fail
- the weight of community politics and systemic pressure that can impact women more sharply or more personally

These are not theoretical suppositions. They are lived realities in BC and in educational communities around the world.

Yet what I see, time and again, is women establishing firm boundaries, leaning into their values, and building supportive networks that make the work both possible and purposeful.

“Establish your fence lines — and don’t give up on maintaining that fence.”

WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

Say it Louder

In the interviews with women who are Principals, one message came through clearly:

None of them “balanced” everything. They designed and built infrastructure to make the work sustainable.

Childcare, household planning, shared calendars, morning runs, therapy, community, evening routines, career timing, and — importantly — permission to pause, restart, and shift roles as life evolves.

This is not weakness or vulnerability. It is leadership.

It is the honest acknowledgment that none of us works and leads in isolation from the rest of our lives.

INSIGHTS, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND WHAT COMES NEXT

The Leadership Gap — A BC Snapshot

Despite decades of progress, the leadership gap persists:

- Women represent 74% of BC teachers
- Women represent 32% of Superintendents
- Women remain underrepresented at the secondary Principal level

What gives me hope is that we are now learning more about why the gap exists, and we have the tools, research, and community commitment to close it.

FOR WOMEN LEADERS RISING IN BC

What I Want You to Know

1) Find mentors early — and keep them close.

Ask for the feedback you need, not the feedback that is easy to give.

2) Build a network wider than your district.

The leaders who thrive in BC are connected — to associations, colleagues, other districts, Indigenous partners, and ministry teams.

3) Your leadership style is not a liability. It is your superpower.

Relational, collaborative, equity-minded leadership is what our system needs most.

4) Learn how search processes work.

Women often underestimate their readiness. Understand governance, budgets, the politics, and the narrative of your district.

5) Plan for the reality — not the idealism — of work–life fit.

Give yourself permission to build the supports you need. Strength is not self-sacrifice.

6) Develop board and media literacy.

The political climate is continually shifting. Be ready before the storm arrives.

7) Lift others as you go.

Mentor other women, invite them to your networks, collaborate with them. BC rises when women do this for each other.

WHAT WOMEN TOLD ME THAT I WILL NEVER FORGET

“Mentorship changed everything for me.”

“Don’t let people take away your confidence.”

“Lead from the middle — culture moves when Principals move.”

“When the work gets hard, fall back on your ‘why’.”

These truths echo across communities, districts, and decades of women’s leadership.

A CALL TO ACTION FOR ALL OF US

If we want more women in senior leadership — and if we want them to thrive — we need systems that recognize and celebrate the strengths women bring, and remove the barriers that hold women back.

That means:

- District succession planning that is transparent and fair.

- Trustee education and orientation focused on equity and unconscious bias.
- Mentorship programs designed with intention, not by chance.
- Networks that welcome, honour, and amplify women’s voices.

And it means asking, every time a leadership role opens:

“Who is missing from this table — and why?”

CLOSING REFLECTION

In our school districts, I see women leading with courage, clarity, humour, humility, and deep compassion. I see leaders who shoulder immense responsibility while still creating spaces of belonging and joy for the people around them. I see emerging leaders who will redefine what leadership looks like for the next generation.

Women are not just stepping into leadership in BC.

They are reshaping it.

“This is a privileged role — and it’s incredibly rewarding. Make a difference, in a good way.”





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Calling All Leaders

Yes ... You!

ATTEND A LEARNING EVENT

RUN FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

APPLY FOR A COMMITTEE

FACILITATE A PROGRAM

LAUNCH A BOOK CLUB

AUTHOR AN ARTICLE

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Partners

Sandra Murphy
Director, Communications
BCPVPA

Professional associations like the BCPVPA depend upon many different factors to ensure that members are receiving the best possible services and supports. Member voice is key, and we invite and incorporate member feedback through a variety of means. The shared experience of our provincial partners, professional associations who are supporting their own members in BC's public education sector, is also critical to understanding the full scope of our local context.

Over time, the BCPVPA has also ventured beyond our borders, peeked over the Rockies, and made connections with other Canadian professional associations engaged in the work of supporting educational leaders. Our first contact many years ago was with the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC); with their membership of 5,400 elementary and secondary school leaders. They do very similar work to the BCPVPA but on a larger scale.

BUILDING Connections



In 2018, Principals and Vice-Principals in Nova Scotia were removed from their province's teachers' union, leading to the formation of the Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS). Having experienced a similar transition in the late 1980s¹, the BCPVPA was pleased to connect with our Nova Scotia colleagues to answer questions and recommend best practices.

Through these and other connections, the BCPVPA has made the acquaintance of the Association of Administrators of English Schools in Quebec (AAESQ), the Association des directions et des directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO), and the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO), each of whom share our common distinction of operating independently of the provincial teachers' federations.

¹ bcvpva.insite.com/files/sites/bcpvpa/about-us/bcpvpa-intheirownwords-june2022.pdf



The Presidents and Executive Directors of the Six Associations gathered in Victoria, BC in September 2025.

“How do these cross-country and worldwide connections benefit our members? Simply put, knowledge is strength.”

We come together for learning and leadership development activities as the **Six Associations**.

Most recently, the BCPVPA hosted our colleagues for a Leadership Summit in Victoria, BC, in September 2025. Expanding our scope beyond the ongoing relationship building between our presidents and executive directors/CEOs, this conference included staff from our professional learning and protective/support services teams to share more deeply about priorities and processes.

While collaboratively exploring the purpose, mandate, benefits, and challenges of the Six Associations, we also dug down into roles and governance, capacity building, wellness, leadership development opportunities, equity and Reconciliation, partnerships, and advocacy to best support our respective memberships.

Where our national connections with the Associations have helped us to understand other Canadian contexts, our global connections through the International Confederation of Principals (ICP) has brought us to a broader stage. The ICP is a global professional network of national school leader associations with the objective of encouraging teachers to join the next generation of educational leaders, addressing shared global issues such as Artificial Intelligence and climate education, and fostering the role of student voice in school leadership. The BCPVPA's Deputy Executive Director and Member Support Services Director, Magdalena Kassis, currently

sits on the executive as the Americas Representative.

How do these cross-country and worldwide connections benefit our members? Simply put, knowledge is strength. The roles of our members are evolving rapidly, everywhere in the world. Work intensification is a common marker across all of our connected organizations, as is the resulting need for improved attention to member health and well-being. Breathtaking innovations in technology, and their relentless march into our classrooms, have affected schools and educational leaders everywhere. Recently, during a meeting of the Executive Directors of the Six Associations, there was discussion about how the associations are using AI in the workplace. From developing policy governing AI, to concrete suggestions about how to use AI to enhance communication with members, it was clear that we all have much to learn, both about the topic and from each other.

And, we *are* learning from one another – sharing ideas, advances, and solutions – each time we connect with an Association leader from Ontario at a conference, message with a Nepalese Principal during a webcast, or pick up the phone for an update from a project colleague in Iceland. We are improving our systems, and adapting new concepts for our context. We are reaching beyond our borders to help build the best professional pathways for our members, for now and for the future.

Association of Administrators of English Schools in Quebec
aesq.ca

Association des directions et des directions adjointes
des écoles franco-ontariennes
adfo.org

BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association
bcpvpa.org

Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario
cpco.on.ca

Ontario Principals' Council
principals.ca

Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia
psaans.ca

International Confederation of Principals
icponline.org

Feature

Sandra Murphy
Director, Communications
BCPVPA



You are *exhilarated*.

Your preparation paid off, your interview felt fantastic, and you *just* got the call: you are going to be a Vice-Principal. **You start next week.**

There are so many emotions that accompany this life-changing news, excitement and trepidation tugging your heart this way and that. Anyone starting a new role can relate, but the transition from teacher to Vice-Principal – and *sometimes* to Principal – can feel like a solitary road, heading straight up.

This year, the BCPVPA launched a dedicated program to help new educational leaders to find their footing on that steeply inclined path, and to gather both tools and traveling companions along the way.

The **Compass Leadership Academy** kicked off in October 2025 with an in-person conference that welcomed more than 200 members who are new to their Vice-Principal or Principal roles, along with 30 seasoned members volunteering their time and expertise to facilitate, stimulate thought, and answer questions from their table groups.

Supporting new leaders is a priority of the BCPVPA Board of Directors and staff. Our Explorations for Aspiring School Leaders program opens up the world of school leadership to curious teachers, while our long-running Foundations for New School Leaders program (formerly Short Course) has been inspiring new Vice-Principals and Principals for more than 40 years. Compass has been designed as a companion program to these initiatives that will introduce the hands-on core responsibilities of school leaders, alongside the many aspects of leadership and decision making that fill each day.

Where to begin with constructing an immersive experience such as this one? From a kernel of an idea earlier in 2025, Compass gained momentum over the

summer and became a priority project for our team. We were grateful for the support of every school district in British Columbia, for their enthusiasm for the initiative, and for their recommendation of newly hired staff who would benefit from the program. We were also very fortunate – alongside our brilliant facilitators – to have the support of exceptional BC senior education leaders including Suzanne Hoffman, Judy Maranda, Julie Pearce, and Rick Ryan.

When Day One of the conference dawned, as with any new project, we wondered what to expect. Attendees arrived, more and more and more of them. The energy crackled as people in the room connected. That first day brought together the full cohort of new leaders for a morning of meeting and networking, learning about the BCPVPA's Leadership Competencies, and walking through a year in the life of a BC school leader.

The BCPVPA issued passports to each attendee, with the invitation to visit our staff at department booths lined up in the lobby: Member Support Services, Professional Learning and Development, Member Health and Well-being, Finance, and Communications. Lured by snacks and prizes for completed passports, and remaining for some spirited conversations, there was a mighty buzz that enlivened our breaks and lunch, and introduced attendees both to their Association and to each other.



BCPVPA staff welcomed Compass attendees: L to R Carmen Eberle, Director, Member Support Services; Dr. Andrea McComb, Director, Professional Learning & Development; David Serpa, Communications Assistant; David Nelson, Director, Member Support Services

The afternoon brought us back, with an overview of fiduciary duty, a primer on decision-making, and a dive into a variety of fascinating case studies to help solidify the learning.

Day Two of the conference was dedicated to new leaders working in rural and remote communities, and this programming recognized the unique nature of their work in smaller BC towns, introducing procedures for professional boundaries, skills for co-creating collaborative communities, and sharing valuable time management skills. New leaders in this cohort also have access to several personal online coaching sessions as support.

These two days offered a wealth of information and interaction, and connections that will last these leaders a lifetime. But that is not the full story of Compass.

The October conference was the entry point for continued learning. Over the next two years, Compass attendees will engage in immersive virtual learning that will support them in their practice. In this first year, the spring after-school sessions focused on Finance, Governance, and Human Resources: Working with People. Teachers in their roles do not have the same direct experience with these responsibilities, and these sessions helped to expand and deepen the understanding of each attendee

as they work into their new Vice-Principal and Principal roles.

The Compass Leadership Academy has brought together BC educational leaders from every corner of the province. We met members who were not only new to their roles, but new to the Association, and current members who had made the move to the next stage in their careers, and were ready to refill and recharge their toolbelts.

Many of our seasoned leaders shared with us their memories of their own first days of leadership, their feelings of isolation and uncertainty, and how they could have benefited from a pathway of information and connection, along with the understanding that there are colleagues eager to help with this professional transition.

As we looked out over that bustling room in October, as we wound a course between the lively tables, we heard questions, we heard exclamations, we heard laughter, and we witnessed the province's next generation of educational leaders stepping up, and stepping forward. We can't wait to see where their winding road takes them.

For more information about the Compass Leadership Academy, please contact pldinfo@bcpvpa.bc.ca



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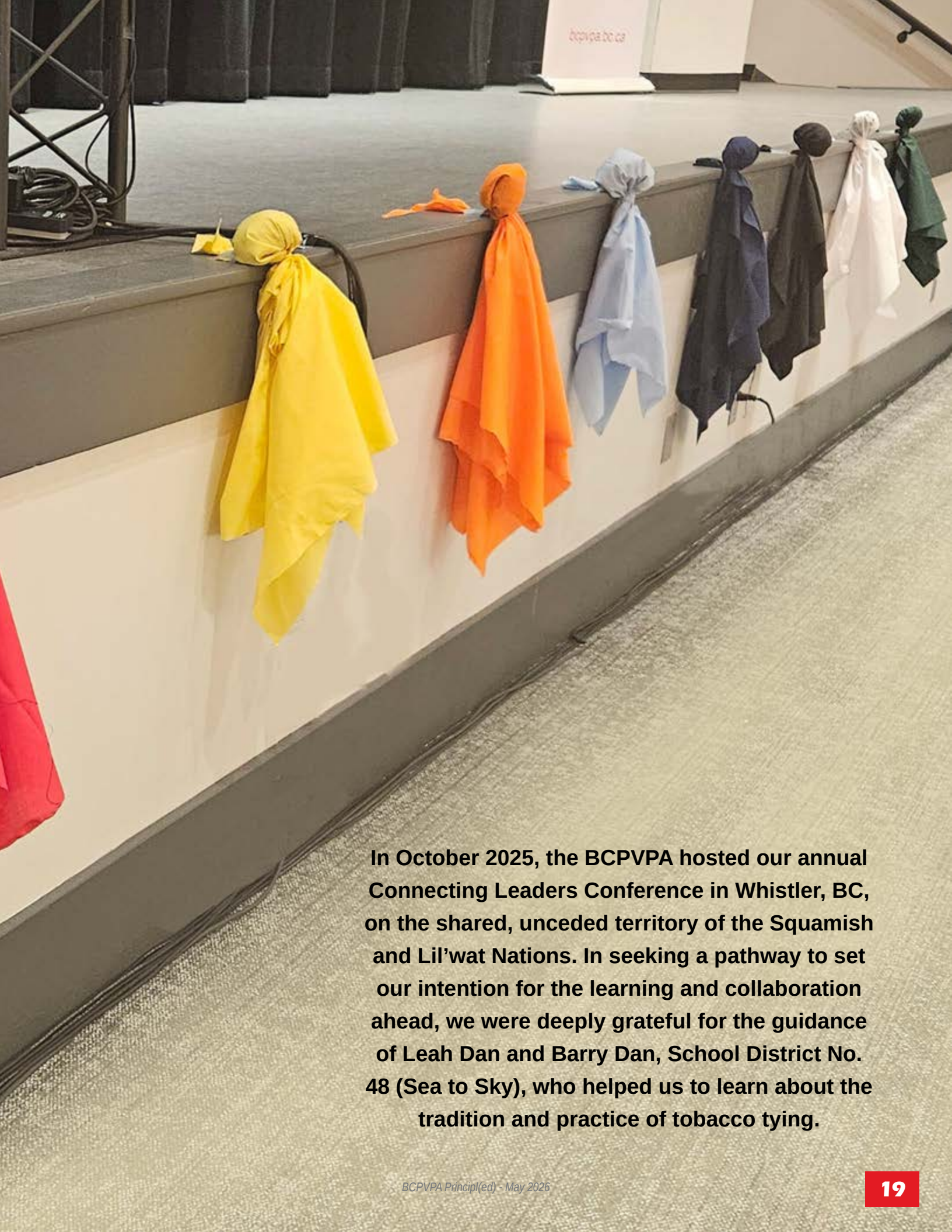


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SETTING AN INTENTION





In October 2025, the BCPVPA hosted our annual Connecting Leaders Conference in Whistler, BC, on the shared, unceded territory of the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations. In seeking a pathway to set our intention for the learning and collaboration ahead, we were deeply grateful for the guidance of Leah Dan and Barry Dan, School District No. 48 (Sea to Sky), who helped us to learn about the tradition and practice of tobacco tying.



Leah Dan and Barry Dan prepare the materials for tobacco tying

Tobacco tying is a sacred practice in many Indigenous cultures, where tobacco – one of the four sacred medicines – is placed in a small piece of cloth and tied into a bundle which is formed with prayer and intention. Each of us were guided to create a bundle, while considering the meaning behind the specific colour of cloth we had in our hands.

Purple	the land	Orange	the children who didn't come home	Black	the west
Red	the east	Light blue	the Lil'wat nation	White	the north
Yellow	the south	Blue	the sky	Green	the things that grow

The bundles were mounted to the front of the stage, where all of the attendees marked their presence and considered the intention behind each bundle throughout the conference. After the conference, the bundles could be burned in a fire as a closure to those intentions. With reliance on Leah's and Barry's knowledge, we learned that we could also mindfully disperse each bundle to member communities, finding a place for each intention where it was most needed at that time. Each of the bundles has a home for this year in communities across the province, where their intentions can propagate through those schools and districts. When we come together again for the October 2026 conference, those bundles will be gathered again for their closing journey.



Our sincere thanks to



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of our October 2025 conference

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CONNECTING LEADERS

“Can I give you a piece of advice?”

We have all heard that phrase at some point in our careers. Perhaps less a question than a statement, as you are definitely enroute to receiving that guidance. In some situations, we absorb the counsel, give thanks, and move on. But in other circumstances, that advice can be pivotal, profound, and transformative. You may be hearing an informed perspective that is miles distant from your own. You may be receiving the missing puzzle piece that will let you complete a beautiful scene.

For the BCPVPA Board of Directors, the member voice that is generated by advisory committees is critical in adding layers of knowledge to support the Board's ongoing and complex decision making. Each committee is comprised of members who bring their distinctive context, understanding, and background to each

meeting. Those members come to this work with an interest in the unique role of their chosen committee, in learning and connecting with other members, and in gaining a clearer understanding of the provincial scope of our education system.

The members who apply for these committee roles are not homogenous. We receive applications from first-year Vice-Principals, and from seasoned Principals; from urban metro members and from those leading in rural and remote communities. Applicants represent a huge range of contexts and personal identities, and the resulting committees bring together individuals whose professional spheres may not have overlapped in any other circumstances.

And that is quite possibly the superpower of an advisory committee.





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Advisory Committees

The BCPVPA's Advisory Committees have evolved as a reflection of member need. A Contract Advisory Committee was originally struck when there was no provincial compensation framework, and there were wide disparities in compensation around the province. In the 2025-2026 school year, with the guidance of a working group, the Contract Advisory Committee has transitioned to a new Contract Representative structure that opens a direct connection to the Board of Directors, and offers an improved opportunity for sharing directly with each Chapter's representatives.

The Budget Advisory Committee, and the Professional Learning and Development (PLD) Advisory Committee, each have a purpose embedded in the Association's history. The Budget Advisory Committee has just that as its annual scope: member voice in the development of the BCPVPA budget each spring. The Board depends upon the PLD Advisory Committee's feedback about membership needs related to learning and leadership development opportunities.

The Indigenous Leadership Advisory Committee was formed more than ten years ago to offer recommendations to the Board that might help increase our members' cultural competencies in regard to Truth and Reconciliation, alongside recommending ways in which our members who identify as Indigenous can be better supported by our Association.

The BCPVPA's other two Advisory Committees were created in response to changing societal priorities and awareness. The Member Health Advisory Committee was originally formed to focus on work intensification,

and has evolved to have a broader mandate in advising the Board about many aspects of member health. The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee, now in its second year, was preceded by the Anti-Racism Working Group, the members of which shared their collective perspectives and concerns with the Board over a two-year mandate. The EDIA Committee was created to continue that work of helping the Board to navigate change, to better understand the needs of equity-deserving groups and individuals in our membership, and to equip all members with the knowledge and tools that will help them to be successful in weaving the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion into their work.

Through their discussions, and with the guidance of members of the Board who chair each committee, members can bring to light their lived experiences and those of their colleagues, to inform the Board's decisions and ensure that members remain central to the work of the Association. Applications for the BCPVPA Advisory Committees open every spring, and the successful committee members are notified in advance of the new school year. Each committee's meeting dates are embedded as part of the application process, to better support members in planning their busy personal and professional lives.

If you are looking for a way to give back to our community of educational leaders, consider applying to be part of a BCPVPA committee. For more information, please contact Executive Director, Scott Robinson scott@bcpvpa.bc.ca, or Deputy Executive Director, Magdalena Kassis magdalena@bcpvpa.bc.ca.

Support

Carmen Eberle

Director, Member Support Services
BCPVPA

Successful workplaces are built on teams that feel empowered to lead, take initiative, and challenge the status quo. Inclusive leadership not only builds the capacity of self and others, but it also cultivates cultures that thrive on creativity and innovation allowing for new ideas to surface naturally. I believe any leader can achieve this notion of inclusive leadership through open communication, active listening, and authentic feedback. High performing teams tend to flourish in cultures where they can express themselves freely, share perspectives, and take risks without fear of judgement or reprisal.

To create space that is conducive to inclusive leadership, I have encouraged colleagues to reflect upon their own practice and apply strategies designed to strengthen their intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of their practice. As educational leaders, we are in a privileged position that allows for the extension of opportunities where all employees have the chance to reach their full potential. Encouraging collaboration and modelling inclusive leadership has a positive effect and impact on staff and can create greater connection, well-being, and overall success within an individual's leadership abilities.

"I approach inclusive leadership by trying to frame all of my words and actions with the intentionality of giving all members of our school community opportunities to provide input and realize personal growth."

Laird Ruehlen – Secondary Principal SD No. 72

Authentic Feedback and Reflection

In leadership, authentic feedback and reflection in leadership builds the capacity of self. A climate of mutual respect begins with leaders who genuinely listen and are open to feedback, no matter how difficult it is

Inclusive Leadership that Builds Capacity of Self and Others



to hear. How you show up in the workplace is critical for building trust, creating space to give and receive information allowing others to feel safe in your presence. One method to foster authentic feedback and reflection is to schedule uninterrupted individual meetings with each staff member where you can ask questions and encourage dialogue. This approach can lead to stronger relationships and increased staff engagement. Examples of questions I have used in my practice include:

- What do you feel we are doing well as a team?
 - *Invites positive reflection and signals genuine curiosity.*
- If you could contribute one thing to the team that supports the school community, what would it be?
 - *Welcomes team members to think about their own strengths, challenges, and contributions on the team.*
- What am I doing that is helpful to your work, and is there anything I can do differently to support you or the team?
 - *Shows openness to hear from staff, while inviting honest feedback without pressure.*
- When you think about a good day at work, what is happening for you? What makes those days feel good?
 - *Encourages insight into motivation and well-being.*
- Everyone likes to be recognized in different ways: when it comes to feeling appreciated and valued at work, what is meaningful for you?
 - *Shows respect for individual differences and promotes inclusion by ensuring that everyone's contributions are acknowledged in ways that truly resonate.*

"Inclusive leadership in my school looks like: ensuring every voice is heard and valued, empowering students to challenge racism and advocate for equity, and creating opportunities where every learner feels safe, supported, and inspired to thrive."

Nadine Thibert – Secondary Principal (Acting) SD No. 58

When staff have an avenue to speak freely about their needs, the information provided — opinions, feelings, attributes — can help to identify gaps in the system. Takeaways from these conversations can help inform next steps or actionable items that benefit teams. Productive two-way dialogue also strengthens trust. When leaders allow time to give and receive information without judgment, that action alone invites authentic and honest conversations.

"Inclusive leadership in our school means sharing leadership and empowering others. We create opportunities for staff to lead learning in ways that honour their strengths, invite participation, and build collective teacher efficacy."

Tammy Mountain – Elementary Principal SD No. 74

Demonstrate Genuine Care for Others

Have you heard the saying, "The more people you like, the more others like you"? The "reciprocity of liking" rule suggests that people tend to like those who like them. Research on this phenomenon shows that when individuals become aware that someone likes them, there is an assumption that, based on a balance of probability, the individual will like them in return. Being genuine and self-accepting can have a positive impact on interpersonal relationships.

Educational leaders who consider the varied needs of different team members tend to understand that not everyone needs to be treated the same way: the key is to recognize the unique needs of each employee. Developing an understanding requires time to get to know your staff. This can be done by cultivating bona fide opportunities to show a real interest in the personal and professional lives of others, responding to others with empathy and sincerity, allowing for different perspectives to be shared, and learning about the experiences, education, or backgrounds that have shaped your colleagues.

Educational leaders can practice these skills intentionally by:

- Creating moments to listen with presence, without an agenda. This could be stopping by and asking, “How are things going?” or “What is taking shape this week?” or “Is there anything you are working on where I can be of support?”

- *By taking a genuine interest in team members’ lives, and work place priorities, leaders can deepen their emotional connection and bridge trust.*

- Celebrating and recognizing people’s efforts and acknowledge even the small wins. This can be done through simple gestures such as taking the time to write a thank you note, or acknowledging efforts in a staff meeting, newsletter, or staff bulletin.

- *By recognizing people’s efforts, they are more likely to feel seen, heard, and valued, which may result in higher productivity and sense of belonging.*

- Modelling authenticity by sharing personal learning and challenges. This can be done by learning alongside your staff and expressing gratitude for the expertise others may have to offer the team.

- *Modelling authenticity builds relational and social capital; both are essential for nurturing inclusive, compassionate educational communities.*

- Involve others in decision-making. This demonstrates cultural awareness, empathy, and a grounding in humility and responsibility. Ways to demonstrate this in your own practice include:

- Listening without defensiveness.
 - Acknowledging misunderstanding when it occurs.
 - Co-creating solutions that reflect community voices.
 - Valuing Indigenous knowledge as foundational, rather than supplemental.
 - Recognizing the values, histories, and worldviews of others.
 - Building trust through reciprocal and sustained relationships.

School leaders are stewards of the future. They must genuinely value everyone for who they are. Showing genuine care and concern for others does not always come naturally and is an important skill that can be developed or refined. Human interactions that show genuine care for others make staff feel valued and can help leaders to build trust, deepen connections, and leave team members feeling a strong sense of belonging.

“I approach inclusive leadership by focusing on belonging. To me, inclusion means finding ways to welcome people into existing structures, while belonging is about creating structures and pathways that reflect the needs of the people we serve. One approach places system at the center; the other places humans at the center.”

Riley McMitchell (he/him) – Elementary Principal SD No. 39

Model Collaborative Inquiry

Every employee comes with different lived experiences, offering the richness of diverse perspectives and abilities. Accessing the knowledge of others empowers them to capitalize on their strengths, which invites delegation of leadership opportunities. Not every project or responsibility needs to fall on one person. Taking a distributed leadership or collaborative inquiry approach allows leaders to nurture talent within their team. This approach opens doors to creating a better collective response than what could be achieved independently. Positioning yourself as a collaborative leader makes others feel included in decision-making and, with this, others feel part of something bigger than themselves. When the team succeeds it is a shared celebration, and when the team stumbles it becomes an opportunity to learn and grow.

An example of collaborative inquiry in practice is to openly admit when one does not have all the answers, or when one places themselves in the position of a lead learner. Collaborative thought sessions or shared brainstorming are ways to approach not having all the answers. These techniques allow for the gathering of alternative perspectives and, if applied constructively, this can help



to mitigate confirmation bias so that informed decision-making can unfold. Working alongside staff in this way has the potential to create an everlasting synergy where critical thinking supersedes one's own ego or the need to be seen as the only expert.

In an educational setting, collaborative inquiry could involve asking individuals to be an expert on a team or to lead a specific project that taps into their talents. Distributed leadership is conducive to a Flat Army¹ structure where collaborative leadership is supported over a hierarchical or tiered model of support. A Flat Army approach eliminates the need for control, while helping to break down barriers, such as silos or unhealthy competition that can often come with the latter approach. Collaboration evokes a sense of shared ownership that encourages innovation and inspires mutual learning.

1 Flat Army: Creating a Connected and Engaged Organization, Dan Pontefract, March 2013, Wiley

"Inclusive leadership in my school means interacting with students and staff with care, curiosity, and genuine connection. It also means creating a culture where families are true partners. Inclusion helps us build capacity, strengthen relationships, and ensure everyone feels they belong and can shape our direction."

Cathryn Blanco (she/her) – Secondary Principal, SD No. 42

Encourage Professional Support Networks

Whose shoulders do you stand on? Leaders can find themselves struggling to answer this question, especially when they are faced with adversity, and juggling multiple glass balls in the air. For some, it might look like connecting with others in a similar role in the same or another district, joining an affinity group, or engaging in an informal or formal mentorship program. For your staff, it could be coordinating release time to attend professional development opportunities, arranging meetings with trusted colleagues in a similar role, or orchestrating formal professional learning communities where school-based groups have time to collaborate on important aspects of learning. All these different structures inspire shared learning, collaborative problem-solving, deep and meaningful inquiry, and reflection opportunities. When implemented successfully, a culture of well-being unfolds, and an environment based on continuous learning and shared leadership become naturally embedded into practices.

Building networks for yourself and others not only builds relationships but builds mutual capacity. Discussing challenges with trusted peers increases knowledge through purposeful sharing, while reducing feelings of isolation or vulnerability to stressors that could have an adverse effect on well-being. When leaders show they

also need support, it establishes a culture whereby self-care is encouraged, and others are supported to engage in similar well-being practices.

In all my years of being an educator, inclusion has been a key component of my practice. Through curiosity, we can provoke deep and meaningful conversations whereby perspective-taking becomes the norm, and disagreement is an invitation for further dialogue, empathy, and understanding. Leading in this way takes courage, requires humility, and involves the sheer willingness to challenge the status quo in a confident and effective manner.

Ultimately, there are many ways to reach the same goal, and leading through inclusive practices while keeping

an open mindset will afford you and your team time to discover new perspectives, innovative solutions, and valuable growth opportunities. When we lead with inclusion at the heart of our practice, we open the door to possibilities we never imagined.

"I practice inclusive leadership by understanding each student's story. Through strong relationships with students and their families, we work collaboratively to set goals that best support every learner's needs."

Cathy Gracie – District Principal Learning Support Services
SD No. 35

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David Nelson

*Director, Member Support Services
BCPVPA*

In August 2025, BCPVPA Executive Director Scott Robinson and I had the opportunity to present to more than sixty district leaders at the annual conference hosted by the BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA). Our session focused on strategies for supporting and building trust with the Principals and Vice-Principals they supervise.

One component of the session explored how district leaders can effectively engage in supportive conversations with school leaders to foster growth. A key theme was determining whether a situation lends itself to a supportive conversation, or requires more direct guidance.

In this article, I revisit those strategies in the context of *your* work as Principals and Vice-Principals. These same approaches can assist you in coming alongside teachers to engage in collaborative, trust-building conversations that strengthen relationships and support professional learning.



The Supportive Conversation

One of the most impactful ways school leaders can support teacher growth and strengthen school culture is through meaningful supportive conversations. These are not simple check-ins or performance reviews — they are relational, reflective dialogues grounded in curiosity, empathy, and trust.

Engaging in supportive conversations requires a shift from being a problem-solver or expert to being a listener and co-learner.



Assessing Readiness for Supportive Conversations

Before initiating a supportive conversation, school leaders must assess both the context and the teacher's readiness to participate. Ask yourself whether this is the best approach for this situation and this individual.

Key considerations include:

- **The teacher's skill and experience:** Are they new to the profession, or experienced? Do they have the capacity to navigate the issue with guidance, or are they currently unable to do so independently?
- **Your relationship with the teacher:** Have you established trust? Supportive conversations rely on psychological safety and the belief that your intent is to support rather than judge.
- **The teacher's mindset and emotional readiness:** Are they open to reflection and feedback, or are they overwhelmed or defensive? Are they willing to engage in this type of dialogue?
- **The nature of the situation:** Is the issue urgent, politically sensitive, or governed by policy, situations that may require more directive guidance? Or is the issue suited to exploration and reflection?

In short: ***Does the situation require clear direction, or is it an opportunity for a supportive conversation?*** These conversations work best when the teacher is both ready and willing to engage.



Strategies for Effective Supportive Conversations

The following strategies can guide school leaders in approaching supportive conversations with intention and care.

1. Begin by Listening

At the heart of every supportive conversation is deep, intentional listening. Be fully present. Reflect back what you hear, ask questions that deepen thinking, and resist the urge to jump in with solutions.

When teachers feel truly seen and heard, trust strengthens, and growth becomes possible.

2. Be Curious

Approach conversations with a genuine desire to understand. Shift from assessing to exploring:

- *What do you think is working well in this situation?"*
- *"What options do you see moving forward?"*

Curiosity transforms the dialogue from directive to collaborative and empowers teachers to take ownership of their growth.



“Silence can feel uncomfortable, but it often leads to meaningful reflection. Give time for thinking and processing.”

Equally important is embracing your own vulnerability. You don’t need all the answers. Not knowing can create opportunities to learn and grow together.”

3. Embrace Silence and Vulnerability

Silence can feel uncomfortable, but it often leads to meaningful reflection. Give time for thinking and processing.

Equally important is embracing your own vulnerability. You don’t need all the answers. Not knowing can create opportunities to learn and grow together.

4. Step Out of Your Title

One of the most powerful things a school leader can do is step out of their supervisory role during supportive conversations.

- Resist the urge to give advice.
- Position yourself as a collaborator rather than an evaluator.
- Trust in the teacher’s ability to lead their own learning.

5. Model Empathy and Understanding

Difficult situations can lead teachers to question their competence. Acknowledge and validate their feelings and reassure them that you will work together to identify solutions.

Use empathetic language such as:

- *“I am sorry this is happening.”*
- *I can see that this is really upsetting for you.”*

Empathy reduces defensiveness, builds trust, and opens the door to productive problem-solving.

6. Use Collaborative Language

Supportive conversations should feel like a shared journey. Use language that reinforces partnership and psychological safety:

- *“Let’s think about...”*
- *“What are some options we can explore?”*
- *“How might we approach this together?”*

7. Develop an Action Plan — Together

Supportive conversations should lead to purposeful action. Co-create a plan for moving forward:

- Identify one or two concrete next steps.
- Clarify the support you will provide.
- Set a time to check in and reflect on progress.

Focus on progress rather than perfection. The goal is continuous growth.

8. Don't Skip the Debrief

After implementing the plan, take time to reflect—both on the outcome and the process.

Ask:

- *"What worked well?"*
- *"What did we each learn?"*
- *"What might we do differently next time?"*

Debriefing reinforces a culture of learning and demonstrates your commitment to your own professional growth.



Final Thought

Every supportive conversation is an investment in a positive school culture. When you walk alongside a teacher during a challenging moment, you send a powerful message: you are not alone, and your growth matters.

By listening deeply, staying curious, and leading with empathy and humility, you help build a school culture where trust, reflection, and continuous improvement are not the exception — they are the norm.

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Vicarious Liability and Negligence

Implications for Educational Leaders

Carmen Eberle

*Director, Member Support Services
BCPVPA*

As an educational leader, it is easy to get caught up in the demands of the school day. Given the high standard of care expected of Principals and Vice-Principals, and the increasing complexity of the work, it becomes even more important that educators appreciate and understand the differences between vicarious liability and negligence, especially when considering the legal risks and ethical responsibilities of educational leaders employed by boards of education in British Columbia.

What Are Vicarious Liability and Negligence?

I first learned about the premise of vicarious liability during an employment law course. It was not something I had heard much about through regular professional development opportunities and, over time, I came to realize the importance of legal responsibilities for employers and employees in the education sector.

The Supreme Court of Canada has stated that “vicarious liability imputes liability to the employer... of a tortfeasor, not on the basis of the fault of the employer... , but on the ground that as the person responsible for the activity or enterprise in question, the employer... should be held responsible for loss to third parties that result from the activity or enterprise.”

In simple terms, **vicarious liability** means that an employer may be held responsible for the actions or omissions of its employees, particularly those actions that occur while employees are doing their job. This means that a board of education could be held legally liable if an employee does something wrong while carrying out their duties, where there is a significant connection between the conduct authorized by the employer and the wrong.

Negligence focuses on whether a board of education failed to meet the standard of care owed to students. In British Columbia, the courts have found boards of education negligent where a teacher, acting within the scope of their duties, acted in a way which was below the standard expected of a reasonable and prudent educator, for example, by failing to provide proper instruction, supervision, or adhere to safety protocols. Negligence has been found where inadequate oversight or failure to follow established procedures contributed to the risk of harm.

“Every Principal and Vice-Principal has a duty of care to ensure the safety and well-being of all students while they are in the school or under the school’s supervision.”

How does This Apply to Principals and Vice-Principals?

Under the School Act, boards of education in British Columbia are corporate bodies responsible for managing schools. Teachers are employees of the board, and the board may be held vicariously liable for the conduct of a teacher (or Principal or Vice-Principal) acting in the course of their employment where there is a sufficient connection between the employee’s duties and the harm that has been caused by the teacher. Principals and Vice-Principals are appointed by a board of education within this structure and are assigned operational leadership over their schools.

The School Act speaks to several issues of liability. First, it provides immunity for trustees, officers, and employees for acts or omissions in the performance of their duties, except where there is dishonesty, gross negligence, or malicious or willful misconduct. Second, that immunity does not relieve a board of education from vicarious liability for torts committed by trustees, officers, employees, students, or volunteers. Third, the School Act authorizes indemnification and, importantly, directs that boards must not seek indemnity from trustees, officers, or employees except in cases of gross negligence or where an officer or employee willfully contravened employment terms or orders. Boards of education must also maintain insurance.

Every Principal and Vice-Principal has a duty of care to ensure the safety and well-being of all students while they are in the school or under the school’s supervision. The Principal and Vice-Principal of a school must take all reasonable steps to prevent harm and ensure the learning environment is safe, that the school code of conduct is followed, and that all employees they may direct are appropriately supervised. A Principal or Vice-Principal is also responsible for identifying and addressing risks in the school setting.

In British Columbia, negligence claims in school settings are typically brought against the board of education, not individual administrators. While Principals and Vice-Principals have operational duties (supervision, policy enforcement, safety oversight), courts usually analyze any shortfall in those duties as part of the board of education’s duty of care to students. As a result,

claims are commonly framed against the board, with administrators' decisions forming the factual basis of a claim rather than separate personal liability.

Consequences of Harm to a Student

Vicarious liability could arise for boards of education in regard to an employee's wrongful conduct only where there is a strong connection between the duties the board assigned and the harm that has occurred. The wrongful conduct could be grooming, sexual exploitation, neglect, physical abuse, or emotional abuse. However, not all harm will support a claim of vicarious liability.

While inadequate supervision or institutional inaction may support a claim of direct negligence, this will not necessarily establish vicarious liability. The courts in British Columbia require more than a mere opportunity for misconduct, and have emphasized that vicarious liability will not arise unless the board of education's enterprise, including the authority, responsibilities, or power it grants to an employee, materially increased the risk of the wrong.

In particular, situations that could potentially trigger a legal claim include:

- Failure to ensure a safe learning environment.
- Failure to report misconduct under statutory duty to report provisions, such as those found in the School Act and the Teachers Act, which require reporting to the Commissioner for Teacher Regulation.
- Negligence in supervision, where the administrator neglects their obligation to monitor, guide, and intervene appropriately in staff conduct.

In these kinds of situations, the employer may be held legally responsible if they have failed to supervise, investigate, or enforce training or proper application of policies and guidelines to prevent misconduct towards or harm to children. This shows how important it is for educational leaders to not only react to issues as they arise, but to take proactive steps to ensure policies and



“Serious lapses in judgment or failure to act in accordance with professional expectations may have broad employment implications, including termination of the employment contract.”

procedures are followed, and to ensure that all staff are regularly trained on how to deal with potential risks to students before they arise.

Personal Accountability for Educational Leaders

School administrators are required to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm and to avoid breaching the duty of care. This legal duty also aligns with the position of trust that educators hold within their communities. All certificate holders are expected to care for students and act in their best interest while – first and foremost – safeguarding the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of their students. Although Principals and Vice-Principals are not likely to be vicariously liable for the misconduct of their staff, they may face professional accountability for their mismanagement, failure to act, or failure to report misconduct. When a school administrator fails to act in the face of misconduct or wrongdoing of a person they are required to oversee, their inaction may also be investigated and acted upon by the Teacher Regulation Branch (the “TRB”). Their board of education may also be vicariously liable for the Principal’s or Vice-Principal’s negligence. In such cases, even if the school administrator did not commit the harmful act themselves, their failure to act, report, or intervene may potentially trigger personal and/or organizational liability.

Administrator Mismanagement

Vicarious liability will ordinarily not apply to Principals or Vice-Principals, and will usually apply to a board of education. When school administrators fail to properly supervise, train, or manage employees, or when they ignore or permit breaches of district policy or reasonable safety expectations, this does not make them vicariously liable. Instead, these exposures may create negligence exposure for the board of education, which owes a duty of care that includes adequate supervision and safety oversight.

It is important to note that Principals or Vice-Principals are afforded liability coverage for acts performed within the scope of their employment through the Schools Protection Program (SPP), the provincial insurer for school districts, administered and delivered by the Risk Management Branch of the Ministry of Finance,

in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Child Care. It is equally important to note that where there is gross negligence, SPP coverage may not be available.

Career Consequences for Mismanagement

Serious lapses in judgment or failure to act in accordance with professional expectations may have broad employment implications, including termination of the employment contract. If the Principal’s or Vice-Principal’s inaction is found to constitute misconduct, it may also result in a report to the TRB. This underscores the importance of maintaining high standards of professional practice, not only to support safe and ethical school environments, but also to protect one’s professional status and career opportunities within the education system. As leaders in education, it is not enough to react to issues as they arise. Rather, it is important to be diligent in putting supervision practices and training in place, as it demonstrates that you know and follow key board of education and Ministry policies and procedures to mitigate risk, and foster safe and respectful learning environments. The key is to be proactive and have a mindset of preventative risk management at all times.

Insights Through Case Studies

Three Canadian case studies follow, and each highlight aspects of vicarious liability and negligence.

Case Overview: Bain v. Calgary Board of Education (1993, Alberta QB)

In *Bain v. Calgary Board of Education*, a school district was found vicariously liable for a student accident that occurred during an outdoor education field trip near Vernon, BC. The court found that the decision to allow students to separate and ascend a steep area without appropriate adult oversight constituted a breach of the school board’s duty of care.

Legal Proceedings

In this case, the court found the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) liable for negligence after Kevin Bain, a Grade 11 student with known cognitive and physical limitations, suffered a traumatic brain injury after falling

from a rocky slope during the portion of the excursion where the teacher allowed a small unsupervised group of students to proceed ahead of the main group.

The central issue in the case was whether the school board and its staff met the legal standard of a “reasonable and prudent parent”. The court held that they did not. Given the known risks of the terrain and the student’s limitations, the lack of direct supervision and failure to enforce safety protocols amounted to negligence.

The court held that the CBE was directly liable, as the teacher was acting within the scope of their employment and the board was responsible for ensuring that reasonable precautions were taken to protect students on school-sanctioned trips. The decision emphasizes that school boards must foresee potential hazards and take proactive steps to prevent harm when organizing off-site educational activities.

This case is an important precedent in Canadian tort law concerning student safety, duty of care, and liability during extracurricular activities.

Case Overview: Ratt v. Tournier (2014, Saskatchewan QB)

“The plaintiff student engaged in text messaging in class in violation of the school policy which prohibited cell phone use during school hours. When the teacher asked him to hand the phone over, he turned his back to her, attempting to shield the phone from her view while continuing to text. After being asked again, he reluctantly handed the cell phone to the teacher. The teacher delivered the cell phone to Tournier, the Vice-Principal. Tournier asked the plaintiff about the incident and received an inconclusive response.

Tournier checked the cell phone, and saw the words, “we stole a car,” on the first screen, being the subject line of the text. He opened the text, and only that text, but there was no further comment. The plaintiff stated, and Tournier accepted, that he was not personally involved in the theft. Tournier contacted the police. The police officer asked the plaintiff to send a text message to Lloyd, the individual who sent the original text to him, to elicit more information about the crime, and Lloyd replied as to the location of the car. The police officer took the plaintiff

with him to find the car, and then brought him back to school (a deviation from police policy). The plaintiff sued Tournier and the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division for breach of privacy or negligence.

The court dismissed the action. In circumstances where the student was using the cell phone and texting messages in clear violation of school policy, the student could anticipate a reduced expectation of privacy.

Where the student’s behaviour was extremely out of the norm, as in this case, and the Vice-Principal established a reasonable basis for his concern for violence or threats to personal safety of a student or the general student body, an individual student’s right to privacy was lessened in order to allow the teachers and school administration to exercise their responsibilities for providing a safe environment and maintaining order and discipline in the school. The plaintiff’s claims failed.”

Privacy and Duty of Care

The circumstances of this case raise questions about whether the Vice-Principal’s review of the text messages constituted an unreasonable search or breach of privacy. School administrators will usually have authority to act when student safety is compromised. However, the necessity of accessing private messages may result in heightened scrutiny. In cases such as this, it is relevant to consider whether or not there was a duty of care owed, and if reasonable steps to protect students and the broader school community from potential harm were factors in the decision-making process.

Ultimately, the court concluded that no breach of privacy occurred under either the Education Act or The Privacy Act, finding that while students have some expectation of privacy in their cell phones, that expectation is diminished when they are in violation of clearly established school rules and/or codes of conduct. The Vice-Principal’s limited view of the message and phone contents was justified by legitimate safety concerns, and it was deemed that the school’s no-cell-phone policy was applied reasonably. Overall, the decision to protect student safety outweighed the privacy interests outlined in this case. This case highlights the significance of claims that can be made against school boards when administrators engage in activities that appear to go beyond the scope of their duties.

**Case Overview: H.N. v. School District No. 61
(Greater Victoria)
(2025, British Columbia Court of Appeal)**

A Grade 6 student was introduced to a volunteer tutor who met with him once a week at school. Early signs of grooming began during those school-based sessions, but the sexual abuse occurred later at the tutor's home during visits that were not arranged, authorized, or supervised by the school. The Court confirmed that these home visits were created entirely by the tutor, the child, and the child's parents, and not through any school-directed relationship.

The Court held that vicarious liability did not apply because the school's tutorial arrangements created only a limited opportunity, not a meaningful enhancement of risk. Vicarious liability requires a strong connection between the duties the employer assigns and the

wrongful act. The Court emphasized that the tutor's authorized role was narrow and did not involve parental-like authority, intimate caregiving, or control that could significantly increase the risk of abuse. Simply providing the tutor with an opportunity to interact with a student during short, supervised sessions was not enough to meet the strong-connection test required by the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court of Canada, discussed above.

This ruling is important for school administrators because it confirms that vicarious liability is not automatic, even when something as serious as grooming begins in a school setting. Liability arises only when a school's enterprise and expectations materially contribute to the harm. If an employee or volunteer exploits a situation in ways that fall outside of their authorized duties, the school board may not be responsible under vicarious liability. For administrators and school leaders, this

**“Enforce clearly written policies and ensure all staff
understand and apply them consistently.
Ignorance of policy is not a defence.”**



decision highlights the importance of clearly defining roles and boundaries, because courts will assess whether the employer truly created or intensified the risk that allowed the wrongful conduct to occur.

Takeaways from Case Studies

Negligence occurs when a school authority fails to meet the standard of care expected of a prudent and reasonable parent, resulting in foreseeable harm to a student.

Vicarious liability, by contrast, may result in a board of education being responsible for the negligent acts of its employees committed in the course of their duties, even when the board of education itself did not directly cause the harm.

Even when personal exposure to damages is remote, Principals and Vice-Principals may be named in claims or complaints of professional misconduct. The indemnification and insurance provisions may ensure defense and cost coverage of civil claims, absent gross negligence or other applicable exceptions, but being named still entails time, stress, and reputational harm. That reality makes documentation, early escalation of resourcing constraints, and consistent adherence to policy important risk controls.

These case studies highlight the critical need for proactive planning, strict adherence to safety protocols, and institutional accountability. Key takeaways include:

- **Risk Assessment:** Carefully assess high-risk activities. Factors such as weather, student ability, supervision levels, and emergency preparedness should be carefully reviewed.
- **Policy Compliance:** Enforce clearly written policies and ensure all staff understand and apply them consistently. Ignorance of a policy will not be a defence.
- **Supervision and Resources:** Ensure adequate staffing, training, and resources are appropriate to the activity's risk level.
- **Professional Judgment:** Understand boundaries within your duties and act in alignment with policies and administrative procedures. Seek

guidance when uncertain and escalate concerns to a supervisor when needed.

- **Balance Safety and Rights:** Weigh rights of students (such as privacy rights) against obligations to maintain a safe, orderly learning environment. Make informed decisions, while acting responsibly when concerns arise. Always seek support and guidance from your supervisor when unsure.

For Principals and Vice-Principals, this emphasizes the importance of strong oversight, informed decision-making, and continual review of risk management practices to protect students from harm.

Going Further: Additional Actions Educational Leaders Can Take

By taking some additional proactive measures, educational leaders can place themselves in the best possible position to mitigate risks related to vicarious liability, including:

1. **Know your Legal Rights and Responsibilities:** Familiarize yourself with any indemnity clauses in your contract of employment, and refer to sections 94 and 95 of the School Act, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 412, for more information on indemnity and liability.
2. **Ongoing Training:** Keep yourself and staff up to date on developments in educational law, including administrative procedures relating to safety and discrimination/harassment. Seek advice when needed.
3. **Review Insurance Coverage:** Make sure you understand what is covered under the Schools Protection Program (SPP), and what is not covered, and seek advice if needed.
4. **Cultivate a Culture of Accountability:** Ensure clear expectations for staff and regularly review practices to ensure they align with educational standards.

By enlisting proactive measures to educate yourself, educational leaders can significantly reduce the likelihood of claims against themselves or their employers.

Seeking Support

BCPVPA offers professional guidance for all active members, and can help with employment-related questions. For information, please contact mssinfo@bcvpva.bc.ca, and ask to speak to a Director, Member Support Services.

Disclaimer

The BCPVPA strives to provide helpful and timely information, guidance and support to its members. The information in this article is general information, is not legal advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for independent legal advice specifically tailored to a member's circumstances.

Definitions

Duty of Care as defined by *Thomson Reuters Practical Law Canada*

"A duty recognized by law to take reasonable care to avoid conduct that poses an unreasonable risk of harm to others."

Negligence as defined by *Black's Law Dictionary*

"The failure to exercise the standard of care that a reasonably prudent person would have exercised in a similar situation; conduct that falls below the legal standard established to protect others against unreasonable risk of harm, except for conduct that is intentionally, wantonly, or willfully disregarding of others' rights; the doing of what a reasonable and prudent person would not do under the particular circumstances, or the failure to do what such a person would do under the circumstances."

Standard of Care (In Tort Law) as defined by *Black's Law Dictionary*

"In the law of negligence, the degree of care that a reasonable person should exercise."

Tort as defined by *Black's Law Dictionary*

"A civil wrong, other than breach of contract, for which a remedy may be obtained, usu[ally] in the form of damages; a breach of a duty that the law imposes on persons who stand in a particular relation to one another."

Vicarious Liability as defined by *Black's Law Dictionary*

"Liability that a supervisory party (such as an employer) bears for the actionable conduct of a subordinate or associate (such as an employee) based on the relationship between the two parties.."

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1. British Columbia Schools Protection Program (SPP)

A self-insured program, that is delivered by the Risk Management Brand of the Ministry of Finance in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Child Care. Their mandate "is to provide professional risk management services for all BC public Schools (K-12)".

2. Manual of School Law

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

3. 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, set out the conduct and competence requirements for an individual to be issued and maintain a BC teaching certificate of qualification.

4. Teacher Regulation Branch

The BC Teacher Regulation branch is a body that regulates the actions and omissions of certificate holders in British Columbia.

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Learning

Peter Johnston

Director, Professional Learning and Development
BCPVPA

In the summer of 2021, when I left the Surrey School District and stepped into the role of Director of Professional Learning and Development for the BCPVPA, I brought with me more than two decades as a Principal. I knew how to run staff meetings, engage a gym full of families, and speak to a whole school community. I would have told you I was a good teacher before that, a good coach, and a Principal who could present confidently in front of staff, students, and parents.

But I would not have called myself a *professional* coach, presenter, or facilitator, even though I had previously worked with Franklin Covey for four-and-a-half years as a casual facilitator, and later as Director and full-time Director of North American Markets (Marketing).

With those aspects of the role, I was more like a new teacher, Vice-Principal or Principal in their first few years. You are doing the work, learning as you go, and doing a good job, but you are still finding your way. Most of us only start to feel we really understand the depth of the role and all its elements in year four or five.

It has been the same with my current role of Director of Professional Learning & Development.

Over the past four years here, I have been on my own intentional learning journey. Alongside developing programs for our 2,700 members, I have been quietly doing my homework: studying, practicing, and investing in my own growth so that I can serve educational leaders in British Columbia at a different level.

Recently, that journey took a leap forward through the number-one global executive leadership training organization, **Maxwell Leadership**. Experiencing this training has fundamentally shifted how I see myself as a leader, and how I design and deliver professional learning for you.

GROW Yourself TO GROW Others

By the time you read this in May, I will be a Certified John Maxwell, Coach, Presenter, and Facilitator, and able to bring Maxwell's executive leadership content directly to you through BCPVPA programs. Beginning as early as August 2026, and throughout the 2026–2027 school year, we will offer a range of John Maxwell executive leadership workshops — including *The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth* — tailored for BC's Principals and Vice-Principals.

Today, I'm comfortable saying I am a professional learning architect and facilitator for BC's educational leaders, and I am still very much a work in progress.

"Growth Doesn't Just Happen"

One of the central concepts in Maxwell's work is the Law of Intentionality: growth doesn't just happen.

As Principals and Vice-Principals, you know what it feels like to live in the whirlwind. You are managing complex human systems, responding to crises, supporting staff, communicating with families, and trying to keep everything moving forward for students. In taking care of everything else, it is easy for your own growth to slip to the bottom of the list.

*Already Good,
Still Growing:
The Power of
Intentional Practice*



You might think, as I did for years, “*I’m learning as I go; I’m growing just by doing the work.*” That is what Maxwell calls a growth gap trap — in my case, the **Assumption Gap**: the belief that you will automatically grow just because time is passing and experiences are piling up.

The truth is, growth doesn’t just happen.

If we want to get fit, we know we can’t simply “think” ourselves into better health. We have to be disciplined. We schedule the workouts. We show up on the days we don’t feel like it. We follow a plan. We revise that plan. We rest and recover. Over time, we get physically stronger. It would be the same process for a musician, or a chess master: practice, practice, practice.

Professional learning is no different.

To grow as a leader — especially in a role as demanding as Principal or Vice-Principal — you need intentional, structured, and ongoing development. And that means carving out time, choosing your learning opportunities wisely, and committing to doing the work between sessions.

“Know Yourself To Grow Yourself”

Two other Maxwell principles have become foundational for me:

- **The Law of Awareness** – You must know yourself to grow yourself
- **The Law of the Mirror** – You must see value in yourself to add value to others

These resonate deeply with my own story. I often share that back in grade school I was diagnosed with a moderate to severe level of dyslexia and spent much of my K–12 school career in the Learning Resource Room. That experience shaped my leadership in powerful ways. I never assumed I was the smartest person in the room. I learned early to seek out the perspectives of others, to listen carefully, to ask for help, and to create space for different voices.

It also gave me a deep empathy and compassion for students who have neurodivergences and learn differently, and for the families and staff who support them.

Maxwell’s language helped me put words to something many school leaders quietly feel: **you can’t sustainably pour into others if you’re not also investing in yourself.** If we want to add value to staff, students, and families in increasingly diverse and complex school communities, we have to see our own growth as non-negotiable.

That is what I mean when I say, “Grow yourself to grow others.” If we want to cultivate healthy learning environments for staff and students, we need to be healthy learning leaders. If we want our teams to be reflective, compassionate, and strategic, we need to model reflection, compassion, and strategic thinking ourselves.

Honing The Craft: Learning What Professionals Do Consistently

Last fall I facilitated a two-and-a-half-day Destination Learning experience focused on *Multipliers*, which is about building the capacity of others. It wasn’t that I suddenly experienced a shift for this one session. I have always cared deeply about doing high-quality work for members, and have always prepared thoughtfully for workshops, conferences, and webcasts.

What has changed over these four years — especially through my Maxwell Leadership training — is that my preparation has become **more focused, more consistent, and more intentional.**

In the past, much of what I did as a facilitator was based on instinct and experience: I knew how to read a room, tell a story, build in discussion, and adjust on the fly. Maxwell has helped me *name* what I was already doing and given me a clearer sense of what professional facilitators do *every time*, not just when they have the extra bandwidth.

Now, when I prepare for a session, I still do all the things I have always done, but I also lean on multiple, complex physical checklists and layers of editing to keep the experience as tight and engaging as possible. At the heart of that work, I run a detailed checklist that guides everything that I design for your learning. Whether we are in person or online I ask myself:

- *Have I designed time to learn, time to talk, time to reflect, and time to connect?*
- *Am I, in what and how I am facilitating, adding value to you?*

While previous sessions never lacked preparation, my preparation is now more **deliberate** and **repeatable**. I am still honing these developing skills, and I expect to keep refining them. But I feel more confident that, each time we are together, I am drawing on a professional process that helps me make the very best use of your time.

The participant feedback from that Destination Learning session confirmed that this intentionality was felt:

- One colleague shared that the workshop, *“felt like a meaningful pause in time to reflect and regain purpose... Working with PVP colleagues is fulfilling and important.”*
- Another said, *“I did really like pulling in some from John Maxwell. Having time to talk with someone was great — mix of table partner, groups in the session and the walk and talks.”*
- A third arrived as a self-described “wallflower” who would rather observe than engage, but went on to say that the intimate conference format and numerous conversations, *“pushed me out of my comfort zone a bit to interact,”* and that they *“loved the format and numerous great conversations that were had.”*

Those comments told me that the preparation was working. The intentionality we were exploring together in the content was also embedded in the way the learning was designed and facilitated.

What Makes BCPVPA Learning Different?

Over the past four years, we have listened carefully to what members say they need from professional learning. You have told us clearly that you want:

- **Critical learning** you can immediately apply in your context
- **Time to connect** with other school leaders who understand your reality

- **Space to reflect** on your own leadership and well-being

We have built that into every program.

Our Destination Learning experiences, in particular, are designed as a blend of wellness, rejuvenation, critical learning, and deep reflection. The resort settings are not an indulgence — they are part of creating an environment where school leaders can step away from their daily whirlwind, breathe, and think more clearly about who they are and who they are becoming as leaders.

Other offerings focus on time management, leadership competencies, and emerging practices. In the months ahead, we will be introducing *The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth* and other John Maxwell executive leadership programs in formats that work for BC school leaders — both in-person and online, and, starting as early as August, as part of our 2026–2027 PLD year.

“To grow as a leader — especially in a role as demanding as Principal or Vice-Principal — you need intentional, structured, and ongoing development.”



Across all of these programs, I am now deliberately applying Maxwell's coaching and speaking principles:

- using **variety** to keep sessions engaging
- balancing **pacing** so we have both energy and space to think
- building in frequent **interaction** rather than long stretches of "sit and get"
- using **stories** from real schools to connect concepts to your daily leadership

My goal is simple: that you experience learning that is professional-grade, engaging, and practical, and that you leave feeling both supported and challenged to keep growing.

"If we want to cultivate healthy learning environments for staff and students, we need to be healthy learning leaders. If we want our teams to be reflective, compassionate, and strategic, we need to model reflection, compassion, and strategic thinking ourselves."

"

Learning It So It Fits Your World

Behind every workshop or retreat you attend, there is a lot of learning happening on my side of the desk.

When new content arrives — whether it's a Maxwell resource, a leadership framework, or a new idea about systems thinking or time management — I don't just ask, *"Is this interesting?"*, I ask, *"How will this land in a busy elementary school on a Thursday afternoon?"* or *"What would this look like for a secondary VP who just came out of a complex student incident?"*

As I am working through books, workbooks, videos, and facilitator guides, I am constantly scribbling questions in the margins:

- *How does this honour the diversity of our BC schools?*
- *What does this mean for a rural Principal with a small staff?*
- *How will this support leaders who are tired, but still deeply committed to kids and communities?*

The content we bring forward is never "off the shelf." It is shaped by what we hear from you in your districts, what you share in circles and feedback forms, and what you tell us you need to keep growing as educational leaders.

I feel genuinely blessed and honoured to serve you in this way. I do not take your trust — or your time away from your schools and families — lightly. It is a privilege to listen to your stories, to learn alongside you, and to share the leadership knowledge and tools that others have poured into me over the years.

Professional-Grade Learning At A Fraction Of The Cost

Let me be very direct about value.

If you or your district were to purchase equivalent executive leadership training from a private provider — including John Maxwell-branded content — you would likely be paying a minimum of \$3,600 per person, plus travel and accommodation for facilitator costs.

At the BCPVPA, our mission is to support BC's school leaders, not to maximize profit.

When we offer Maxwell-based programs, you receive the same leadership models, the same high-quality workbooks and participant guides, and the same core content at a fraction of that cost. Your fees cover our speaker costs and participant guides, and help with our travel and accommodations. BCPVPA PLD aligns with the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan goal “Principals and Vice-Principals have access to the learning opportunities and programs needed to build their leadership capacity”, but we are not charging corporate executive-training prices to do that.

In other words, when you invest your hard-earned PLD funds with us, you are getting executive-level training that is:

- specifically tailored to **BC public education**
- facilitated by someone who has **lived the role** for more than 20 years
- intentionally designed using **professional coaching, presenting, and training standards and certification**

For districts and Chapters, we can also come to you, bringing your whole Chapter together to learn and connect in a safe, supportive space. That is happening in more and more districts, and the feedback we receive is that it strengthens both practice and community among leaders.

Always A “Glorious, Infinite Work In Progress”

One of the Maxwell concepts I appreciate is the notion that we are all works in progress — never finished, always learning. That language feels right to me.

I spend a lot of my time:

- listening to leadership podcasts
- reading and listening to books on leadership
- talking with school leaders across the province about what they are grappling with
- looking at my own practice through a leadership lens

I am constantly asking questions like:

- *What tools do Principals and Vice-Principals actually need right now?*
- *Where are they feeling stuck, exhausted, or alone?*
- *How can professional learning be both rigorous and humane — something that renews our members rather than drains them further?*

I don't see myself as “having arrived”. I see myself as someone who is deeply **committed to growing** so that I can better **support your growth** — and I am very grateful that you allow me to walk alongside you in that journey.

An Invitation To Intentional Growth

If there are three things I hope you take from this article, they are:

1. **Your Growth Matters.**

In the rush of daily school life, it is easy to postpone your own learning. But if you want to grow your staff, your students, and your community, you must also keep growing yourself — intentionally, not accidentally.

2. **Your PLD Dollars Deserve Maximum Value.**

If your professional learning funds are limited, know that BCPVPA programs are designed to give you professional-grade, executive-level learning at a fraction of the private-sector cost, grounded in the reality of BC schools.

3. **You Don't Have To Do This Alone.**

Whether you join a Destination Learning retreat, a time management or leadership development series, an upcoming John Maxwell executive leadership workshop, or invite us to work with your whole Chapter, we will meet you where you are in your career and help you take your next step.

My encouragement is simple:

Keep looking for your next professional learning opportunity — one that stretches you, supports you, and reminds you that you, too, are worth investing in.

Because when you **grow yourself**, you really do **grow others**.

learning

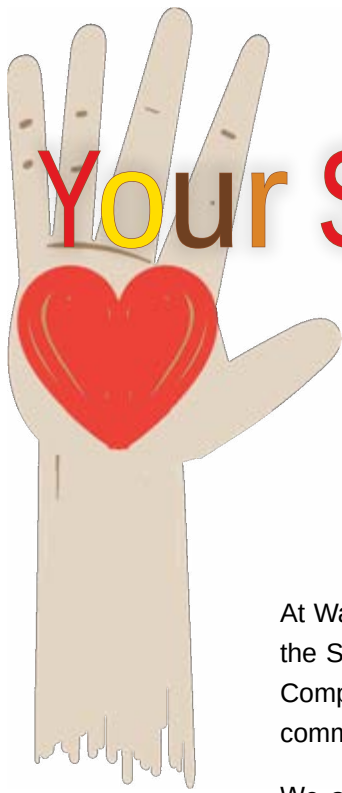
**The BCPVPA is all about people, and
ensuring that our members are successful
and supported in the important work they do.**

Our Professional Learning & Development team
creates and delivers relevant professional learning
and development opportunities to BCPVPA
members, programming based on member input and
consultation.



The BCPVPA supports more than 2,700 Principals
and Vice-Principals in BC's public education system.
bcpvpa.org

bcp  vpa



Your Stories: Anti-Racism

A Journey Towards an Anti-Racism and Intercultural Competency Framework

David Johnson

Vice-Principal

SD 23 (Central Okanagan)

At Watson Road Elementary School, where learning happens on the traditional unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) People, we have been building a culture where Anti-Racism and Intercultural Competency is a key learning priority and core principle of how we see ourselves as a school community.

We are in the fifth year of our journey of learning, acting, and building capacity so that our staff, students, and parents have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to respond to incidents where racism, prejudice, and/or discrimination are at the core. In this follow-up to my November 2023 *Principl(ed)* article, I share some of the actions we have undertaken that can be woven into the work of other BC schools as they journey towards being anti-racist learning communities.

EQUITY TEAM

We have a team of lead learners who gather regularly to participate in learning activities and discuss the direction of our anti-racism work.

BOOK STUDIES

Our staff participates in voluntary book studies each year. Our last book was *The Anti-Racist Kid* by Tiffany Jewell and Nicole Miles, and in spring 2026 we will study *Teaching with Equity – Strategies and Resources for Building a Culturally Responsive Classroom* by Aja Hannah. We have also done several book studies to establish core learning around inclusion and trauma-informed practice.

CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS

All classrooms have had presentations on equity, Reconciliation, the history of racism, what racism looks like, examples of micro-aggressions, and how to be an ally.

ASSEMBLY SERIES

Primary and Intermediate students participated in an assembly series where they learned about belonging, diversity, inclusion, racism, and intercultural competency.

ELL CELEBRATION

Our ELL (English Language Learning) teacher welcomed our ELL families to an event where their children showcased their learning about Canada and Canadian culture, and highlighted how their own cultural backgrounds contribute to our learning community.

BULLETIN BOARDS

Our ELL teacher, Indigenous Student Advocate, and classroom teachers highlight our cultural diversity through monthly bulletin boards. Students throughout the school love learning more about their classmates through these culturally rich visual displays.

STAFF MEETINGS

Our staff learning is continually revisited during staff meetings.

IMPLEMENTATION DAY LEARNING

We have dedicated staff development days that focus on trauma-informed practice, cultural safety, and anti-racism training.

RECONCILIATION AND ORANGE SHIRT DAY PROJECTS

Teacher leaders and our Indigenous Student Advocate lead school-wide activities to honour Truth and Reconciliation throughout the school year. ReconciliACTION is embedded in our school's culture.

GUIDING DOCUMENTS

Our staff is grounded through provincial documents – Anti-Racism: A Guide for Teachers; Racial Equity Together - K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan; and, Racism Response Guidelines – and through our local Equity in Action for Truth and Reconciliation Agreement with local Indigenous partners. Author and educator Jo Chrona's graphic, "Becoming Anti-Racist in Canada" is an image that we revisit frequently to reflect on our own journey.

STUDENT LEADERS

Some of our IBPOC student leaders lead during our assembly series, and present to our primary classrooms about belonging, fairness, and anti-racism. Administration also meets each term with Student Advisory Reps (STARS) to get insights into the student experience at our school. We ensure that our IBPOC students have a voice in each STARS conversation.

STUDENT LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Students at all grade levels have delivered personalized land acknowledgements during our morning announcements. Daily land acknowledgements are part of our morning greeting to students, staff, and guests.

CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

Classroom teachers invite their students' families to share their culture with the class.

EQUITY AUDITS

Staff teams completed a walk-through of our school using an Equity Audit tool to find any gaps in how we deliver the most culturally safe learning environment possible.

CODE OF CONDUCT LANGUAGE

This has been embedded to support the response to incidents of racism, prejudice, and discrimination.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

In addition to hosting a parent roundtable, we have invited our PAC to participate in staff anti-racism and DEI training. We also engage our parent community through monthly newsletters where topics related to cultural safety and anti-racism are highlighted.



A key factor in the learning is teaching students and staff about the “why”, and the “*why it is important*”.

Our school community has learned that it is not enough to just have events, but to understand the impetus for the events. When we talk about Orange Shirt Day, our students know that Orange Shirt Day is a recognition of the systemic racism of residential schools and Indigenous-specific racism in our society. When we talk about Black History Month, we don’t limit the conversation to one month, but instead talk all year about why Black History Month is honoured.

Walking an anti-racism journey is just that – a journey. We have the privilege of having a committed staff who believe in this important work, and who are committed to the self-reflection required to look through another lens. When we reflect on this work as a journey, we don’t work towards an end date. Rather, we experience a continual arc of learning and action.

*DO YOU HAVE YOUR OWN STORY TO TELL ABOUT
ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVES IN YOUR SCHOOL?*

*HOW DO YOU ENSURE THAT EVERYONE IN YOUR
LEARNING COMMUNITY FEELS A SENSE OF BELONGING?*

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU:

REACH OUT TO SANDRA@BCPVPA.BC.CA



BEYOND ALGORITHMS

Our Journey Toward Building Mathematical Thinkers

Justin Green

*District Vice-Principal
SD 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith)*

When artificial intelligence began solving math problems in seconds — showing steps, explaining reasoning, and performing with perfect accuracy — it forced those of us in Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (NLPS) to confront a quiet truth we could no longer ignore:

*If mathematics education is defined by procedural answer getting,
AI can now do much of it better than humans.*

What AI exposed wasn't a crisis. It was an invitation — an opportunity to rethink what we want math learning to be.

For decades, many of our classrooms mirrored the way we ourselves learned: carefully following steps, memorizing procedures, identifying the right formula for the right type of problem. But as AI grew more capable, we could no longer pretend that procedural fluency alone would prepare students for a world where machines execute algorithms effortlessly.

And so, we found ourselves asking a new — and fundamental — question:

*If AI can perform the calculations,
what does it truly mean to think mathematically?*

That question became the starting point of an exploration that continues to reshape our classrooms, our professional learning, and even our identities as educators.

A Turning Point: When “Which Formula Do I Use?” Reveals More Than We Realized

The earliest signs that something needed to change weren't dramatic — they were subtle, repetitive moments. A problem would appear on the board, and before thinking about the numbers or the situation, students asked:

“Which formula do I use?”
“What’s the rule for this one again?”

Their impulse wasn’t to make sense of the problem. Instead, they tried to recall the matching steps.

It wasn’t their fault. We had conditioned them to search for the right procedure.

Phil Daro’s well known distinction echoed in our minds: math class cannot be about answer getting. Answer getting may produce correct results, but it rarely produces thinkers. And in a world where technology answers faster and more accurately than we ever could, our mission needed to be deeper.

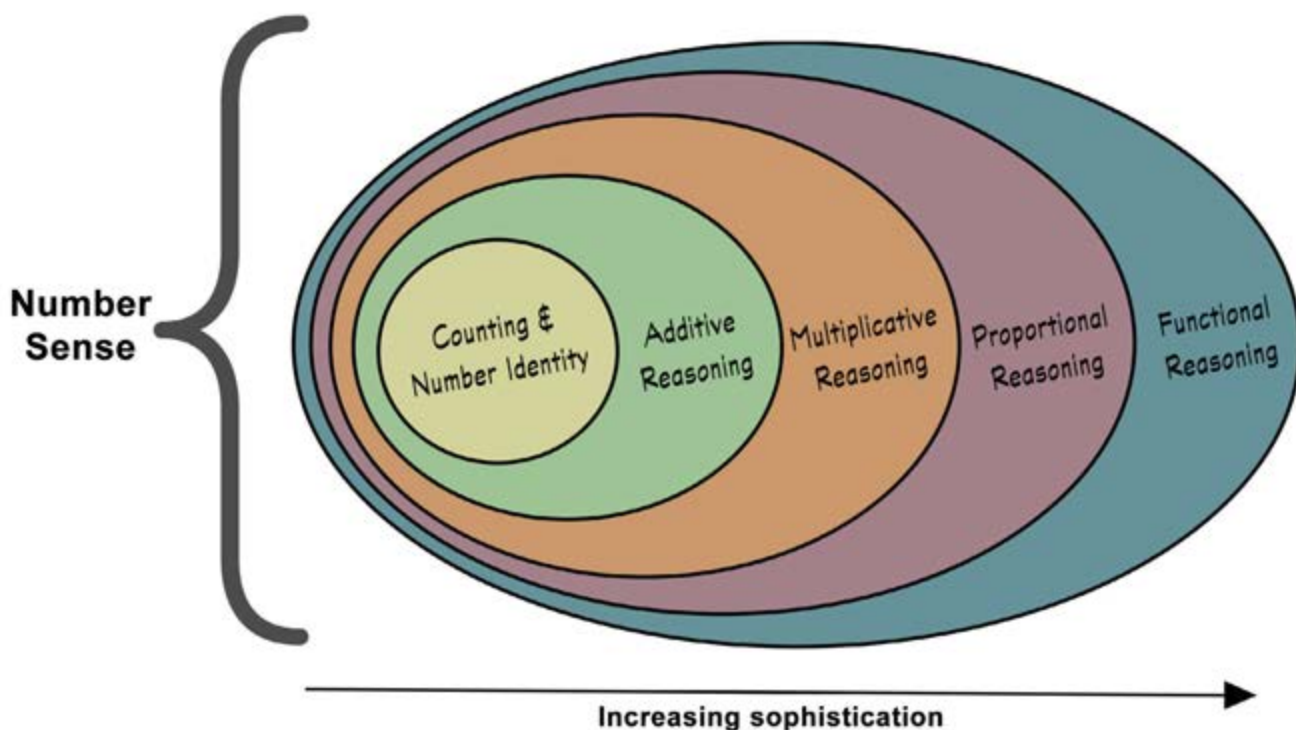
When we embraced this truth, something shifted. Instead of asking how to teach students to compute faster or follow steps more efficiently, we began asking:

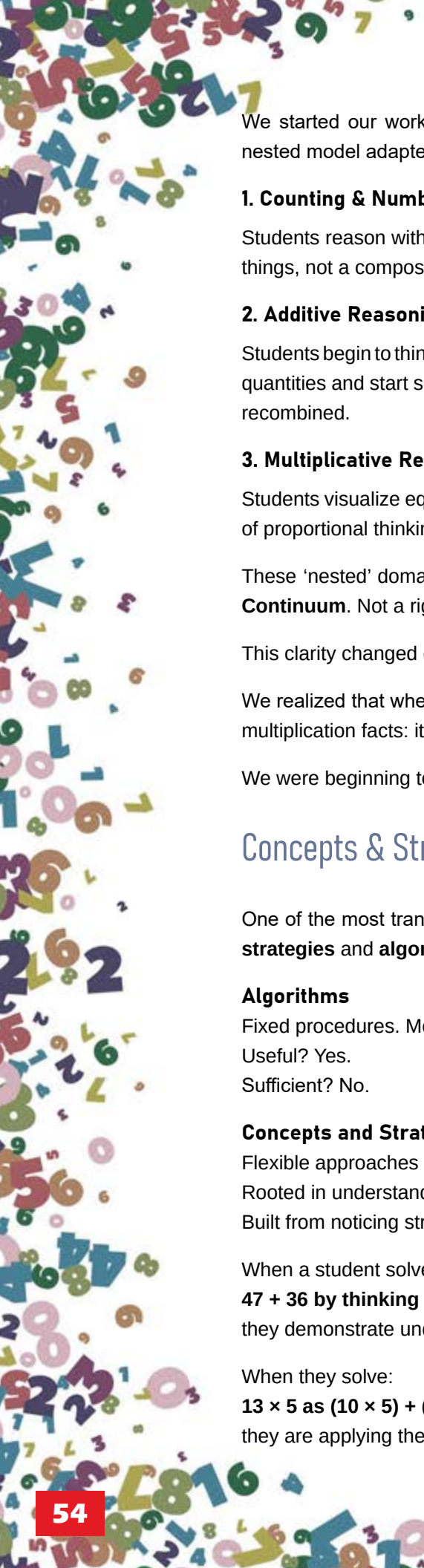
How do we help them think? Reason? Notice patterns? See structure? Understand?

Seeing Mathematics Through New Eyes

Our search for clarity led us to the work of Pam Harris and Peter Liljedahl. Their research didn’t simply provide new ideas — it offered a new way of seeing students’ mathematical development.

Domains of Mathematical Reasoning





We started our work in NLPS focused on the first three domains of mathematical reasoning in this nested model adapted from the work of Pam Harris:

1. Counting & Number Identity

Students reason with individual items. Their thinking moves in ones. Ten is understood as ten separate things, not a composed unit.

2. Additive Reasoning

Students begin to think in sets. They make jumps larger than one. They understand numbers as composed quantities and start seeing relationships: how far apart numbers are, how they can be decomposed and recombined.

3. Multiplicative Reasoning

Students visualize equal groups and arrays. They begin attending to two dimensions at once. The seeds of proportional thinking — and eventually functional reasoning — take root here.

These ‘nested’ domains became the backbone of what would eventually become our **K–5 Numeracy Continuum**. Not a rigid checklist. Not a remedial tool. But a way of making students’ thinking visible.

This clarity changed everything.

We realized that when a student solves 13×5 by counting by fives on their fingers, the issue isn’t their multiplication facts: it’s that they are still reasoning additively.

We were beginning to see what students understood, rather than what they remembered.

Concepts & Strategies Over Steps: The Heart of Mathematical Thinking

One of the most transformative shifts for us was understanding the difference between **concepts and strategies** and **algorithms**.

Algorithms

Fixed procedures. Memorized steps. Little thinking required.

Useful? Yes.

Sufficient? No.

Concepts and Strategies

Flexible approaches grounded in relationships.

Rooted in understanding.

Built from noticing structure, not remembering steps.

When a student solves:

$47 + 36$ by thinking “ $50 + 33$ ”

they demonstrate understanding of number relationships, not a memorized trick.

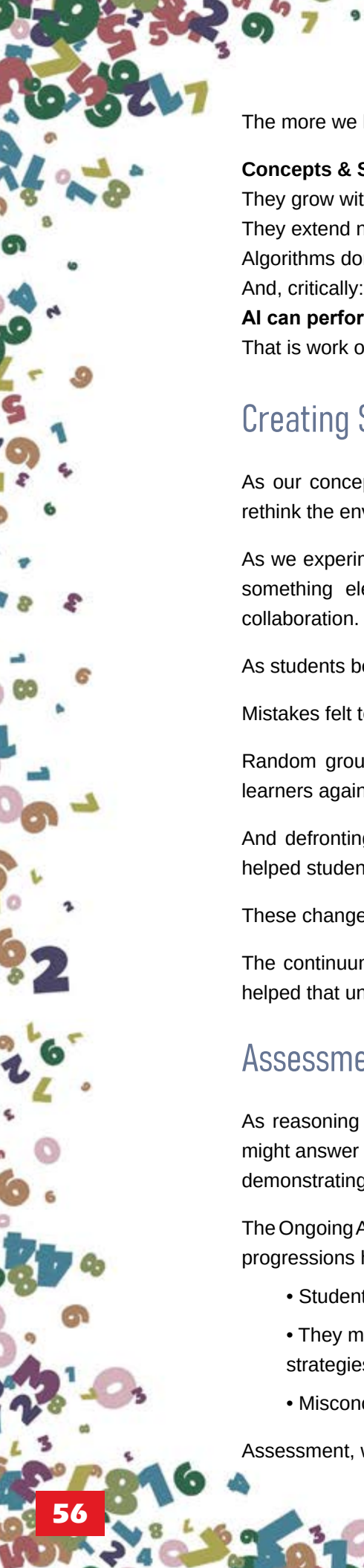
When they solve:

13×5 as $(10 \times 5) + (3 \times 5)$

they are applying the distributive property, often without knowing its formal name.

“Students visualize equal groups and arrays. They begin attending to two dimensions at once. The seeds of proportional thinking — and eventually functional reasoning — take root here.”





The more we leaned into concepts and strategies, the more we realized something important:

Concepts & Strategies scale.

They grow with the learner.

They extend naturally into decimals, fractions, functional reasoning, and beyond.

Algorithms don't.

And, critically:

AI can perform algorithms effortlessly, but it cannot build understanding.

That is work only humans can do.

Creating Spaces Where Thinking Can Emerge

As our conceptual understanding grew, Liljedahl's "Thinking Classroom" practices helped us rethink the environment where reasoning develops.

As we experimented with students standing at vertical whiteboards instead of sitting at desks, something electric happened. The classroom shifted, from silent compliance to buzzing collaboration.

As students became more comfortable: They leaned in. They shared ideas. They took risks.

Mistakes felt temporary when they could be erased with a swipe of a hand.

Random grouping reshaped identities. Students who were used to being "helpers" became learners again. Those who had long been quiet found their voice in a small group of peers.

And defronting — the teacher moving away from demonstrating procedures at the board — helped students see that math isn't something shown to you. It's something you do.

These changes didn't just create engagement. They created **conditions for thinking**.

The continuum helped us know what understanding to look for; thinking classroom practices helped that understanding take root.

Assessment as a Window Into Thought

As reasoning took center stage, traditional assessments began to feel too narrow. A student might answer correctly while relying on fragile counting strategies, or answer incorrectly despite demonstrating strong reasoning blurred by a small error.

The Ongoing Assessment Project (OGAP) became a powerful guide here. OGAP's developmental progressions helped us recognize:

- Students don't develop reasoning linearly.
- They may show multiplicative thinking with small numbers but revert to additive strategies with larger ones.
- Misconceptions are not failures: they're roadmaps.

Assessment, we realized, should not sort students.

It should reveal their thinking.

This shift has influenced how we are looking to design assessments in NLPS:

- More open tasks
- More justification
- More analysis of student work
- More focus on evidence rather than correctness

The goal has become simple:

Make students' reasoning visible so we know how to support their next step.

Professional Learning as a Journey, Not a Workshop

If we are asking students to rethink math, teachers have to as well.

Many educators carry their own math stories — some marked by success, others by anxiety or even trauma. We cannot simply hand them new strategies and expect transformation.

The Responsive Math Teaching (RMT) model has guided us to what we think of as a more humane approach:

Phase 1 — EXPERIENCE

Teachers first experience math as thinkers themselves.

They grapple with reasoning tasks.

They feel what students feel.

They rediscover mathematics as sense making.

Phase 2 — TEACH

Teachers bring these practices to their classrooms: experimenting, observing, adjusting.

They share student work with colleagues, reflect together, and refine their instruction.

Phase 3 — LEAD

Some teachers begin facilitating learning with peers, not as experts, but as co-learners guiding the journey.

This model allows us to acknowledge a truth:

Instructional change is emotional long before it is technical.

Leadership in the Midst of Transformation

Leading this work required a deep shift in how we see our own roles.

We are not here to dictate change.

We are here to walk through it with teachers.

Drawing on Dr. Becky Kennedy's concept of **The Learning Space**, we recognize that people grow best when:

- struggle is normalized
- support is present

- 
- uncertainty is safe, and
 - identity is honoured

We are learning to say things like:

“I’m still figuring out the difference between additive and multiplicative reasoning myself.”

And, magically, teachers are beginning to lean in.
Because if leaders can learn out loud, they can too.

We are also learning to honor the emotions tied to this transformation. For some teachers, letting go of familiar practices feels like loss. Their expertise had been built on traditional methods, and the shift toward reasoning challenges their sense of competence.

Our role is not to push harder.

It is to accompany.

To notice.

To listen.

To celebrate.

To ask:

“What are you wondering about right now?”

Making Space for Coherence and Momentum

As this work unfolds across our district, we have noticed some patterns in what has supported our push forward:

- Targeted collaboration time
- Shared language around reasoning
- Common developmental frameworks
- Co-teaching opportunities
- Focus on a few high leverage concepts

And, perhaps most importantly:

Positioning ourselves as lead learners — not lead knowers.

Redefining What Fluency Means

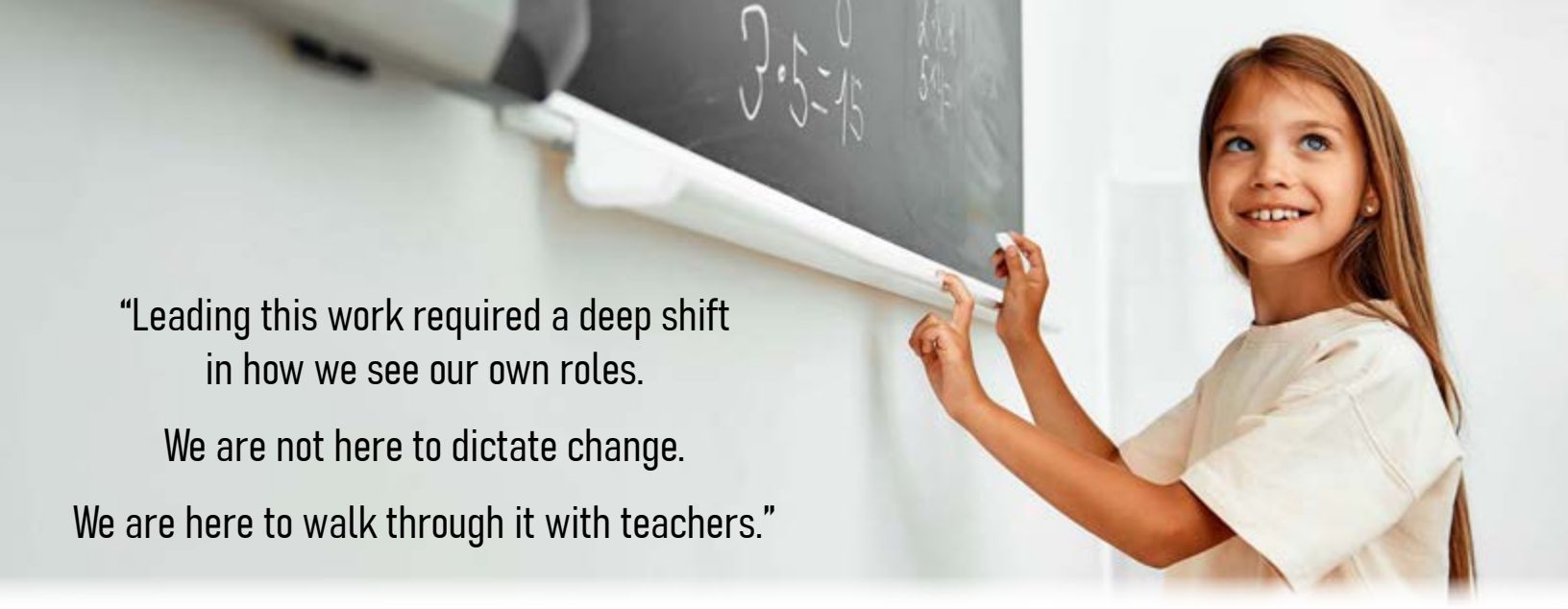
As our Numeracy Continuum matures, it is reshaping our beliefs about fluency.

Fluency has become **flexibility, efficiency, and reasoning** — working together, grounded in understanding.

Students don’t reach fluency by memorizing facts.

They reach it by:

- recognizing relationships
- decomposing and recomposing numbers
- choosing strategies that fit numbers



“Leading this work required a deep shift
in how we see our own roles.

We are not here to dictate change.

We are here to walk through it with teachers.”

- reasoning with models
- understanding structure

Fluency has become something **grown**, not *assigned*.

And, we fully acknowledge, it grows at different rates for all of our learners.

An Invitation to Continue the Exploration

One of the reasons we started this journey was because AI forces us to ask difficult questions about the purpose of mathematics education.

We continue it because we have glimpsed what is possible when classrooms become places of reasoning rather than answer getting:

- Students take intellectual risks.
- Teachers rediscover joy in mathematical thinking.
- Collaboration replaces compliance.
- Understanding replaces memorization.
- Mathematics becomes a living, human pursuit.

We don't have a blueprint.

We don't claim to know the “right” way.

We are learning: imperfectly, openly, together.

And now we extend an invitation:

If you are asking similar questions in your district, let's learn with one another.

Let's examine what reasoning looks like across contexts.

Let's build a community committed to developing mathematical thinkers, not answer getters.

Because in a world where algorithms are executed instantly by machines, perhaps the most important work we can do is help students become the kind of thinkers who can understand, evaluate, and extend what those machines produce.

This work would not have been possible without the contributions of Tannis Reis, NLPS Learning Coordinator – Numeracy. Tannis' collaborative spirit and her expertise in numeracy development were pivotal in guiding the creation of our Numeracy Continuum.

Well-being

Rochelle Morandini

*Director, Member Health & Well-being
BCPVPA*

Desjardins Financial Services (DFS) and the BCPVPA have developed a strong relationship that benefits school leaders in the K-12 sector. This relationship has resulted in:

- A disability plan that, despite the increase in “claims experience” – the number of claims received – runs smoothly with very little “noise” in the system.
- Stable rates resulting from our work together to keep benefit premiums sustainable.
- Valuable one-on-one resources that Plan participants and their families can access to support their health and well-being.

Background

The BCPVPA is the Plan Administrator of the short and long-term disability (STD/LTD) plans (the Plan) that provide benefits to approximately 4,000 Plan participants comprised of Principals, Vice-Principals, and all other exempt, non-union staff in BC’s public education sector. The Plan has been in place since 1988, and has evolved to support all school districts across British Columbia.

As part of the BCPVPA’s Plan stewardship, we work in partnership with our benefit consultants, HUB International, to facilitate regular disability plan marketings which are an important due diligence practice. The marketing process invites insurance carriers to bid on our Plan. This exercise enables us to learn and access new disability plan features and encourages competitive pricing.

DFS was first selected to be our insurer of choice during a 2021 marketing; DFS was again the successful proponent from our Fall 2025 marketing exercise, and we have entered another five year agreement. DFS was selected due to their demonstrated excellence in service delivery to our Plan participants, as well as for their competitive pricing.

A Valued Partnership Benefiting Educational Leaders



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No “Noise” in the System

I have worked with many disability insurance companies and their employer clients during my career. Disability plans which experience considerable “noise” tend to be characterized by higher rates, frustrated employers, and poor individual claim experiences. Noise can come in the form of many behaviours and outcomes, including:

- Slow claims processing resulting in tardy decisions and, ultimately, benefit payment delays to individuals
- Poor communication which can lead to negative outcomes and/or surprise decisions, leaving individuals and/or their employers in difficult positions
- Denied claims that result in increased stressors for individuals who are already coping with their challenging health condition(s), and on employers left to manage a complex leave
- Complaints regarding customer service, both from the employer and the individual claimants
- Ineffective return to work planning, which is difficult for all parties
- Legal action threatened against the insurance company

As the BCPVPA Director of Member Health and Well-Being, I work closely with DFS's claims specialists, vocational rehabilitation consultants, and leaders. Our team approach to claims administration encourages open communication regarding claims processing, timing, and information requirements; circumventing potential challenges; and troubleshooting when something goes awry.

Disability benefits are a form of insurance, and payouts from insurance are based on policy language that needs to be applied consistently. While there are times an individual's scenario may not meet policy requirements, we can often rectify the situation by clearly understanding what information is needed to make a fair and accurate decision upon appeal.

In the event there are service bumps, DFS meets with the BCPVPA to have open discussions about the source of any concerns, and creative ways to resolve any issues.



Both parties come to the table to focus on solutions rather than complaints. This results in better customer service for the BCPVPA and the participants of the Plan, and provides a supportive environment for the DFS team, as we position ourselves beside them in resolving any concerns.

This positive working relationship keeps claims processing timely, the decision processes clear and smooth, and fosters a better individual and district experience. This results in a disability benefits program that is “quiet” with very little “noise”.

Stabilizing Rates

Going to the market every five years also enables the BCPVPA to gather competitive quotes on disability rates. Rates are determined by many factors and, in particular, by claims experience. HUB International do a fantastic job of reviewing rates from different insurers who bid on our Plan, calculating what is reasonable, and ultimately negotiating on our behalf to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Our LTD claims experience has continued to increase the past few years, with a similar reality emerging across the education sector within other employee groups. This is likely a broader trend experienced by many employers over the past few years, regardless of whether they are in the public or private sector.

Desjardins values working with the BCPVPA and wanted to demonstrate their dedication and desire to maintain our business and relationship. In doing so, they provided very competitive pricing. As you may have noticed on your paycheque, your LTD payments were reduced, and this premium rate will be stable over the next five years. Given the recent increase in inflation, and the desire to keep more money in Plan participant's pockets, this is a welcome outcome from our marketing experience!

Plan participants and their loved ones have access to online and telephone services that support health and well-being.



Resources Available to LTD Plan Participants

Plan participants and their loved ones have access to online and telephone services that support health and well-being*.



DFS offers the **Health is Cool 360°** platform, powered by Novus Health. This is a one-stop source for up-to-date information to help you make informed health decisions. Health is Cool 360° is also a great way to discover the resources available in your community. Information includes:

- Location of healthcare professionals, clinics, and support groups in your area
- Resources on illnesses and medications
- Support on how to navigate our health system
- Connection with health coaches to help manage a variety of chronic conditions (see below)

DFS offers the **Health PACT (Prevention, Assistance and Counselling by Telephone)** program, found within the Health is Cool 360° platform. Health PACT includes a health risk self-assessment and personalized health coaching guidance by phone to help you manage various health concerns. A healthcare professional works with you to identify possible solutions and support you in your efforts to both improve your health and manage symptoms resulting from any of the following areas:

Mental Health and Wellness

Manager Assistance Program:
provides personalized assistance to people leaders/managers.



Health is Cool platform:
targeted prevention tools, including four mental health self-assessment questionnaires

Health PACT
provides personalized guidance and support with issues related to fertility, women's health, menopause, pregnancy.



Healthy Weight Focus



Health is Cool platform:
health evaluation questionnaire to identify risk factors

Health PACT
provides personalized guidance and support with Health promotion, including sleep, exercise, and diet.

Smoking Cessation (including cigarettes, vaping)

Health Promotions (including sleep, exercise, diet)

Chronic Illness Management (including diabetes, heart disease, chronic pain, sleep disorders, high cholesterol)

* Please note that while the Desjardins "Focus" websites (Mental Health Focus, Family Focus, Healthy Weight Focus, and Cancer Care Focus) contain a wealth of information and great educational resources, much of the coverage and many of the resources highlighted on these websites (drugs, practitioners, medical equipment) are applicable only under Desjardins' Extended Health Plans, and not the LTD plan. The extended health plan for Principals, Vice-Principals and Exempt employees is provided by Pacific Blue Cross.



Substance Use and Addictions (including alcohol, gambling, medication)

Partnership with EHN Canada: EHN provides both inpatient and outpatient treatment for substance use disorders, behavioural addictions, PTSD, depression and severe anxiety, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders. Desjardins members receive a 15% discount on all services.



Partnership with Prenato: Desjardins members get 3-month free access to Prenato's online support platform, discounts on prenatal screening tests, and discounts on prenatal classes and other support services.



Health PACT: provides personalized guidance and support with issues related to fertility, women's health, menopause, pregnancy.



Partnership with Constant Health: The program offers personalized support and guidance from a dedicated team of registered dietitians trained in both nutrition science and behaviour change. There is also a specialized Obesity Medication support program, to optimize medication efficacy, and reduce side effects. Desjardins members have access to preferred pricing for a comprehensive 15-week program.

Cancer Care Focus

Support for disability claimants through a new Extended Support claims team, a specialized team of claims specialists with expertise in handling claims related to serious illnesses, including cancer.



Partnership with OncoHelix: provider of advanced molecular and immune diagnostics with deep expertise in precision oncology. Desjardins members get 10% off genetic testing (prevention) and tumour testing.



Partnership with Sword Health's Thrive program: a virtual physiotherapy solution led by licensed physiotherapists to help reduce pain, rebuild strength, and address common side effects of cancer and its treatments, safely at home. For Desjardins members, up to \$120 is reimbursed by Sword Health.



Partnership with Constant Health: offers personalized, evidence-based nutrition support for individuals living with or recovering from cancer. This initiative empowers individuals to both better manage common treatment side effects such as nausea, appetite loss, constipation, diarrhea, and taste changes, and to assist them with treatment or stress-related weight gains or losses. Desjardins members get access to preferred pricing.



Some of the services above have an associated cost, including Prenato, EHN Canada, OncoHelix, Sword Health, and Constant Health. These expenses may be eligible for reimbursement through your Pacific Blue Cross Extended Health and Benefits plan, as services are provided by registered practitioners such as dietitians and physiotherapists.

A Relationship Benefitting All K-12 Leaders

The BCPVPA is proud to provide a “quiet” and competitively priced disability Plan for Principals and Vice-Principals and all exempt staff in BC’s K-12 public education sector. While it is a big responsibility, we believe that all Plan participants benefit from the efforts made to manage this Plan since the late 1980s.

We value the relationship with Desjardins, and we regularly receive positive feedback regarding the interaction claimants have with the DFS staff. A well run, serviced, and supportive disability plan is important for claimants who need these benefits at what can be one of the most challenging times in their career.

We hope that you will explore the other services and resources available at no cost to BCPVPALTD Plan participants. These resources may help you to learn about the prevention of disabling health conditions that could impact your employability, and the mitigation of emerging health conditions that may affect your quality of life.

As the Plan Administrator, I am here to answer any of your questions or provide guidance on how to navigate your disability benefits, regardless of whether you are a Vice-Principal, Principal, or exempt staff. Our objective is to ensure you have a good experience, and access the benefits that you are entitled to receive.

Ideally, you may never need to use the disability benefits, but the Plan is there for you, should you ever need it.

The BCPVPA is proud to be a member of the International Confederation of Principals, a global association of school leadership organizations that reaches out across four regions: Africa, The Americas, Asia & Oceania, and Europe.

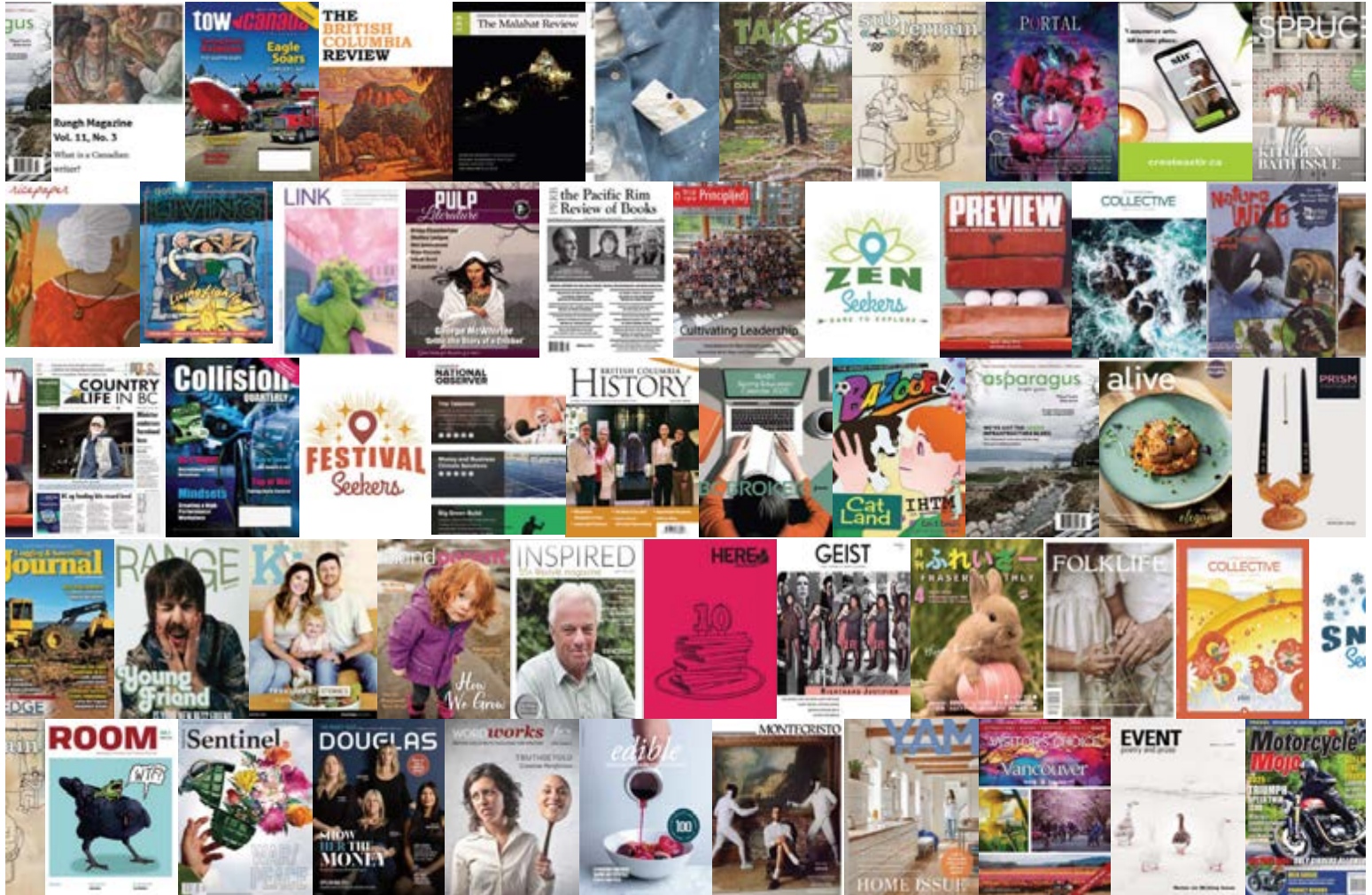
BCPVPA members are invited to join the ICP WhatsApp group to keep up to date on upcoming events. Find the link under Member News in My BCPVPA.

icponline.org



INTERNATIONAL
Confederation of Principals

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Everybody Deserves a Smile

8,500 sugar cookies, 2,500 EDAS bags decorated, 2,000 Christmas cards hand made.

31 shelters, soup kitchens, and support agencies reached, 20 of those in the Comox Valley.

9,000 donations.

Delivery to four shelters and one East Hastings back alley handout in Vancouver,
four agencies in Victoria, one in Duncan, one in Campbell River.

Unique indigenous packages for elders donated by Nala'atsi and Ecole Puntledge Park K/1 Indigenous program.

A district-wide collaboration led by Madame Chantal Stefan, the EDAS Club Teacher Team,
and the Grade 7 EDAS Club, alongside 22 participating school communities.

Host School: École Puntledge Park Elementary

Participating Schools

Arden Elementary School, Valley View Elementary School, École Robb Road, Queneesh Elementary School, Highland Secondary School, G.P. Vanier Secondary, Mark Isfeld Secondary, Huband Park Elementary, Navigate (NIDES) School, Brooklyn Elementary School, Cumberland Community School, Lake Trail Community School, Miracle Beach Elementary School, Phil & Jennie Gagliardi Academy, Nala'asti School, Airport Elementary School, Royston Elementary School, Aspen Elementary School, Courtenay Elementary School, Glacier View Secondary, Hornby Island Community School



Books

Carmen Eberle

Director, Member Support Services
BCPVPA

Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know by Adam Grant is a compelling and timely read.

In an era where educational leaders face increasing uncertainty, heightened accountability, and a stronger demand for reliability, this book offers an insightful exploration into how we think, make decisions, and lead. Grant challenges the status quo and highlights a key truth: with accelerated change comes the critical need to re-evaluate our approaches, beliefs, and biases.

"Define your identity in terms of values, not opinions"

One of the book's main messages is that we often "favour the need to feel right over being right", a mindset that can be risky in leadership. In today's complex decision-making environments, welcoming multiple perspectives and second opinions can be invaluable. Grant encourages us to think like scientists: to search for truth, test hypotheses, and embrace the possibility of being wrong.

"Seek out information that goes against your views"

Grant's writing style is both engaging and thought-provoking, with a subtle touch of humour. One notable example is his discussion of how people claim, "I'm not biased." Ironically, he points out, those who consider themselves scholarly can be especially prone to this mindset trap. Confidence in one's thinking can make it harder to recognize personal blind spots. As a result, ideas may solidify into ideologies, lacking a foundation based on evidence.

"Make time to think again"

Adam Grant is an organizational psychologist at The Wharton School, where he has been the top-rated professor for seven straight years. His books have sold millions of copies, his TED talks have been viewed more than thirty-five million times, and he hosts the hit podcast *Re:Thinking*. His pioneering research on motivation and meaning has enabled people to reach their aspirations and exceed others' expectations.

Throughout the book, Grant emphasizes the importance of open-mindedness and intellectual humility. However, he goes one step further, advocating for curiosity. The ability to remain curious and to seek out new views, entertain unfamiliar ideas, and consider alternative approaches can distinguish a good leader from a great one. As the saying goes, "Curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back." *Think Again* suggests that the risk of asking questions is well worth the reward.

"Don't shy away from constructive conflict"

For leaders, especially in education, this book offers practical strategies for rethinking and re-evaluating beliefs and behaviours. It inspires us to lean into uncertainty with curiosity, challenge our assumptions with data, and welcome dissent as an opportunity for growth.

"Build a Challenge Network, not just a support network"

If you are looking to expand your mindset, sharpen your decision-making, and foster a culture of learning and adaptability, *Think Again* is a must-read. By applying its strategies, leaders can make subtle but powerful shifts in their thinking, leading to more effective and fulfilling personal and professional outcomes.

"Have a conversation about the conversation"

Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know
By Adam Grant
Penguin Books, December 2023

The Million-Copy Bestseller

THINK AGAIN

'The right book
for right now'
Brené Brown

'Brilliant...
guaranteed to
make you rethink
your opinions'
Daniel Kahneman



ADAM GRANT

THE POWER OF KNOWING
WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW



The Last Word

Scott Robinson

Executive Director

BCPVPA

This past year, the BCPVPA has amplified our focus on new-to-role Principals and Vice-Principals, highlighting the challenges of those roles, offering supportive programs like the new Compass Leadership Academy pilot alongside our legacy Foundations for New School Leaders program, and sharing articles in *Principl(ed)* magazine that explore the joys and difficulties of the roles.

If we step back to the not-so-distant past, all these new-to-role Principals and Vice-Principals were excellent teachers. In some cases, their skill and suitability for leadership was recognized by existing educational leaders, and they were developed and encouraged to

pursue formal leadership roles. In many cases, it was the guidance of Principals and Vice-Principals that helped gifted teacher-leaders begin to envision themselves as Vice-Principals, and gave them the courage to consider applying for the role.

Across British Columbia, school districts are experiencing a growing and sustained challenge in recruiting Principals and Vice-Principals. Applicant pools are thinner, fewer teachers are stepping forward, and in some districts — particularly rural and remote areas — leadership vacancies are becoming increasingly difficult to fill. This is not simply a staffing issue. It is a sustainability issue in the system.

While district recruitment strategies and leadership programs are important, a powerful lever for strengthening the leadership pipeline sits squarely within the school community. Principals and Vice-Principals play a critical role in identifying leadership potential early, intentionally developing it, and unambiguously encouraging promising educators to consider leadership roles.



“Principals and Vice-Principals play a critical role in identifying leadership potential early, intentionally developing it, and unambiguously encouraging promising educators to consider leadership roles.”

SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP:

Growing the Next Generation of Educational Leaders in British Columbia

Strong leadership pipelines do not emerge by accident. They are grown through thoughtful conversations and encouragement that invite teachers to see themselves as educational leaders long before they may have considered that pathway for themselves.

In BC, many highly capable teachers never apply for Vice-Principal roles. This is not because they lack ability, but because they may lack encouragement, clarity, or confidence that the role is “for them”. Some are deterred by the perceived workload, the complexity of the role, or concerns about work-life balance. Others do not see themselves reflected in current leadership demographics or assume leadership is only for a particular “type” of educator.

In rural and remote districts, the issue is often compounded. Fewer staff, limited exposure to leadership roles, and geographic isolation can mean leadership potential goes unnoticed or undeclared.

When systems rely only on self-nomination for Vice-Principal and Principal roles, they may consistently lose capable future leaders — significant potential, unrecognized and gone without a sound.

Current Principals and Vice-Principals are uniquely positioned to disrupt this pattern. They see leadership capacity long before a posting is written, in how teachers handle complexity, respond to conflict, support vulnerable students, and influence colleagues without formal authority. Naming that potential matters.

Leadership readiness does not begin with managerial skill. It begins with values, judgment, and relationships. While leadership profiles will vary across contexts, several traits consistently signal future capacity:

- **Moral purpose:** A clear commitment to Reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion.
- **Relational trust:** Having the natural trust of students, families, and colleagues, particularly in challenging situations.
- **Sound judgment:** An understanding of nuance, confidentiality, and the importance of context when making decisions.
- **Systems awareness:** An ability to think beyond their own classroom and consider school-wide, district, or student-centred implications.
- **Emotional regulation and resilience:** An ability to remain grounded under pressure and recover when things do not go as planned.
- **Influence without authority:** An ability to lead initiatives, mentor colleagues, or bring people together without a formal title.

Importantly, leadership potential may be most visible during moments of tension — responding to parental concerns, navigating staff conflict, or supporting students with complex needs.

Encouragement without preparation can feel risky, for both the individual and the system. Aspiring leaders benefit most when development begins well before they apply for their next role. Current Principals and Vice-Principals can support this growth in realistic, sustainable ways:

- Create authentic leadership opportunities by inviting promising educators to lead school initiatives, chair meaningful committees, or coordinate programs with real responsibility and impact.
- Demystify the work of Principals and Vice-Principals by being open to sharing how decisions are made, including constraints related to policy,



“One of the most significant factors influencing a teacher’s pursuit of leadership is whether someone they respect has recognised their potential.”

legislation, collective agreements, and district direction.

- Mentor and coach by asking reflective questions, encouraging self-assessment, and helping individuals clarify their leadership values, in addition to sharing your own experiences and advice.
- Normalize complexity by being honest about the challenges of educational leadership, without portraying the role as unmanageable or joyless.

These experiences allow teachers to explore leadership in a grounded way while maintaining their professional identity and confidence.

One of the most significant factors influencing a teacher’s pursuit of leadership is whether someone they respect has recognised their potential. A simple, direct

statement — *“I think you would make a strong Vice-Principal or Principal”*—can be transformative.

It is sometimes difficult to know how and when to have the conversation with a teacher about their potential as a leader. It is crucial to offer effective encouragement, while being both intentional and specific:

- **Name what you observe:** “Your ability to navigate that complex parent situation showed strong judgment and empathy.”
- **Connect to impact:** “Staff already trust your leadership.”
- **Clarify pathways:** Explain district processes, timelines, and available supports.
- **Respect autonomy:** Communicate encouragement as an invitation, not as pressure.

- **Follow up:** Leadership interest often develops over time, not immediately.

Equitable encouragement matters. When educational leaders maintain the “status quo”, there can be an unintentional narrowing of the system’s leadership pipeline, resulting in limited diversity in school and district-based leadership. Look carefully for teachers who bring a variety of experiences and personal identities to the role. Representation matters, and students who see themselves reflected in their Principal or Vice-Principal receive a powerful message about belonging, opportunity, and possibility.

In BC’s public education system, leadership continuity and quality are foundational. Developing future Principals and Vice-Principals is not an add-on to the role; it is part of responsible educational leadership.

Your influence extends beyond your current school. It shapes who leads next, how prepared they are, and whether they step forward at all. So, I invite every one of our members to think about who on your staff might be an effective future Principal or Vice-Principal, and consider having a conversation with them. There are 2,700 of us: imagine if we all identified one future leader, supported their development, and encouraged them to apply for the role?

By intentionally identifying leadership potential, creating growth opportunities, and naming that potential out loud, Principals and Vice-Principals strengthen not only their own schools, but the broader system we collectively steward. If we want strong school leadership tomorrow, we must grow it today — deliberately, equitably, and with care.

“In BC’s public education system, leadership continuity and quality are foundational. Developing future Principals and Vice-Principals is not an add-on to the role; it is part of responsible educational leadership.”



bcp vpa

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

for BC Principals and Vice-Principals

