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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



Compass facilitated table groups created lasting bonds and helped shape inquiry on a wide range of topics.