

Principl(ed)

VOL. 3 - ISSUE 1 - November 2021

President's
Perspective

Re-imagining
the 3 R's

Thriving
in Education

A Day in the Life

of a
Secondary
Principal

Aaron Akune talks about
student leadership and
building a safe and
caring culture in your
school community.



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The Journal of the BC Principals'
& Vice-Principals' Association



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"It was remarkable to see how certain kids and certain staff thrived under one Principal or the other; it really shows the influence of leadership. The other great thing for me at that school was the opportunity to grow and learn with a cohort of students from grade eight to graduation as their Vice-Principal. For some kids, you are the constant: you know them, they know you, and what you're about."

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"My job is about people: the people that work hard every single day to make the K-12 sector the best education system possible. It is about people whose dedication to student success is truly inspiring."

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"In an unprecedented school year, where elementary school parents were rarely seen inside of the school building because of pandemic restrictions, our PAC flourished. I attribute that largely to Lee's positive and purposeful leadership style, his focus on gratitude, and his ability to delegate responsibilities to others while still providing support."

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"The analogy of a lighthouse is fitting to the role played by Principals and Vice-Principals during the 2020-2021 school year. Our members may have felt isolated at times, but stood true and held the foundation for staff, students, and parents."

Thriving in Education



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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 2600 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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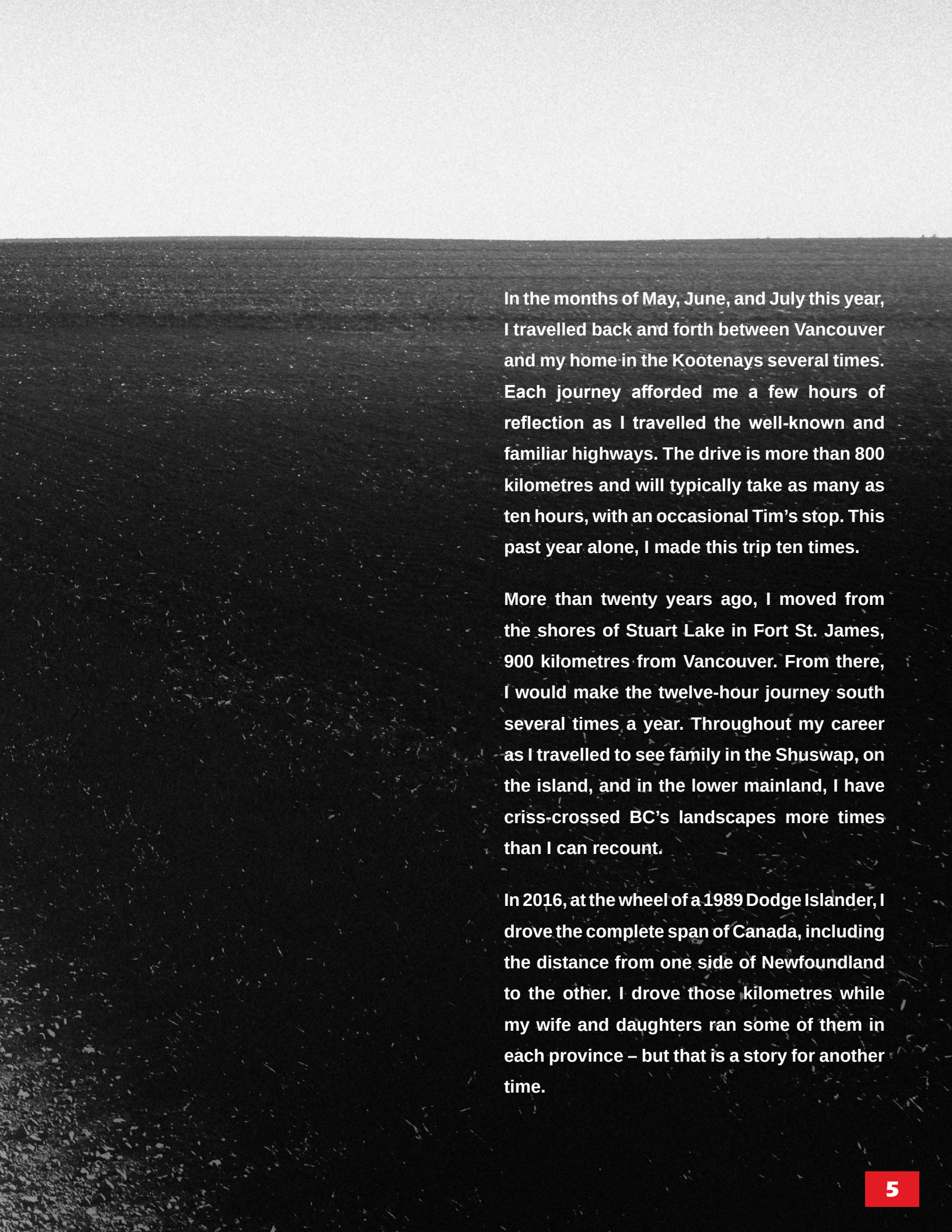
BCPVPAvideos



Perspective

a single step

by
Darren Danyluk
President, BCPVPA



In the months of May, June, and July this year, I travelled back and forth between Vancouver and my home in the Kootenays several times. Each journey afforded me a few hours of reflection as I travelled the well-known and familiar highways. The drive is more than 800 kilometres and will typically take as many as ten hours, with an occasional Tim's stop. This past year alone, I made this trip ten times.

More than twenty years ago, I moved from the shores of Stuart Lake in Fort St. James, 900 kilometres from Vancouver. From there, I would make the twelve-hour journey south several times a year. Throughout my career as I travelled to see family in the Shuswap, on the island, and in the lower mainland, I have criss-crossed BC's landscapes more times than I can recount.

In 2016, at the wheel of a 1989 Dodge Islander, I drove the complete span of Canada, including the distance from one side of Newfoundland to the other. I drove those kilometres while my wife and daughters ran some of them in each province – but that is a story for another time.

I am well-travelled, and it is fair to say that I welcome the road. As the odometer rolls forward, logging each journey's progress, my mind can also travel forward, planning and imagining a future. Just as often, my mind can wander backward, recalling moments which evoke both joy and pain. Regret, as well as gratitude, percolate as the signposts streak past my vision; I know many of the road signs and their kilometre counts by now.

The trips I made to my home in the days following May 28th gave me these hours to reflect upon Kamloops, Brandon, Marieval, Cranbrook, and Kuper & Penelakut Islands. Like the kilometres ticking upward on my odometer, the confirmed number of children whose lives ended in unmarked graves at a residential school in Canada increased each week, rising into the thousands. As reported in Scientific American¹ this summer, "Given that more than 1,300 graves have been identified using ground-penetrating radar at only four of the 139 federally run residential schools, the current official number of 4,120 students known to have died in the schools will end up being only a fraction of the actual total." The reflections of one journey will inevitably lead to undertaking another.

This image of a rolling odometer – its numbers inexorably climbing – along with my chance encounter with a young Secwepemc woman, set me to reflect upon reconciliation and the journeys which lay before me and all Canadians. Some journeys, such as this young woman's, combine the metaphoric with the literal, inspiring with each kilometre that passes.

The woman's name is Sasha, and I first met her when she started grade eight, one September many years ago. Families live with challenges, and Sasha's family experienced more than its fair share, living with the effects of intergenerational trauma, rooted in the residential school experience of family elders. I was her teacher briefly in her grade 12 year but, long before then, I knew through her teachers that Sasha was strong-willed, independent, and fiercely loyal to her family and especially her young brothers. I would

"Some journeys, such as this young woman's, combine the metaphoric with the literal, inspiring with each kilometre that passes."

come to know these boys better than I knew their sister. In growing to know her brothers, I learned the selfless depths of Sasha's dedication to family. It was a pleasant surprise to see that it was Sasha stepping from the car which pulled up to the curb in front of my home one afternoon this July.

My trip home to the Kootenays in July was short, only four days. Most of those days were spent packing, purging, and storing as we downsized. One of the many items we parted with was a caged fire pit. With temperatures in the 40s, wildfires raging, and a ban on open fires, I did not expect any interest in the firepit when I posted it on the local marketplace. However, it was this item which drew Sasha to our home that day. It had been a Father's Day gift, and I was happy it would now be Sasha's to enjoy with her family on a cool autumn evening or a brilliant and cold winter day. We chatted for a few minutes there on the sidewalk, and it was in this short exchange that Sasha told me of the journey she'd just completed, and the one she was about to take.

Sasha told me she was 'walking the children home'.²

Her words struck me immediately, because I was moved by the same sentiment while reading Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe's book *Calm Within the Storm* in the spring. Dr. Hanley-Dafoe was quoting American spiritual teacher, psychologist, and author Ram Dass when she wrote, "When all is said and done, we're all just walking each other home." For me, at the core

1 Scientific American "Canada's Residential Schools Were a Horror", Ian Mosby, Erin Millions, August 2021

2 The Toronto Star, "Sasha Eugene to walk from Kamloops to Shuswap admin building", James Rose for the Columbia Valley Pioneer, August 19, 2021

of this statement is the belief that we do not travel through this world alone, but rather in the company of all those around us. We care for and keep company with all humanity as we walk alongside each other on the journey to our ultimate home, whatever we believe that destination to be. As I drove the highways of BC this summer, Sasha spent many days walking them, beginning with the 120 kilometres of highway that stretches from the former residential school at St. Eugene Mission in Cranbrook to the traditional lands of the Secwepemc people in the Windermere valley. Sasha's own words are best to express her vision and inspiration: "Our ancestors will finally be able to come to peace in the homeland that they were stolen from. These lost innocent children's souls discovered and undiscovered may finally start their journey to the sky world and be released back to the creator and those waiting for them up above."

On August 20th, at sunrise, Sasha began her second medicine walk to bring home her ancestors from the former Kamloops residential school, a journey of nearly 500 kilometres. At the conclusion of her ten-day journey, Sasha posted that it had "been an honor and a blessing to be able to go on this journey and bring healing, education and love into the community." Sasha credits her ancestors, saying they are why she is here and "proud to be Indigenous today."

Across BC and throughout Canada, similar journeys took place this summer, such as the journeys of Jamie Henry³ and Shayna Taypotat.⁴ These walkers have covered literally thousands of kilometres to bring forth honour, education, and healing. Sasha speaks of the healing witnessed during her walks and how this experience has changed her perspectives on many things. We are moved well beyond metaphor when equating the concrete distance traveled by these walkers as a measure of the distance we must travel towards reconciliation. We witness and feel the demonstration of personal sacrifice and effort this journey will require. And, as with every journey,

3 Yukon News, "Warrior Walkers arrive in Kamloops after six-week journey from Whitehorse", Canadian Press, August 10, 2021

4 Summerland Review, "From Saskatchewan to Shuswap, walker speaks of wish for healing for all people", Martha Wickett, August 20, 2021

the first step may be the most difficult, for it must be taken deliberately and with conviction to face the road ahead.

As an initial step, readers might start with the numbers, in an effort to learn and understand. Behind the numbers that spiral upwards are the names of children. These children had mothers and fathers; they were brothers and sisters. The official number of 4,120 references the Memorial Register found on the website of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (nctr.ca). The National Student Memorial Register on this site was created to recognize the children who never returned home, and it "represents another starting place on the collective journey of honouring and remembering the children lost to the residential schools." This site is not static, and it notes that there are additional "names of children waiting to be found that are not included within this register." In only a few minutes on the site, I was able to read the names of children who did not return to their homes from the St. Eugene Residential School in Cranbrook, BC. Among the nineteen names remembered, I recognized two family names. Immediately, I could picture the faces of their relations I have known, and taught. No longer are these lost ancestors only numbers.

For many years, I've known that in my own heritage there lies a connection to this nation's First Peoples. In vague and often racist terms that included references to high cheekbones, and to skin that easily tans, both branches of my family acknowledged that possibility, yet without understanding or an evident desire for any true meaning of that history. I bear responsibility for my own ignorance, for I began my own journey to

" Behind the numbers that
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understand this connection only as my fifth decade nears its end.

In the genealogy researched and recorded by a member of my family, the reference is brief and unembellished. It simply makes note of a Cree woman, baptized Marguerite: my great, great grandmother's grandmother. Other than the names of her husband and her children, I know nothing of this woman nor of the Cree people, and I have been uncertain about the next steps I must take.

**"... as with every
journey, the first step
may be the most
difficult, for it must be
taken deliberately and
with conviction
to face the
road ahead."**

I share this because I believe that for many, the journey for Truth and Reconciliation is two journeys: one as a part of the whole, seeking national truth, accountability, and healing on a national scale; and one as an individual, seeking personal truth, understanding, and acceptance. The steps we each take on both paths may at first be small and unsure, we may feel daunted by the great distance ahead, and the difficult terrain. Nonetheless, it is well past time to start our journeys, and begin walking this path with that single step.

***Darren Danyluk is the
2020-2022 President
of the BCPVPA.***



connection

"All the topics were perfect! The forum came at a great time, during a very busy and stressful time of the year. It gave me the opportunity to take a step back and reflect on our practices. Most importantly, it re-energized me and I am ready to face the rest of the school year."

(Member Event Feedback)



BCPVPA offers BC Principals and Vice-Principals opportunities to learn, but also to network and collaborate with colleagues from across the province. Those shared experiences bring our 2,600 members closer together and help to strengthen BC's public education system.

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The work and responsibilities of school leaders can vary greatly from elementary to middle to secondary, from region to region, and from school to school.

A Day in the Life offers a snapshot of BCPVPA members in their roles, and shares their thoughts on their path, their practice, and why they love what they do.

In our seventh installment of the series, we meet Aaron Akune, Principal of North Delta Secondary School.

Principal Aaron Akune had a clear plan. “If I was to rewind the movie of my life in my head, I had already formulated the idea of landing a teaching position in Richmond. That was my vision: I was a Richmond kid, I’d be a Richmond teacher and, if all things went well, I would spend my career in Richmond.”

Apart from one year of his life in Williams Lake, Aaron grew up and lived in Richmond while attending UBC and through eleven years as a science teacher. While the idea of going into leadership and administration at the school level was always in the back of his mind, a number of other leadership opportunities would lay the groundwork for his later decisions.

Aaron grew up in an extended family of educators. “My dad was a teacher, Principal, and Superintendent and my mom was a teacher,” said Aaron. “At the time I didn’t really think about it, but so many of my aunts and uncles were in education, and later my cousins as well. So there’s something in the genes – or in the water! I think where it started for me was the summer after grade 10 with my best friend at the time. We started coaching soccer for girls who were just turning five. We worked along with this same group of kids with soccer, and later with softball. At the time, if asked, I would have said I was there because I like the sport; I liked the coaching side of it. If you’d asked me about going into teaching I would have said, heck no! My parents are teachers, my extended family is composed of teachers. I can still remember being at the dinner table and saying, I don’t know what I’m going to do when I grow up, but I

A Day in the Life of a Secondary School Principal



"The best moment in this profession is knowing that as a school, you were part of a game-changing and life-changing experience over the course of five or six years for a student."

- Aaron Akune

Photo courtesy Aaron Akune

can tell you: I'm never going to work in a school. So that worked out really well, as you can tell!"

In university, Aaron was convinced that he would pursue a career related to athletics and health, in sports medicine or physiotherapy. In his final year, he came to a realization. "You're at that time in your undergrad where you've got final exams the next morning, and your friends and classmates are focussed on studying", Aaron recalls feeling torn between coaching a practice and preparing for exams. It was definitely a sign that he enjoyed working with and teaching kids.

After his bachelor of science, Aaron applied straight to the education program at UBC. "And after that was completed, I remember it was a July 1 call on my cell

phone while I was on the ball diamond. I was called to come in the next day for an interview, and that took me into the role of a science teacher. I never looked back."

After eight years teaching at the same school, another opportunity further defined Aaron's leadership goals. "We were a shrinking school at the time, and similar to the experience of other teachers, I was going to end up being short a block. The Principal said, I've got a role for you. Our athletic director was stepping back, and the Principal said, well: guess who's in the gym all day? Guess who the best person is to take this on? He talked me into the role – honestly, it didn't take me very long. I realized pretty quickly that spending time in the gym – supporting the

athletes and coaches – brought me joy. The other piece was the leadership component, bringing on new coaches, mentoring coaches, and feeling like you're overseeing something bigger. For a couple of years, I split the athletic director's role with another teacher, and we also co-taught a science class. That was interesting: you bring together two people with a very similar interest, but sometimes with different approaches and different perspectives. There were some times where we'd disagree, talk things through, and arrive at a collaborative plan. It really helped that we got along well and had very similar values. I think this was a good precursor to many situations I find myself in now. It's important to take the time and not feel pressured to make a rushed decision. You sleep on it, let it sink in, and then a couple of days later you have the answer. Other times it might mean an informal walk and talk conversation, and then over time you find that you understand one another better and you've worked out a creative plan."

"That was some of the best preparation. The other piece that I really enjoyed, and that has stuck with me, is what it was like building trust and relationships with families in the role of athletic director. I would get comments from parents like, "Do you ever go home?" And I would say that I don't coach this particular team, and I may not know this particular sport well, but I'm here as the athletic director, to support your kids and the coach. If parents are going to give up the time, it's important that we are there as well."

A masters degree was Aaron's next step, along with thoughts about a path to more formal leadership. And the Richmond boy was sticking to his plan. "I was following my dream and applying to Richmond for a Vice-Principalship. Although the opportunity never presented itself in Richmond, the secretary at my school knew that I was interested and she suggested that I apply to Delta. She suggested that I update my application and offered to drop it off at lunch, as she lived just behind the Board Office in Delta. And I thought to myself, Delta? I didn't even know there was a posting there, or considered applying. Not long after, I received a phone call from an unknown number on a Friday afternoon when I was out with

"I would get comments from parents like, "Do you ever go home?" And I would say that I don't coach this particular team, and I may not know this particular sport well, but I'm here as the athletic director, to support your kids and the coach. If parents are going to give up the time, it's important that we are there as well."

colleagues. Sure enough, it was a call from Delta inviting me to interview for a Vice-Principalship."

Aaron started with a halftime Vice-Principalship at Delta Secondary in 2007 – teaching in the morning, supervising at lunchtime, and taking care of Vice-Principal responsibilities in the afternoon – and was able to work with two different Principals during his time there. "It was neat to see the changes in the school led by two leaders who were quite different. They had very similar values but two very different styles and approaches. It was remarkable to see how certain kids and certain staff thrived under one Principal or the other; it really shows the influence of leadership. The other great thing for me at that school was the opportunity to grow and learn with a cohort of students from grade eight to graduation as their Vice-Principal. For some kids, you are the constant: you know them, they know you, and what you're about."

After more than six years at Delta Secondary, Aaron moved to Seaquam Secondary as Vice-Principal in December 2013, and then to a Principalship at Sands Secondary in September 2014 where he remained until moving to his current role with North Delta Secondary in January 2019.

"With all of those transitions, I learned to be flexible and adaptable. But it's still really about the people and the building of relationships. Leaving Delta Secondary in the middle of school year was difficult because I felt very connected to the students and staff. A memory for me – and something that is still in my house! – is a

On Student Leadership

“One of the initiatives I love the most is student leadership. In Delta, we have a Youth Advisory Council composed of students in Grade 8-12. Each school team ranges in numbers anywhere from just a half dozen to more than 30. School teams meet regularly to plan initiatives. Each month, school teams meet as a larger group to share their initiatives and offer their perspective to school and district leaders. Typically, the Vice-Principal at the school heads up the group. One year, when I began the year without a Vice-Principal, it happened to be our school’s turn to host the district meeting of 70 to 80 kids. Jumping into that situation and truly relying on the leadership of students, I realized the potential of leveraging a group like that: these are leadership kids, in different grades, and with a lot of different perspectives. These are kids who have earned quite a bit of trust with adults in the school and are well-respected amongst their peers. When you can get students like this on board with a direction and can generate some momentum, it’s powerful because they can engage staff in some disrupting conversations that can trigger change.

Connectedness, transitions, and mental health have been our focus. We have collaboration time built into our schedule for staff, and one thing that we have started to do is bring kids into the conversation. I’ve said to the kids, you have to know that when you join these meetings, you might be a small number compared to the staff, but your voices matter a lot to the teachers. You have the chance to really influence the direction that we take.

We started to survey the kids around connectedness, and around the transition to grade eight. I don’t think anyone can disagree that for kids, the transition from the grade seven to grade eight – in a new building – with new people, is a really pivotal time. If you can get that right, if you can meaningfully connect them with adults and positive peer influences in the school, you have a much greater chance of them being successful. Something we initiated at my previous school, and continued pre-COVID at North Delta, is to visit each grade 8 student’s home and hand-deliver letters to the families instead of emailing an introduction. We mapped it out on Google and went door to door, ringing doorbells and knocking on doors. Truthfully, it was an excuse to go and just say hello, meet the student, and in many cases, the student’s family. It proved to be a little more challenging here at North Delta, where in some instances we have the challenge of a language barrier. A large percentage of our parent population speak Punjabi as the first language in their home. Sometimes, we would arrive at the door and be greeted by a grandparent. They appreciated the visit but often weren’t quite sure who you were. So, we decided to invite some of our leadership kids to come with us, and they were able to assist with translation. It proved to be an excellent opportunity for our students to be ambassadors of the school and help families feel more comfortable. When we get beyond COVID, I look forward to doing the same thing in the future. It spoke volumes that not only were we there as adults to support their kids, but there are other kids that are willing to do that during their summer break.”

signed farewell banner that the kids rolled out. I didn't expect that, because I didn't have a 'classroom'. I didn't realize the impact that I could have on kids could be that strong. And of course I didn't realize that I would only be at Seaquam for seven months, but I think it was the same: you go in the best you can mid-year and just get to know people. My time at Seaquam was way too short, but I was able to begin building some positive relationships with people. In terms of digging into the deeper work at the school, I don't feel that I ever had the chance to sink my teeth in. If I had stayed, the following September would have been the time to start that work."

"When I started as a Vice-Principal and was teaching halftime, I really noticed how challenging it was to build relationships with kids. I was used to having classes of students in front of me daily, and knowing many students in the school from previous years. Coming in brand new to a bigger population, and not having as much direct facetime with kids was hard. In the halls, sometimes they just walked right by, sometimes they might have waved – and it was really just a courteous wave. Probably around Christmas that year, I really started to understand that my classroom had changed. During the half of the day when I wasn't actually teaching, my classroom had to be that seven or eight minute class change. I realized I had to be intentional about talking to as many kids as I could in those short bursts of time, remembering the running conversation I had with a student, who they are, and genuinely having fun with them in those brief moments. I would often run back to the office after a class change and quickly open up the picture book so I could identify the kids. During the first couple of

months of the year it wouldn't be uncommon for me to take the book home and try to study it – look at faces, look at names, and try to put faces and names together. Because I know that if I saw them today, and can call them by their first name tomorrow, it will have a tremendous impact. It signals to them that they matter."

"Working with staff, the first step is getting to know them. There are those you have hired and there is often an inherent sense of trust with them. It's particularly meaningful for them to know they have your confidence, especially when they're brand new in their career. And then there is the group of staff that's already there at the school when you arrive. Many are a little cautious at first as they try to get to know you. Some feel they know you already based on your reputation, what they have heard from others. And there is a very small group who may say, I've gone through 'X' number of Principals: when you leave, I'm still going to be here. It's your job to build relationships and win them over. Part of that is just making the time, it's the informal conversations and being able to laugh and talk about something that may have nothing to do with work. Or, it may be supporting them in other ways, coming to a student theater event, a sporting event or something extracurricular. It's important to honour the people who have been there, and to say, how has this been done in the past? I'm not saying that I'm committing to doing it that way in the future, but I want to understand *why* we have done it that way."

"When you start to make changes in a school, some of them will be procedural and organizational. These are often highly visible to others. The deeper changes, especially those involving a shift in philosophical approach may not be as noticeable at first. Over time, the decisions you make and the rationales you offer communicate your values and beliefs, and lay the groundwork for foundational change. What is most important is that collectively, we continue to learn and evolve. We're going to make some mistakes, and we need to err on the side of being flexible, adaptable and generous with kids and with ourselves."

"I really started to understand that my classroom had changed. During the half of the day when I wasn't actually teaching, my classroom had to be that seven or eight minute class change."



“As educators, we have learned so much during the pandemic. Even if it appears we are returning to ‘normal’ in the future, we have grown so much that I believe we will approach matters differently, and better.”

If there is something that Aaron is most proud of, it's knowing the stories of students, and championing the underdog. “It's having a strong relationship with a kid, but also knowing their family. You don't necessarily get all that feedback until they graduate, but we had one graduate this year, a great boy. I knew the two older sisters, and I received a long email from the mother to say that it's been a real treat to see all three of her kids go through two different schools with me. Even this morning, there was a kid who graduated this year from my previous school who swung by just to say hello and thanks. So, those are the experiences that are really memorable for me. When you are able to build a safe, caring culture in a school community, these kinds of powerful connections are not only possible but grow to become expected. It's very challenging to truly develop the feeling of ‘family’

across a larger school, but if collectively you're able to create ‘micro families’ – your Athletics teams, theatre group and clubs – kids will be able to find their safe space, a sense of belonging and ultimately thrive.”

“I remember working closely with a kid who was really creating challenges for herself during her grade 10 and 11 years. Her mom was part of our PAC and she would say, I don't know how you do it, I don't know why you'd want to work with my kid all day. But then one day she asked me to have a chat with her daughter because we both noticed, she hadn't been at school nearly as often as she should have been. I had known that student for three and a half years, and one day I called her in and had a heart-to-heart chat with her. I said, “Your mom drives you to school every day – which I don't agree with, because you're an athlete and could be walking here on your own. When your mom drops you off, she signs you over to us, and so as long as you're at school, I'm like your dad at school. And that's how this is going to work. If I'm pleased with you about something or if I'm disappointed in you about something, I'm going to

On Connections

"I appreciate the connections that I've made through the BCPVPA. I have been part of our local Chapter as Professional Development Chair, Vice-President and President, and that's given me a closer connection to folks within our local Chapter and at the Association. Acting as a facilitator at Short Course I for a few years is what truly brought me into the Association. Despite the long and tiring Short Course days, and the challenge of transitioning into Short Course right after school ended, I found the conversations to be some of the most engaging and best professional learning for me. Four of us from the table group of my first year as a facilitator have formed a small network. We exchange messages periodically and try to get together once a year.

Last year Short Course was virtual, which was different. While I didn't feel quite the same satisfaction on my part, given the circumstances I think the program was still really effective. And now, being part of more frequent President's meetings on Zoom, that's been a great connection.

At first, the BCPVPA President was always just a name and a picture, but then you get to know who these people are. I remember being at an event in Vancouver and I had never met (former President) David DeRosa in person. We ended up in the same workshop session, and David greeted me by name – I realized then who he was as I recognized his voice from talking to him on the phone. And after that, even if it was just for a few minutes at an event, we would chat. It's been the same with (current President) Darren Danyluk, I met him two years ago at Short Course I. It really makes you feel connected and part of the Association."

tell you about it." And it was funny, because a couple of days later I was at the front door in the morning as I usually am, greeting kids as they came into the school. As usual, the girl arrived five minutes late, and she was probably expecting me to confront her about that. But before I could say anything, she says, "Hi, Dad. Sorry I'm late." And this is where it began. For her final year or so, that was how she and some of her friends greeted me. Although it was all playful in nature, the fact that they referred to me as 'school dad' was indicative of the mutual trust that had been established. It was all about the human connection."

"The best moment in this profession is knowing that as a school, you were part of a game-changing and life-changing experience over the course of five or six years for a student. Like helping them find a safe living arrangement when they had no place to go home to. Or providing them with food when we know they are coming to school without having had a square meal. Or supporting them through challenging or traumatic situations outside of school, or sometimes just being willing to listen. I'm proud of these kinds of things, and they bring me joy knowing we may have altered a young person's life significantly."

"The most challenging thing for a Principal can be those heart-breaking situations, the ones that keep you up at night. You find things out suddenly and often unexpectedly: there you have been as a school supporting a kid for four years and you didn't know about something that was going on for them outside of school. You worry about the damage that may have taken place, and how the child has internalized it. You wonder what you could have done if you had known. It all comes back to getting to know people and making people feel safe enough to share."

"Another gratifying moment is seeing a teacher experience success. Teachers come to us for advice about how to approach a student who has not been succeeding, or for permission to try something unique with their students. To engage in dialogue with them, offer suggestions, see them try some of these strategies, and experience success is a very

positive moment. In those moments, you realize that something you said or offered may just have made a remarkable difference for the teacher and student. Even more importantly, it becomes part of the teacher's repertoire and they have it available to themselves as a tool when working with other students in the future."

"It's very challenging to truly develop the feeling of 'family' across a larger school, but if collectively you're able to create 'micro families' – your Athletics teams, theatre group and clubs – kids will be able to find their safe space, a sense of belonging and ultimately thrive."

"A piece that I find challenging is some of the difficult conversations you need to have with adults, where you might philosophically disagree, or you might philosophically agree but have a different approach to implementation. Sometimes you land in a tough place where no matter what you decide, someone is sure to be unhappy. Over time, you become more comfortable holding true to your values and making these challenging decisions. You listen to and consider the many perspectives and do your best to communicate your rationale. You have to have the trust, confidence, and belief in yourself that you are making the best decision given the information you have. If new information comes forward, you have to consider adjusting. If you make a mistake or something doesn't turn out as you had envisioned, you own it. You may take some heat for things, but you never make decisions in order to show anyone up or to feed your own ego."

What would Aaron say to someone considering the move? "I have enjoyed the Principalship far more than being a Vice-Principal, or being a teacher. I find much greater satisfaction being able to influence a larger number of people. As a Vice-Principal there

was a different sense of pressure about decision-making: at the end of the day, it's not your final call. And now as a Principal, the good – and the bad! – is that *you* get to make the call. I'm really fortunate with the team I work with. We listen to each other's perspectives, offer constructive feedback, and are comfortable enough with each other to be able to disagree. Even when we may not have started 100% in agreement privately, when we emerge publicly, we always support one another. Truthfully, there are times when you know that you might be the only one that believes in your decision 100%, but again you must have confidence in yourself and your decision-making to occasionally go against the grain. The other great thing about this role is that there is still the opportunity to be very hands on and connected with kids, and to have a real direct influence. You have an ability to impact student learning by influencing teacher practice. It's less about formal meetings and more often when a situation arises with a kid. Being able to talk through a situation with a staff member, asking what they've tried, making suggestions, and coming up with a plan, or connecting them with someone in the district or their department who can shed more light. As a Principal, compared to being a Vice-Principal, you're in greater contact with district leaders like the assistant superintendent, directors and district principals. Folks at the district level do some heavy, heavy lifting behind the scenes that helps to make your work at the school level a little bit easier."

"As Principals, we're in the middle of so many conversations: district leaders, staff, parents, alumni, and community associations or organizations: you get the full picture. You might only be one of many different stakeholders but you're usually the one who has the best idea of how things will go within your school. You can see how it all fits together and you are critical to the roll out and implementation of so many initiatives and directions."



@aakune



Photo courtesy Aaron Akune

A Day in the Life

“My alarm is usually set for quarter to six. I’m clearing the cobwebs, getting ready, and that’s when I try to do a quick check on my phone over breakfast: junk, junk, junk, whoa – what’s this? I’ve talked to many colleagues who wonder why I do that, and why I don’t wait to get to work instead of stewing over something for an hour before arriving? But having that space gives me a chance to think. When I get to the school, I’d rather be able to say to someone that I saw their email and give them an answer, or let them know that I haven’t got an answer for them right away.

I enjoy listening to sports radio on the way in – that’s my chance to do a little bit of catch up – and then I’m generally at school by 7:30 am. The first half hour is a chance to quickly hit ‘send’ on some emails, lay out the day, have some conversations with office staff and tackle Teachers Teaching on Call (TTOC) and Education Assistant (EA) shortages. It’s quieter at that time, and there are fewer distractions. Once we hit 8:00 am, it gets pretty busy because questions start coming in as more staff arrive. The kids start to come in at 8:15am, and there’s more and more questions. I usually try to go to the front door 15 minutes before the first bell, and hold the door open to say good morning. It’s an important 15 minutes for connecting with kids, and one of the most enjoyable parts of the day. This past year with our COVID-19 procedures, we’ve had three entrances with myself monitoring one door and two Vice-Principals monitoring the other doors. I’ve always felt greeting students at the door is important and we agree that when we are no longer following COVID protocols, we will still maintain three entry locations so that we can see every kid enter the building at the start of the day. We have eyes on every kid that comes through, and sometimes that means that a kid is starting their day better because someone remembered who they are; someone said good morning. You may be the first adult that they saw today because their parents had already gone to work. Greeting kids at the door gives you a chance to observe: if something isn’t going right, you can read it and you know to talk to that kid either in that moment or later in the day.

A Day in the Life of a Secondary School Principal

5:45 am	Wake up
6:30 am	Check email over breakfast
7:00 am	Leave for school
7:30 am	At School. Check absences, send emails, connect with office staff about messages that came in overnight, connect with staff as they arrive
8:00 am	Talk with admin team about 'must-do's' for the day, go over our appointments
8:15 am	Greet students at door
8:40 am	Walk hallways to ensure students are in classrooms and classes are underway Pop into classes
9:00 am	District-wide Virtual Principal & Vice-Principals Meeting Snack during meeting
9:50 am	Hallway supervision during class change
9:50 am	Announcements
10:00 am	Walk hallways to ensure students are in classrooms and classes are underway. Pop into classes. Pop into Learning Commons, check in with students on study block and Teacher Librarian
10:30 am	Phone call to District Leaders
11:00 am	Set up seating in cafeteria for lunchtime
11:20 am	Lunchtime supervision

While the kids are in class, my work can range from small meetings with staff, speaking with the office team, meeting with parents, working with teachers while they are on their prep, calling someone from the board office or joining a Zoom meeting with Principal/Vice-Principal colleagues from another school I enjoy getting out there for class changes, and being visible in the hallways with students and staff. I try to position myself in the highest traffic areas. I can't get out there for every single change but it's a priority when I'm in the building.

Some people view supervision as putting out fires. I see lunchtime as a chance to be proactive, putting out fires before they happen. It's a chance to engage in conversations and friendly banter with students. It also offers an opportunity to observe who is friends with who, and who is eating alone that day. Occasionally, there are incidents that happen during lunch that can occupy us for the rest of the afternoon, but sometimes it's quick: I'll tell someone to see me at the end of lunch. We have 'the chat' and then they are on their way, hopefully with the problem averted. People might call them disciplinary conversations – they might start on the surface for disciplinary reasons, or because a student needs some redirection – but it's also a time when you can learn about things that are going on for those kids. You might unearth something much more significant just by making the time to have the dialogue with the student. It could lead to more work, but it's better to know and be able to help, than to not know at all.

As a teacher, I probably didn't realize how frequent and in depth those conversations could be. Sometimes it could result in needing to prepare a Ministry report, contacting a social worker, talking to the police, referring the student to their counsellor, or calling a parent. There is a range of interventions that might be necessary in order to support a kid. In North Delta, there are five high schools in a fairly small geographical area. We often find that a situation at one school has a connection to one or more of the neighboring schools, so the five Principals talk a lot. Sometimes the Principal or Vice-Principal from one of the other schools has the piece of information that helps everything make sense.

We hold staff meetings on the first Monday of each month, meet with department heads once a month after school, and meet with the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) one evening each month. And there are, of course, always the unexpected

things that will take your day in a completely different direction! We usually participate in Principal and Vice-Principal meetings in the district every two weeks. I have missed meeting face-to-face with my Principal and Vice-Principal colleagues during COVID-19 because you can have a different depth of conversation and it gives you a chance to catch up with others who you don't speak with as regularly. It's nice not driving 25 minutes to and from meetings, and it allows us to remain in our schools, but Zoom meetings just aren't the same.

At the end of the school day, it's time to head outside for parking lot duty. A large number of our students are picked up from school and as a result our parking lots and neighbouring streets are very busy. I usually walk out to the sidewalk and monitor traffic. I tell parents I'm making sure students remain safe and I tell staff I'm directing parent drivers. Since I'm out there pretty much rain or shine, I try to use it to my advantage. I wave at and greet parents, say goodbye to students who are walking home, and chat with the occasional staff member who joins me outside. It's just another way to be visible and for parents to recognize me.

If there isn't a scheduled meeting after school, I'll poke my head into the gym or the theatre to see what's going on. In some instances, if you walk into a class, a teacher will wonder why you're there. Others are completely comfortable with you coming in. But if it's after hours and its kids in a club, staff are proud and they want the kids to show you what they're doing. You can have a different kind of conversation that can go a long way towards relationship and trust building.

By 4:00pm, the building quietens down, so you have a chance to get some paperwork and emails done. I usually wrap up around 5:30 or 6:00 pm unless there's a meeting, game or event in the evening. I remember when I was a Vice-Principal one of the parents commenting, are you here for everything? He saw me at his son's basketball game at 5:00 pm, and then at his other son's band concert at 7:00 pm. Secondary schools can be very busy places well into the evening. Often, they are like the hub of a community. You can't be present for everything, and you have to be ready for an early start the next morning but often your absence is noticeable. Your presence communicates to families and kids that the activity is important, and they are important. It's an opportunity to meet parents and say hello."

A Day in the Life of a Secondary School Principal

12:00 pm	Stand in Main Foyer, welcome students who are returning from lunch outside. Supervise students moving to classes
12:10 pm	Walk of hallways to ensure students are in classrooms and classes are underway
12:30 pm	Eat lunch while checking emails
12:45 pm	Interview of candidate for TTOC List
1:20 pm	Return phone call to parents
1:30 pm	Hallway supervision during class change
1:40 pm	Return phone call to Principal or Vice-Principal colleague at neighbouring school. Respond to emails. Prepare for afternoon or evening meeting (Staff Meeting, Department Heads Meeting, PAC Meeting, Student Leadership Meeting)
2:50 pm	Parking Lot Supervision
3:10 pm	Afternoon meeting
4:30 pm	Finish up unsent emails, return phone calls, district paperwork
5:45 pm	If no evening event or evening meeting, packup for the day and head home for dinner
7:00 pm	Some evenings, attend school/ district event (theatre production, athletics event, PAC Meeting, board meeting, etc)
8:30 pm	Finish up documents, emails, prepare 'to-do' list for next day Check absences to get a sense of who will be away the following day

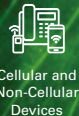
Flip the switch. Recycle your old electronics.

Recycling your old electronics keeps metals, plastics, and other valuable resources out of landfills, and puts them back into the manufacturing supply chain. It also prevents e-waste from being illegally exported or handled by irresponsible recyclers.

Always bring your old, unwanted, or unusable electronics to our authorized drop-off locations to ensure that your end-of-life electronics are being recycled in a safe, responsible, and environmentally sound manner.

The Electronics Products Recycling Association (EPRA) of BC is a not-for profit, industry-led organization designed to manage end-of-life electronic products that have exhausted their potential for re-use by donation to friends, family, or authorized re-use organizations.

WHAT CAN BE RECYCLED?



For more information, and to find out what and where to recycle, visit

Return-It.ca/Electronics

Even when they stop working, your old electronics can still be useful.

Craig Wisehart,
Executive Director, Western Canada

Since 2007, Return-It Electronics has provided British Columbians with safe and environmentally responsible ways to reuse or recycle old, obsolete, broken and unwanted electronics devices.

Today, we recycle more than 3 million electronics devices every year in BC, and over the past 12 years we've worked together with British Columbians to recycle more than 214,000 tonnes of old electronics. Keeping metals, plastics and other valuable resources out of landfills, and putting the recovered materials back into the manufacturing supply chain.

The Return-It Electronics program operates on behalf of the Electronics Products Recycling Association (EPRA), a national not-for-profit dedicated to collecting and recycling end-of-life electronics in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. For more than a decade we've been working together to make it easier and more convenient for people to drop off their old devices for recycling. The program has grown from only a few depots, in 2007, to now more than 285 authorized collection sites found in communities spread all across BC.

The number of categories of eligible

devices that are accepted has grown since the program inception. A decade ago we could only accept computers and monitors, printers, fax machines and televisions, but today British Columbians can recycle 17 different categories of electronic devices including cell phones, video games, home entertainment devices, medical devices, musical instruments and more.

Once they've been collected at a Return-It Electronics depot or an authorized collection site, devices are sorted and sent to local EPRA approved recycling facilities for processing, where their component materials are then separated to recover metals, plastics, glass, and other natural resources that are then used to make new products. In addition to saving these materials from ending up in landfills, this process also keeps them from being illegally exported out of Canada.

More than 72% of British Columbians are already aware that they can safely

and responsibly recycle their old electronics, whether through drop off locations like their local Return-It Electronics depots, or during one of our regular electronics drop-off events in communities across the province. Last year alone we recycled about 4kg of electronics, per person, for every person in BC.

We're also working hard to spread the word about other responsible uses for old electronics, by connecting businesses that would prefer to have their reusable electronics refurbished – rather than recycled – through organizations like the BC Technology for Learning Society. This helps give new life to old electronics by supporting the Computers for Schools program in BC, and by helping British Columbians to give away electronics items to a BC-based refurbisher qualified under the comprehensive standards of the Electronics Reuse & Refurbishing Program.

Return-It Electronics and EPRA British Columbia are not-for-profit organizations dedicated to protecting BC's environment and our shared future. The program is funded through the Environmental Handling Fees (EHF) which are applied to the sale of all new electronics products in BC. Neither a tax nor a refundable deposit, the EHF on each new device is used for the costs of the collection, transportation and responsible recycling of the device once it reaches the end of its life.

In addition to protecting the environment through the programs listed above, Return-It Electronics is also dedicated to helping protect the privacy and data of British Columbians, by providing easy, practical advice on safely and securely wiping devices and memory cards before getting rid of them. This information – and more – is available online at the Return-It.ca website.

WHAT CAN BE RECYCLED?



Desktop/Portable Computers



Display Devices



Printing, Scanning and Multi-Function Devices



Desktop Printers



Home Audio/Video Systems



Vehicle Audio/Video Systems (aftermarket)



Personal/Portable Audio/Video Systems



Video Gaming Systems/ Battery Powered Toys



Cellular and Non-Cellular Devices



IT and Telecom Equipment



Medical Devices



Musical Instruments

Give new life to your old electronics. Learn more at Return-It.ca/Electronics

by
Bruce L. Anderson
CEO, BCPSEA



BCPSEA's new CEO Bruce L. Anderson reflects on his return to the public service, the challenges of the pandemic, and how BCPSEA is moving forward

I have not been disappointed since I joined BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) six months ago. I see my new CEO appointment as an exciting and challenging opportunity to be working for the K-12 public education sector. I look forward to working with all key stakeholders to ensure a positive, rewarding, engaging, and productive human resources and labour relations environment.

As the new CEO, my job is to help leadership in school districts manage and support their teachers, staff, and school communities through effective human resources and labour relations services. My job is about people: the people that work hard every single day to make the K-12 sector the best education system possible. It is about people whose dedication to student success is truly inspiring. People like you – the Principals and Vice-Principals who ensure students and staff are thriving, while upholding educational priorities and goals.

I have worked for a number of public and private organizations, and have seen many people with great passion and commitment. The devotion and heart in the public education system in BC is second to none. My career includes 13 years in the post-secondary education sector. I was Manager of Employee Relations at the University of Guelph, Director of Employee Relations and Employment Services at the University of Alberta, and Executive Director of Human Resources for Simon Fraser University. I then moved to municipal work as the Executive Director of Human Resources for the City of Toronto. Finally, just prior to joining BCPSEA, I worked in the private sector for the Corix Group of Companies. Corix is a North American community-based water utility company that is owned 100% by the BC Investment Management Corporation (BCI), which manages most of BC's public sector pension investments. I worked there first as Chief Human Resources Officer and

then as Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer. My new position with BCPSEA is a great opportunity to return to the public service and apply my knowledge and experience for the advancement of a progressive and rewarding education sector.

I have joined the K-12 sector at a very challenging time. COVID-19 has impacted everyone's work, schooling, and personal lives. The challenges of the pandemic have placed additional strains on people's well-being and mental health. However, despite the circumstances, employees in K-12 have remained focused on ensuring students continue to receive high-quality education.

For you, as the ones who lead your school communities, the pandemic has not been easy. There wasn't a step-by-step guide for what to do. You have been juggling new health orders; restructuring schools, new school district processes, and teaching channels; educating and working with your employees through constant changes; answering hundreds of parent questions; and going above and beyond to keep students safe. Across the K-12 sector, Principals and Vice-Principals, along with teachers, support staff, management, and parents, have stepped up to ensure the success of the education system. I think everyone should stand up and take a bow!

Moving forward, we know that COVID is not over and that it has permanently impacted our work and lives. We know a post-COVID world will be different, but we have learned from our experiences, and BC is a vibrant community that has shown how it can adapt and change to meet any challenge. We also know that the resilience of the K-12 public education sector has been a beacon. We are confident that when the storm breaks, we will come out stronger and brighter. This recognition of current uncertainty, yet optimism for the future, will underpin BCPSEA's strategic planning

and work over our future together. We will continue to recognize the challenges employers and staff in the sector are facing, while also looking for ways that we can assist them. While I am not an educator, I will do my part to help put in place human resources initiatives and labour relations services that support the work and its success.

The latest round of bargaining has just begun this month with local teacher bargaining. Provincial teacher bargaining and support staff bargaining will begin in March 2022. Our teams are hard at work assisting employers to navigate and lead these processes.

We continue to support school district leadership with various human resources and labour relations training opportunities (ONCORE). Based on feedback from school districts, we have adjusted several of the advanced learning series courses to better align with virtual delivery. Our popular hands-on Collective Bargaining Academy course remains in-person, with six sessions scheduled from October to January at various locations across the province.

Through the Workplace Health Promotion initiative, BCPSEA provides a district-centered provincial framework for school districts to enhance their efforts for improving the health and well-being of employees. We are working to enhance mental health supports for BC K-12 employees through identification of virtual mental health care options and delivery of mental health awareness training for leaders.

We have been working with leadership from WorkSafeBC – in partnership with the BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association, BC Teachers' Federation, CUPE, BC School Superintendents Association, and School Safety Association of BC – on workplace violence prevention. Through a working group, a number of documents and tools were created that will assist the K-12 education sector with workplace violence prevention and compliance. A new website section has been created on the BCPSEA website regarding workplace violence prevention:

bit.ly/BCPSEA_OHS

School districts receive ongoing human resources and labour relations services through our direct support and liaison with our Coordinated Legal & Arbitration Support Services (CLASS).

Make a Future is hard at work helping school districts recruit employees. Recruitment advertising support has seen a 53% increase in service requests compared to last year. Two part-time Bilingual Recruitment Managers have been recently hired for a French teacher recruitment campaign. Make a Future's Sustainable Workforce Steering Committee is conducting an environmental scan regarding diversity and inclusion as part of a diversity project.

Just as schools are focusing on equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging, so are we. We are committed to helping the school system be a welcoming and caring place for everyone. We are equally committed to Reconciliation, with diversity and decolonization training planned this school year for the entire BCPSEA team.

While the work described above is but a highlight of the efforts underway at BCPSEA, I hope they demonstrate that our overall purpose is to support the K-12 public education sector to thrive. We are here to help school districts and their leadership with best-practice expertise in human resources and labour relations. Our work connects what is happening in schools with the Ministry of Education's goals.

I am humbled and honoured to be a small piece of this meaningful and impactful sector. K-12 public education is admirable and shapes our society in profound ways. Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself. I look forward to meeting many of you virtually and in person.

Bruce Anderson holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Alberta, and a Master of Arts in Labor and Industrial Relations from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He also holds his professional designation as a Certified Human Resources Executive (CHRE).



bcpsea.bc.ca

BCPSEA is a full service employers' association and is the accredited bargaining agent for the province's 60 public boards of education, for unionized teaching and support staff in the British Columbia K-12 public education system.

BCPSEA provides a full range of human resource services with a focus on the development, coordination and facilitation of human resources best practices.

Learning

LONE LEADERS

RURAL AND REMOTE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MATTERS

by

***Elizabeth Bell, Peter Johnston
& Andrea McComb***

***Directors of Professional Learning & Development
BCPVPA***



School based leaders know that it is important to network beyond their own school and district walls, reaching across provincial and even international boundaries. In talking with Principals and Vice-Principals in the more rural and remote areas of BC, the desire to network is even stronger... and these BC leaders are not alone in their quest for connection.

A year ago, BCPVPA Directors of Professional Learning and Development, Elizabeth Bell and Jessica Antosz (retired), enthusiastically entered into a learning community with other leaders of professional learning in Ontario and Australia. Through ongoing conversation, the Global Network of Professional Learning Leaders (GNPLL) emerged. New BCPVPA PLD Directors Peter Johnston and Andrea McComb now share the BC voice with that group.

The GNPLL is made up of professional learning leaders from the BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA), Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), the Queensland Association of State School Principals (QASSP), the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association (WAPPA), and the New South Wales Primary Principals' Association (NSWPPA). The group's purpose is to connect school leaders across the globe through shared learning and networking opportunities.

In a sharing of the common concerns and goals of the member organizations, it became clear that rural and remote leaders in various educational jurisdictions shared similar interests and challenges. To support those members, the GNPLL launched a webinar series to encourage school leaders who are on their own in rural or remote areas to share their stories, to learn both from each other and from specialists, and to build networks of understanding and support.

The first session of Lone Leaders: Rural and Remote School Leaders was held on October 16, 2021, and will be followed by sessions on February 24 and April 28, 2022. Members who missed the first session are welcome to consider joining us for the remaining two sessions.

In the first webinar, the discussion focused on maximizing educational outcomes for students in rural and geographically remote schools. It introduced school leaders from Ontario and Queensland who shared some of their leadership stories about ways of maximizing student outcomes in these areas. Following an opportunity for networking, Dr. Leyton Schnellert, Associate Professor, and Eleanor Rix, Professor in Rural Teacher Education at the University of British Columbia, shared their expertise. Responses were shared in small groups as networks were formulated.

The next two webinars in the series will follow a similar ninety-minute format. Participants will hear from experts from Canada and Australia who will speak

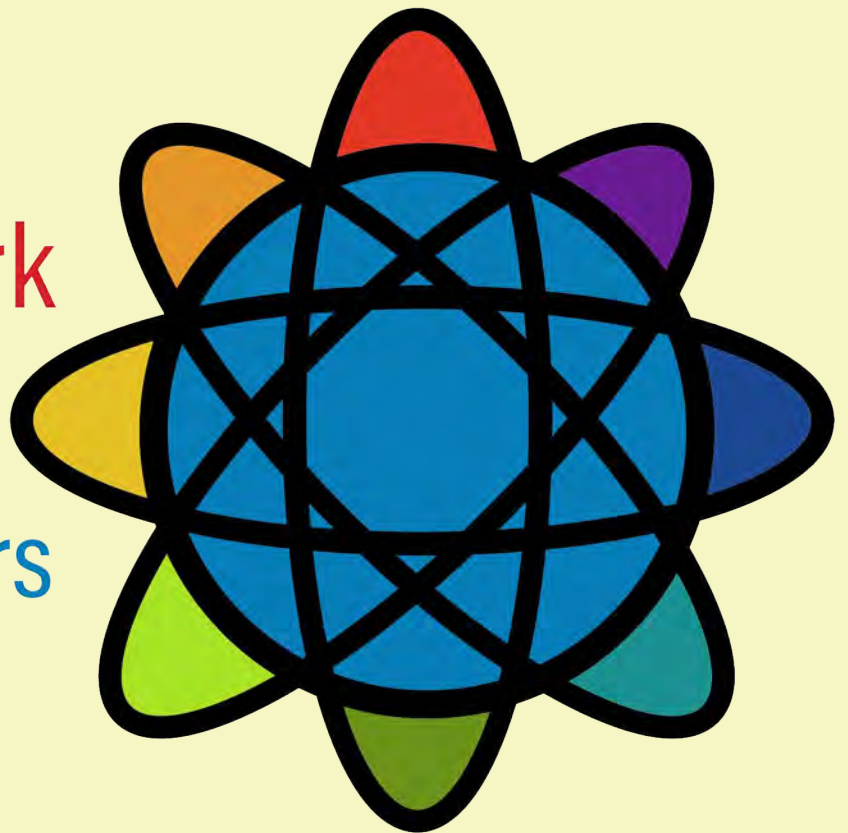
to different aspects of leadership in remote areas, local stories will be shared, and networks will be further solidified.

Topics considered for February and April may include schools as community hubs, staffing, and disaster response through trauma informed practice. Members working in rural and remote schools can contribute additional topics of interest through our registration form: visit bcpvpa.org/professional-learning/registration

As an organization, we are excited about developing new opportunities for our members, and we look forward to bringing you more professional learning through the Global Network of Professional Learning Leaders. Find out more about upcoming PLD events at bcpvpa.org, through eNews and in the Member Portal.

The Global Network of Professional Learning Leaders (GNPLL) brings together the professional learning managers from several Principals' and Vice-Principals' associations in both Canada and Australia. Through this partnership, they identify globally relevant professional learning topics, and develop affordable learning and networking opportunities which are open to Principals and Vice-Principals across the world.

Global Network of Professional Learning Leaders



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Leadership Standards

A Living Document



Since their inception in 2007, the Leadership Standards have evolved to become a document that guides and directs individual Principals, Vice-Principals, some Districts, and certainly the programming content and direction of the BCPVPA. This continual evolution can only take place in a process that is responsive to the ever-changing landscape of educational leadership in BC. Let's take a look back, before we take a look forward.

by

**Elizabeth Bell, Peter Johnston
& Andrea McComb**

*Directors of Professional Learning & Development
BCPVPA*

“The Leadership Standards for Principals and Vice-Principals in British Columbia were first established in 2007. The document was and is designed to hold student and adult development, engagement, and learning central to all leadership practices. The format and content of the Leadership Standards has earned the respect of B.C. educational leaders and partners, including the B.C. Ministry of Education. The Leadership Standards have received international recognition as a comprehensive and practical guide to educational leadership in British Columbia.”

“The purpose of the Leadership Standards is to foster continuous professional learning and development in working towards effective leadership. The Leadership Standards, as they are written, are generic, context dependent and aspirational. As such, this document may be used to help frame personal professional growth plans that support sustainability and best practice...”

“Since conception, continual research and review has led to periodic revision of the Leadership Standards so as to remain current and relevant. Each revision is undertaken by a committee of practicing Principals and Vice-Principals, and we thank all who have been involved at each stage of development.”

Introduction to the Leadership Standards (pg 3)

With a growing intentional focus on anti-racism, and respectful inclusion of all people in society, it is appropriate and essential that the language of the Leadership Standards is specific in reflecting the direction that we expect of leaders and learners in BC.

It can be said that western society entered a new era on May 25, 2020. Gripped by the circumstances of a global pandemic, a world under isolation at home with their device screens, was witness to the murder of George Floyd. For more than nine minutes, a police officer knelt upon George Floyd’s neck, ignoring his pleas for air. It was not the first occasion of such injustice, yet it became a watershed moment in history.

Society has been called to understand what it is to be anti-racist and to decolonize.

In his book *How to be an Anti-Racist*, Ibram X. Kendi writes, “...there is no neutrality in the racism struggle. The opposite of ‘racist’ is not ‘not racist’. It is ‘anti-racist’.” He offers readers a definition of an anti-racist as, “One who is supporting an anti-racist policy through their actions or expressing an anti-racist idea.”

In his article “Indigenous women, Climate Change Impacts, and Collective Action”, Kyle Powys Whyte (*Hypatia*, 29(3), 599-616) reminds us that, “For Indigenous peoples live in worlds so changed by colonialism, capitalism, and industrialization that our collective self-determination and agency are compromised to a degree our ancestors would have been haunted by. Indigenizing our futures involves our reflecting on why our ancestors would have thought today’s times are dystopian.”

These are examples of just two lenses through which we lead our schools.

At this point in our shared history, where BC school leaders are allies in creating an equitable public school system, we are called upon to shine a light on our standards using various lenses. BC school leaders all value equity. We want our students, families, and staffs to experience equity in their education experiences. To achieve this, our actions

and processes need to be intentional. How BC school leaders do our work is essential: this is where our Standards guide us.

Recognizing that equity is a journey, and collaboration and dialogue are our vehicle, BC school leaders are committed to valuing and prioritizing inclusive communication. The commitment to inclusive communication led the BCPVPA to invite leaders to represent the Standards through various lenses: reconciliation, anti-racism, intersectionality, and accessibility. The objective is to have Standards that inspire self-reflection, and guide our leadership actions towards the 'how' of creating an equitable, inclusive, accessible, and respectful learning culture.

The BCPVPA Leadership Standards are not static; they are aspirational, and must foster continuous growth and development which is – of course – rooted in the real world which surrounds us. Now is the time that the BCPVPA Leadership Standards

must evolve beyond neutrality, and uphold equitable ideas. This may require new wording, or perhaps a broader interpretation grounded by the intent of what already exists. In either respect, the time is now.

The Leadership Standards are intended as a living document that is reflective and responsive to the world around us, and which help guide the work of school leaders across BC as well as informing the work of many school leaders beyond our borders.

This fall, a call was issued for our members to participate in a representative working group of practicing Principals and Vice-Principals. The application for this committee is located in BCPVPA's member newsletter *e-News* under Updates and Announcements. The process is facilitated by the Directors of Professional Learning and Development, and will involve considerable conversation, reflection, and research over the course of the year. We anticipate that a new version of the BCPVPA Leadership Standards for Principals and Vice-Principals in British Columbia will be available for summer 2022.

This revision is the continuation of the evolution of leadership and that growth will most certainly continue. Thank you to all who participate in and lead this growth.



The **BCPVPA Leadership Standards for Principals and Vice-Principals in British Columbia** are available in both English and French, as a guide and a workbook, and can be downloaded from the Publications tab at our website bcpvpa.org



Transparent Social Passionate Proactive
Loyal Empathetic Listeners Ethical
Flexible Motivated Creative
Disciplined Authentic Responsible Resourceful
Optimistic
Confident Intuitive Consistent Curious Fun
Strategic Accountable Smart Focused
Courageous Decisive Compassionate Patient
Honest Respectful Learners Understanding
Bold Engaged Competent Organized Teachers
Energized Fair
Joyful Inspired

LEADERS



Working with your PAC



by

Frances Krusekopf

Principal, École Millstream Elementary

SD 62 (Sooke)

in collaboration with Lee Riemer

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DOL

**How a
collaborative
approach
and a culture
of gratitude
creates positive
engagement**



The potential leaders among us are sometimes too humble to step into a leadership opportunity unless invited to do so. In June 2020, I was on a virtual call with our Parent Advisory Council (PAC) executive and the PAC president was resolute that she did not wish to continue in that role. Despite several pleas to the parent community, no successor stepped forward. The executive was discouraged by the complacency of their fellow parents. My experience with non-profit boards had taught me that individuals rarely take on volunteer positions of responsibility when we put out generic calls, and are much more likely to respond when the request is personalized. With that in mind, I suggested that perhaps the next president was on the screen in front of us, and directly asked our PAC treasurer and secretary to consider the role. To everyone's surprise and relief, Lee Riemer – our treasurer at the time – said he would take on the task. What followed was a year of exceptional, authentic leadership and collaboration with a PAC that impressed me beyond what I had previously experienced. After months of sharing enthusiastic stories about our amazing PAC with colleagues, family members, and friends, I realized that – after

more than fifteen years of being a BCPVPA member – I had a story to share with a broader audience.

Upon reflection and in preparing for this article, Lee and I identified three approaches to his PAC presidency which had a key impact on the PAC's ability to increase parent engagement by creating a positive climate. To begin, Lee set a goal for himself to carry out his role with intention, and in keeping with the ideas articulated in the PAC mission statement. Second, he determined to create a culture of gratitude where parent and staff efforts received recognition throughout the school year. And third, he chose to delegate roles to others as a way of sharing the many responsibilities that can easily overwhelm a PAC president. With a focus on intentionality, gratitude, and delegation, Lee created an inviting community where parents were motivated to participate. As he built trust within the parent community, he similarly connected with the school's administration and staff with the same degree of optimistic engagement. He energized our PAC to develop a strong sense of community based on caring relationships.

It was a warm Victoria evening when our Vice-

Frances Krusekopf and Lee Riemer



Principal Tammy DeLeenheer and I first experienced Lee's energy. We arrived at his house for a meet-and-greet to get to know the PAC executive members in an informal setting. The impression I was left with that evening, that Lee was friendly and positive while also organized and purposeful, proved to be the norm for all the initiatives he led as PAC president. Lee welcomed us with two ice-breaker questions: "What is one thing you're looking forward to in the fall? And one thing you are dreading?" He then nonchalantly pulled a whiteboard out from behind his deck chair and presented us with a proposed PAC mission statement. Politely, he solicited our input, incorporated some minor feedback, and then announced the PAC statement that would guide the new school year. *"Create a 'World Class' educational community for our students. Support Staff ~ Encourage Parents ~ Love Kids"*. Tammy and I left Lee's home that night in awe of his enthusiasm to shape a PAC with intention. Not surprisingly, his eagerness was contagious, and the first on-line PAC meeting had an impressive turnout of about fifty participant families.

*Lee welcomed us with two ice-breaker questions:
"What is one thing you're looking forward to in the fall?
And one thing you are dreading?"*

The move to online PAC meetings will likely become one of the silver linings of our pandemic experience, and something that will carry on. I imagine our PAC was not alone in enjoying a significant increase in participation with a move to virtual meetings. The pandemic also reminded us that it takes an engaging chair and agenda to keep an on-line meeting format viable. Lee's positive energy and innovative spirit ensured that the PAC 'events', as he renamed the monthly meetings, stayed dynamic, allowing him to sustain unprecedented participation numbers – from 30 to 50 parents – for the entire school year. With a backdrop of the family piano, guitar, and globe, Lee's PAC online events began with an acknowledgement

of our local First Nations territory, a quick reference to the PAC mission statement, and a review of the event agenda, all aided by accompanying PowerPoint slides. His cheery nature made you want to be there, and his creative agenda ensured that you would stay, even if the event went over time... which it often did! He brought in monthly speakers or guests to 'encourage parents' as articulated in the mission statement. The presenters ranged from our new counselor, to a parent who is a professional musician, to a consultant addressing the topic of creating balance with media use. Lee would seek input about potential speakers from PAC VP Kim Guiry, but often he would also follow his intuition, exploring topics that were timely or of interest to him. Lee often arranged for a fellow PAC member to interview the guest, talk-show style, while staying engaged himself by asking his own questions and ending with positive feedback for the presenters.

Beyond speakers, Lee introduced door prizes such as gift cards or children's socks as a perk to entice participants to the online events. Recognizing the importance of delegating roles to others, Lee solicited the help of parent Sarah Doerksen who collected donations from local businesses to distribute as door prizes. The door prizes were a hit. With the enthusiasm of a game show host, Sarah awarded them to randomly selected event participants. Shout outs, where Lee thanked parents or staff for their efforts, became another agenda highlight. He wanted parents to feel that the energy and time they put into raising \$500 was more than a line item in a financial report and worthy of celebration. In Lee's year-end report, he noted that more than 55 gift cards and thank you cards were given out to key PAC volunteers throughout the school year. This gratitude was also extended to staff who received a personal gift bag in May. By creating a culture of gratitude, he wanted to acknowledge that people's efforts meant a lot.

Lee took on difficult issues with equal finesse. Early on in his tenure as president, both of us learned of proposed catchment changes that would relocate our school's French Immersion program. Together with a parent advocacy committee, Lee acted quickly, handling this concern with diplomacy and an appropriate sense of urgency. PAC provided a

safe space for parents to ask questions, share their opinions, and communicate their perspectives to the school district. Lee understood, and embraced, the potential to expand PAC's impact beyond the usual focus on fundraising initiatives, and to advocate for the 'world class' educational community that was identified in the mission statement.

Lee and I met in my office each Wednesday morning for most of the year. Regular meetings with the school's PAC president were a practice I had initiated in the past with those who had the time and interest. These meetings would unfold informally, each of us bringing forward issues or upcoming events that would benefit from discussion and advance planning. I recognized that dedicating time and space, outside of scheduled PAC meetings, helps develop a positive working relationship with the school's PAC president. It was also a way to demonstrate to the school community that my door truly is open to parents, a particularly important message during the pandemic. As it turns out, meeting with me regularly to establish a strong working relationship was quite intentional on Lee's part. He wanted to affirm my leadership and our teamwork to the parent community, which he often did during the online PAC events.

Lee and I soon discovered that we had common interests that related to assuming a leadership role. Of note was the morning when Lee asked me about my favourite books on my bookshelf. Professional literature, whether specifically related to education or more broadly to leadership, has directly influenced my practice as a school leader. I was heartened that Lee took notice of my collection of books and even more excited to pull out several books such as Margaret Wheatley's *Turning to One Another* and share their significance. In exchange, Lee offered up a few suggestions of his own, including *Deep Work* by Cal Newport, and it became clear to me that reading had influenced his leadership style as well.

As the year ended, Lee informed me that his family would be changing schools to attend their new neighbourhood catchment school. Knowing that he was leaving our community did not change Lee's commitment: the positive PAC spirit he had helped to create stayed strong. Together with the PAC, plans

*I recognized that
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outside of scheduled
PAC meetings,
helps develop a positive
working relationship
with the school's
PAC president*

were made for an end-of-school year ice cream day, a Grade 5 celebration, and grant initiatives with the Capital Regional District and ArtStarts in Schools. Without any difficulty, Lee was able to find a successor to take on the PAC president role. Interestingly, next year's executive will be comprised of two mothers and two fathers. I am certain that our community will benefit from their diverse perspectives.

In an unprecedented school year, where elementary school parents were rarely seen inside of the school building because of pandemic restrictions, our PAC flourished. I attribute that largely to Lee's positive and purposeful leadership style, his focus on gratitude, and his ability to delegate responsibilities to others while still providing support. "Way to go, team!" Lee said at the end of one of his PAC online events. It was true: despite all the COVID-19 challenges, our PAC functioned as a successful team this past year. Perhaps because parents were unable to help in typical ways inside the building, they were more motivated to take on different PAC roles to show support. How grateful I am that Lee provided a welcoming forum to encourage them to do so.

At the end of his online events, Lee would sign off with fellow parents by saying "I will see you on the playground." While I will be disappointed not to see Lee on our playground this fall, I know his year of leadership made a difference to our school community. As Principals, we understand that working successfully with your PAC is critical. Collaborating with a PAC as keen, effective, and innovative as the one I experienced this past year was a real treat and has become my new standard.

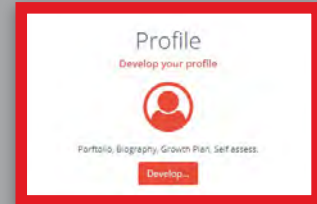


CREATE

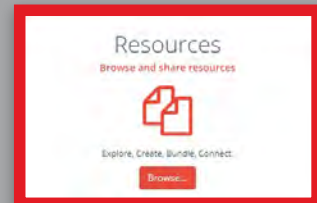
- one-stop access to resources shared by other educators, in your district and province-wide
- share resources directly with students and families: no passwords required
- record Zoom or YouTube instructions, and set meeting times for feedback and check-ins

COLLABORATE

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



Create a personal profile with your biography, photo, and experience



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



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





RETURN-IT SCHOOL PROGRAM 2021/2022

REGISTER TODAY AT [RETURNITSCHOOL.CA!](https://ReturnItSchool.ca)

FREE resources to help BC Elementary and Secondary Schools benefit from beverage container recycling.



\$5,000 Grand Prize Story Contest

Share your school's interesting, creative and impactful recycling story with us and you could win a Grand Prize of \$5,000 (two Elementary School winners and two High School winners every year!)



Return-It School Video Presentation Kit

Teachers can now request a free Presentation Kit via mail to their class with a fun & educational video about recycling, lesson tips, and special goodies for their students.

NEW!



Bottle Drives with Express

Return-It Express makes it easier for schools to hold their bottle drives. No sorting, easy drop offs, and your school keeps 100% of the deposit refunds!



Free Recycling Bins

Get up to 3 free Return-It bins to help your school's recycling program. Plus, discover the best collection & bottle drive methods for your school, from Return-It Express to pick-up services (where available).



Official Return-It 101 Certificate

Display pride in your school's recycling program with an official Certificate of participation signed by Return-It's CEO.



Tools & Tips

Registered schools will have access to resources to help with recycling programs including fundraising and bottle drive tips.



Free Program

Get everything above plus access to our online Teacher's Dashboard with exclusive educational resources and fundraising tips. All FREE from Return-It, the not-for-profit product steward for beverage container recycling in British Columbia that diverts used beverage containers from the landfill and makes sure they are properly recycled. You probably know us best through your local Return-It Depot.

**Sign-up today at ReturnItSchool.ca and join
hundreds of official Return-It Schools across BC**



NEW VIDEO: THE SECRET LIVES OF A PLASTIC BEVERAGE CONTAINER

Ever wonder what happens to your school's plastic bottles after they're collected? Check out our new free educational video, "The Secret Lives of a Plastic Beverage Container" to find out! Available now on the Return-It School online Teacher's Dashboard.



STORY CONTEST WINNERS FROM 2020/2021

Elementary \$5,000 Grand Prize Winner: Forest Grove Elementary

In the past few years, volunteers for Forest Grove Elementary's recycling program have been able to extend it's capacity by bringing on new volunteers from the community and creating a new system for fundraising that has significantly increased the number of beverage containers they've been able to collect. This school year alone, they have collected over 200,000 beverage containers for their school! The program is the main source of funding for Forest Grove's CPAC program, which ensures no student goes hungry throughout the day by providing breakfast and lunch to students who need it. Their inspiring hard work has earned them a first-place cash prize of \$5,000 from Return-It to contribute to their school's fund.



High School \$5,000 Grand Prize Winner: Lake City Secondary

The 9 students in Lake City Secondary's Life Skills class have been tasked with a very important job: once every week, they are responsible for collecting refundable containers from each classroom in the school. While collecting containers allows the students to fundraise and contribute to their school, it also emphasizes movement and inclusion within their school community. Lake City's Life Skills class' recycling efforts have been a huge success – the school raised over \$800 this year alone, and they have been running their program for more than 8 years! They hope to use the funds they've raised, and the 1st place \$5,000 cash prize rewarded by Return-It to go on a school outing.

BOTTLE DRIVES WITH EXPRESS

Return-It Express makes it easier for schools to hold bottle drives. Express takes the work out of fundraising and makes it easy for people to contribute to the school's bottle drive. Students, teachers, parents and the community can simply bring their refundable drink containers to an Express depot and return them tagged with the school's account number. The depot will sort and count the containers and credit the refunds to your Express account within 10 business days.



HOW FUNDRAISING WITH EXPRESS WORKS:



Sign up for a free Express account for your school at **Return-It.ca/Express**



Share your school's Express account number within your school (and your community if you wish). A phone number or any memorable 10-digit number is valid.



Bring your unsorted containers in transparent plastic bags* to an Express location. To find an Express location near you, visit **Return-It.ca/Locations/Express**



Log in at the Express label stand at the depot using your school's account number. Anyone with the account number can contribute to your bottle drive.



Print off the number of labels you need, stick one on each bag, and leave them at the depot.



The depot will sort and count the containers for you and credit your Express account.

Read the full stories at **ReturnItSchool.ca/schoolnews**

* Some depots may have per-visit bag limits. Contact your local Express location directly for more information.

Did You Know?

While the job of Principal and Vice-Principal can be extremely rewarding, there can be times in our careers that feel difficult, challenging, and even lonely. One such example is when members receive a complaint against them, resulting in a formal investigation process. Members inevitably question their own actions and ask themselves, “What could I have done to avoid this situation?” While there is no formulaic answer to this question, we will share in this article knowledge, actions, and wisdom from school leaders who have lived through the investigation process, along with guidance from our Member Support Services (MSS) lens.

News that an investigation is being launched to investigate a member’s conduct or actions can be delivered in different ways. In some cases, a member may be called to an in-person meeting, and senior district staff will relay the news. In other cases, the news may be delivered by email during a busy day, or via a phone call from the member’s HR department or supervisor. We have heard from members that regardless of the thought put into the timing and method of delivering the news – whether in a face-to-face meeting, by email, or by phone – it is never easy to receive. Members shared that the act of reaching out as soon as possible for support from the BCPVPA has helped them to gain awareness and prepare for the process.

by

Magdalena Kassis & Ellen Roberts

Directors of Member Support Services, BCPVPA



LESSONS LEARNED

KNOWLEDGE

ACTIONS

WISDOM

Investigations vary depending upon the direction the complainant chooses to take with their complaint, the circumstances of the behaviour being alleged, and the approach of the individual investigator reviewing the allegations. Most complaints are filed at the district level and are investigated either by the HR department or externally hired investigators. These may include investigations of bullying and harassment and generalized ‘misconduct’ as defined by individual school districts. There are also WorkSafeBC claims of bullying and harassment, and Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB) complaints of a breach of the Professional Standards for BC Educators. In some cases, district-level investigations are accompanied by – or followed by – TRB Investigations when complainants are not satisfied with the outcomes at the district level. Even despite these differences, there are common themes among investigations, particularly around the elements that lead to the complaint or investigation.

“Could this investigation have been avoided?” We are sometimes asked if there are common ‘pitfalls’ that our members fall into, or trends that make them vulnerable to workplace investigations. We would agree that we see some recurring behaviours that have led some school leaders to be investigated, but there are many situations that Principals and Vice-Principals could neither anticipate nor prepare for, and other circumstances that catch them completely off-guard when they emerge.

KNOWLEDGE

When MSS works with Principals and Vice-Principals who are responding to allegations, we find out what they know about district policy, the TRB and BCPVPA standards, collective agreements, rules or regulations, and district processes that might serve as a back-drop to the alleged behaviour being investigated. We ensure that by the time a member sits in front of an investigator at an interview, they are confident in their knowledge of any policies or standards, responsibilities under the School Act, their personal services contract, or any other procedural documents that might be germane to their situation. Up-to-date knowledge of these resources that ‘guide and direct our practice’ can go a long way in

preventing unfortunate situations. In some cases, being more familiar with the documents at an earlier stage could have possibly pre-empted the complaint process the member is facing.

For example, when Principals and Vice-Principals are familiar with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA), and carefully follow the procedures established in district policy with respect to protecting student information, they are more likely to be careful with documents, confidential files, and the sharing of information except when necessary. When Principals and Vice-Principals know TRB Standard 1, they are more likely to ensure that safety measures are in place for children on field trips, that programs are meeting the needs of all children, and that the privacy of students is protected. When Principals and Vice-Principals understand that they have a fiduciary responsibility to their employer – their Board of Education – they know that they are the eyes and ears of the district and must never speak out against a direction of the Board, even if they may not personally agree with it.

We spoke with some members who have been through investigations in recent years: when asked about what they knew ahead of time that they believe **helped them** in their situation, this is what they said:

“All employees have the right to make a harassment/bullying claim if they believe that they have been wronged. My comfort came in knowing that I had not violated the policy/procedures. That doesn’t mean that the entire process wasn’t exceptionally stressful and shocking. Being accused of such unprofessional behaviour is unsettling to say the least.”

“I was fortunate to have taken a two-day workshop on the topic and what the role of the investigator is, the process etc., so I felt that I hadn’t conducted myself inappropriately in terms of my interactions with the individual.”

“Our district has a good process for complaints – as this was one of my very first ones, it was interesting to navigate through it. I took it as a pro-d and learning experience. I was appreciative of having Ellen support me through it and the Short Course helped provide context to how important my decisions are as a Principal.”

“I knew that there were times when staff had made accusations against their admin that were investigated. I knew that I could ask for help and support from the BCPVPA if I was involved in an investigation.”

Some members noted what they wished they had known:

"I did not realize how much assistance the BCPVPA can offer in these situations. The experience made me really appreciate the role of the BCPVPA acting on our behalf. I would strongly encourage all administrators to be part of the BCPVPA. While my district was 100% supportive, I did not realize that they can be called as witnesses for investigations and may not always be able to provide direct support as they needed to maintain neutrality. The BCPVPA walked me through every step and provided practical and emotional support as well as much needed wisdom on the investigation process in a non-judgmental way."

"I wish I had known more about the full definition of bullying and harassment as described by both WorkSafe BC language and the Collective Agreement language. I was surprised and shocked that what I thought was my sound work ethic in fulfilling my roles and responsibilities could be construed as bullying/intimidation/harassment."

"I would have liked to know more about what is involved in an investigation interview for the administrator and how the person making the accusations might cause a number of staff members to also be involved in interviews. I would like teachers to know that if their admin is involved and they are asked that although it is confidential, admin will not hold it against them and that it will not impact their relationships with them. I felt badly for teachers that may have felt caught in the middle of this process and that they may say something that would negatively impact me. That is a heavy burden for them."

ACTIONS

In addition to the knowledge a Principal or Vice-Principal may have, we talk about the actions the Principal or Vice Principal took or, sometimes as importantly, did not take that may have contributed to the investigation. How we communicate our decisions, conduct meetings, respond to difficult situations, and prioritize our daily work can have an impact on our relationships with our staff and affect how we are perceived by parents and the school community. Some Principals who find themselves under investigation are very familiar with rules and regulations and are careful to act accordingly. However, despite knowing the 'rules', they may find themselves in hot water for the way they communicate their decisions.

Having suggested that what members know and do can affect the likelihood of being involved in an

investigation, there are situations that cannot be anticipated or prevented that lead to investigations.

In some cases, complaints reflect complex issues the complainant is facing in their personal life, and there is nothing a Principal can do to avoid the complaint. In other cases, staff members or parents will lodge a complaint against a Principal about a particular decision, even when it may be a decision the Principal has not made. Sometimes the staff member or parent does not agree with a district decision or policy. In situations like these, it is unfortunate when the complainant chooses to file a complaint against the Principal, as the district then has no alternative but to follow through with an investigation.

Some BCPVPA members we spoke with who faced investigations have offered the following learnings and guidance for their colleagues. These were things that they were glad to have previously done as they navigated the process:

“Document everything that is odd, uncomfortable, challenging, threatening, awkward—anything that you walk away going hmmm... Time, place, date, who was there, what was said, how was it said, etc. Handwritten notes are the best in my opinion for awkward, in-person/face-to-face interactions, however responding via email in a professional, positive, and kind tone (even if you don’t want to be) at the end of the day of an investigation, shows that you maintained your professionalism even in the face of unprofessional behaviour on the other person’s part.”

“Make sure you keep your senior administration team in the loop.”

“I was completely emotionally unprepared for the phone call from the district.”

“I think when things begin to go sideways in a relationship, reaching out to them with a ‘care and concern meeting’ involving their union reps (school rep or district rep) really helps when personal meetings go sideways. I also think reaching out to an assistant superintendent and our HR reps really helps when working through difficult situations. That way it is not just my interpretation, but a collaborative approach to working through challenges with an employee.”

“Luckily I had kept all records of communication and taken notes at all meetings. While I never expected an investigation, I was aware that the particular parent was often critical of school staff. While the process was very time consuming, detailed notes and emails allowed the Commissioner to understand the full picture to be able to rule fairly.”

WISDOM

We wish we could offer a no-fail recipe for avoiding workplace investigations for all of our members, but we know that such a thing does not exist. We can, however, share some words of wisdom that we feel might be helpful for Principals and Vice-Principals to consider.

- ♦When in doubt about how to proceed with an unfamiliar and potentially controversial situation, ask a trusted colleague or district staff, or reach out to MSS to talk through the situation. We are always happy to help point members in the right direction.
- ♦If a situation appears poised to escalate beyond the school, let the supervisor know. Superintendents and district staff do not want to hear a bad news story about a member or the school community on the news. It’s always best to be proactive and transparent.
- ♦Remain familiar with key documents and resources that will help guide and direct your practice.
- ♦Don’t put off responding to challenging situations with parents, staff, or community members. This

does not mean answering emails in the middle of the night, but if someone has expressed a concern that goes unanswered, another concern has just been added to the list. Consider responding promptly, if only to confirm that there will be a more fulsome follow-up response to come.

- ♦When implementing significant changes that may not be accepted with enthusiasm by staff or community, plant the seeds early and allow people time to ask questions and warm to the idea. While a change may have been considered by leadership for a significant time, this may be the first time that staff or community has heard about it, and they will need time to adjust. This includes changes to calendar or bell schedules, movement of classes, or programs within the school.
- ♦If a member receives a letter of investigation from the district or the TRB, contact MSS right away. Our support can begin on the first day.

Members in the field who have been through investigations share their words of wisdom to assist colleagues in avoiding investigations, and navigating them if they become a reality.

“Keep accurate and organized notes and files. Make sure your notes are factual and non-biased.”

“Ensure you are approaching difficult decisions with informed and evidence-based decision making. Emotions and personalities should not impede progress, especially if the interest of kids is at stake.”

“Follow up difficult conversations with an email. Again, keep it factual, non-biased, and reinforce the rationale behind the decision. Acknowledge the emotions and difficulties.”

“As difficult as it is, try not to take it personally. Remember, your best intentions may not always be perceived the way you intend and hope.”

“Reflect. Pay attention to your own biases and judgements and ensure they are not factoring into your decision making.”

“Despite the horrible feeling of an investigation, I feel my actions were grounded in policy and in the best interest of the child. As long as you can back your decisions in policy and show communication with your district leadership team, I would still suggest leading from an ethic of care for kids even at the risk of a pending investigation from unhappy parents.”

“The investigator is not your friend, it is their job to investigate and, after compiling the information, make a decision as to whether or not you violated the policy; they want to make a decision regarding who is the more credible person. The investigator is looking for consistency in facts, who presents themselves (through your record and under investigation recollection of events) in the most consistent and professional manner. Does what you are saying/recalling when responding to the investigator’s questions reflect your evidence?”

“When an employee’s performance is falling apart, make sure to document meetings, the support you offer and give, and ensure that they have support from their union, and health and wellness services.”

“Don’t put off making your own wellness a priority, because for your family, friends, colleagues, and the people you work with, there is only one you.”

When members face an investigation process, it can often feel very isolating, as the process is very confidential. Principals and Vice-Principals have often expressed a desire to be able to share their personal learnings and reflections to help colleagues around the province either avoid a situation or navigate it as smoothly as possible. We extend our deep appreciation to those who have gone through the process, and who have shared their words of wisdom.

The MSS Team at BCPVPA offers professional guidance when members are facing difficult situations, and can present workshops to local Chapters on the “Legal Side of Leadership”. We fully support and represent members through an investigation process if they find themselves facing a complaint.

“Reach out for help and support from the BCPVPA as soon as you receive the letter or get the phone call. Those immediate few hours or days would be so much more bearable if I had done so immediately instead of waiting.”

Contact us:

Phone 604-689-3399

Toll-Free in BC 800-663-0432

Find resources on our website:

bcpvpa.org - Member Support Services

Find resources in the BCPVPA Member Portal under Member Support Services

There are 16 members on the BC Teachers' Council (BCTC):

- Five members are elected by teachers
- Three members are appointed by the minister based on nominations from the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF)
- Seven members are appointed by the minister from other education partner groups' nominations
- One non-voting member is appointed to represent the minister

bit.ly/AboutBCTC

BCTC is also responsible for establishing the Standards for

BC post-secondary teacher education programs, and for reviewing and approving post-secondary teacher education programs.

Throughout my term, council members and Ministry staff spent countless hours working to revise the Teacher Education Program Approval Standards.



BC Teachers' Council

"The BC Teacher's Council sets the professional standards for all educators in the province, and reviews the standards for faculties of education in the province. When it comes to setting the professional direction of educators in BC, it is critical for the BCPVPA to have a voice at the table and to provide the perspective of our more than 2,600 members across the province."

Kevin Reimer

Executive Director

BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

As we embark on a new school year, and return to our learning agendas within our schools, I would like to share about my time as the Minister of Education's appointee representing the BCPVPA on the BC Teacher's Council (BCTC).

My initial understanding of the BCTC was only that they set the professional standards for certified educators. What I quickly discovered was that the council bases their important work on ongoing feedback from certificate holders, teacher candidates, education partners, students, parents, and the public.

I was pleased to learn about how much time and attention was spent on the revised Standards for B.C. Educators (bit.ly/StandBCEd) particularly the emphasis on Standard #9:

"Educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future. Educators contribute towards truth, reconciliation, and healing. Educators foster a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and being, histories, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis."

Soon, I discovered that under the Teachers Act, the BCTC is responsible for:

- Setting standards for applicants and educators in BC, including education, competence, and professional conduct requirements
- Setting standards for post-secondary teacher education programs
- Reviewing and approving post-secondary teacher education programs

Beyond the Standards

Reflections on my Appointment to the BC Teacher's Council

by

Jay Dixon

Director of Instruction
SD 71 (Comox Valley)

Throughout my two years as a representative on council, I was impressed by how the sixteen highly committed members of council, supported by Ministry staff, worked collectively to fulfill their responsibility. It was a humbling experience to work with an exceptionally collaborative council. Each elected or appointed member brought to the table a wide range of experiences and professional backgrounds. Each clearly has the best interest of our British Columbia learners in mind: both our youth, and those that aspire to become teachers.

A highlight from my term was participating in the maintenance review process of post-secondary teacher education programs where programs welcome BCTC members into their schools. Post-secondary education programs were very welcoming and collaborative. Each program spends time showcasing how they are supporting the learning experiences of their teacher candidates, and how the learning directly connects to the program Standards.

Finally, during my term I was fortunate to be one of nine members from the BCTC serving on the Disciplinary and Professional Conduct Board. BCTC members are appointed as panel members for disciplinary hearings throughout their terms, and this opportunity introduced me to a new layer of our Discipline Process in BC.

Find out more about the
appointment of a Hearing Panel:
bit.ly/PanelBCTC

Find out more about the
Discipline Process:
bit.ly/DiscProcBCTC

As we all return this school year, BCTC encourages Principals and Vice-Principals to ensure we visit and revisit the Revised Professional Standards in our work. The Standards are now more reflective of BC's curriculum, and include new wording specific to Indigeneity, The First Peoples Principals of Learning, commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, and inclusion and diversity.

Thank you to the BCPVPA for the opportunity to represent our organization as an appointee. I would urge my colleagues to explore the links throughout this article and help with promoting awareness of each Standard.



bit.ly/AboutBCTC



SPRING 2021 WORKSHOPS



Trauma-Informed Leadership

March 17; 10am-1pm CT

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Leadership Insights Ideas to Take You Further

March 29; 9am-4pm CT

Early rate: \$269; Regular rate: \$309

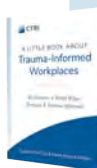
Based on our book, *Don't Blame the Lettuce: Insights to Help You Grow as a Leader and Nurture Your Workplace Culture*, this workshop explores a variety of specialized leadership topics that will help you meet challenges and respond to opportunities in new and different ways.

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NEW BOOK!



Don't Blame the Lettuce: Insights to Help You Grow as a Leader and Nurture Your Workplace Culture

This book will inspire you to intentionally consider your approach to leadership, provide ideas to strengthen your leadership practices, and help you further develop your leadership philosophy.

learning

“Time to meet, talk and debrief in our groups has been valuable. My 'table family' will be a group to connect with moving forward. (Our facilitator) guides the conversation, offers thoughts and ideas, but his best attribute is that with simple questions, he is able to force us to dig just a little deeper in our thinking.”

(2019 BCPVPA Short Course I Attendee)

The BCPVPA offers a continued journey of learning, and the chance to collaborate with colleagues, to more than 2,600 Principals and Vice-Principals in BC's public education system.

bcpvpa.org

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RE-IMAGINING the 3 R's of Education

Take a deep breath. Hold it. Now exhale. Last year is behind you, a distant memory full of unforgettable scenes. The future dangles the promise of a new beginning with another school year commencing. As one of my colleagues told me, “This year it’s onward and upward, Jane.” With this in mind, I am urging my staff to re-imagine the 3 R’s of education. We are moving beyond the traditional dimensions of ‘reading, writing and arithmetic’. Instead, we are re-directing our efforts on ‘**relationships, regulation and resiliency**’. As stated by Heather Forbes in her book *Help for Billy* (2012) “We must broaden the traditional academics only focus that has dominated our classrooms for far too long.”

by

Jane Arbuckle

Principal, Parkside Secondary

Terrace SD 82

The context of teaching has changed due to the demands imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We need to put on a new pair of glasses through which we view our world and the world of our students. We must ask ourselves, “What matters? What is important? What do our students need?” as we plan learning activities that focus upon relationships, regulation and resiliency. These three concepts form the necessary building blocks upon which learning takes place for our students as they continue to face the reality of living in a COVID-19 world.

Teaching is a social endeavour so **‘Relationships’** are important between students and their teachers, particularly those learners who are experiencing adversity. The desire to connect with a compassionate adult is a basic relationship need for students. “All students need a safe person who understands them and is willing to build a connection with them: a champion. This person is an unconditional partner whose sole purpose is to be in their corner, supporting, guiding and helping as needed.” (Souers and Hall, 2019).

Academic success for students can be influenced by the nature of the relationship between students and staff. Think about your favourite teacher when you were in school or college. The traits this teacher displayed likely influenced your motivation to learn and your desire to work. In other words, relationships can drive academic achievement. This notion must be reinforced in our classrooms, so everyone feels they have an advocate who is present as an active listener and cheerleader. If students misbehave, then the questions we need to ask ourselves are “What is driving this behaviour? What does this student need?” before the adults respond.

In today’s schools, educators should be experts in the academics they teach and also be well-informed about the students who enter their classrooms each day. How many of the following questions can you answer about your students: What are their hobbies? What makes them laugh? Who are their friends? What do they want to be when they grow up? What is their family like? What are the behavioural signs that they are becoming upset or dysregulated? When you spend quality time together with students in a

safe and caring environment, the answers to these questions will be disclosed. The information can help guide staff as they support students throughout the school year.

When building affirming connections with students, the power of a smile can never be underestimated. Smiling releases chemicals in the brain that help calm a person’s nervous system. Welcoming students into a room also has a profound influence. Standing at the door to greet students by using their names can be interpreted as a gesture of caring. These two actions of smiling and greeting students do not involve any specialized equipment or training, but they do require attentiveness and authenticity.



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If relationships are the new foundation for an educator’s workplace, then **‘Regulation’** has become the new framework for the learning process. Regulation is the ability to cope with stress, calm one’s nervous system, sustain one’s focus and maintain one’s emotional balance or be calm (Forbes, 2020). Research about the human brain has indicated that the optimal roadmap for learning resides in the neocortex or rational ‘upstairs thinking’ brain. Spatial reasoning,

imagination, logic, planning, higher order thinking, problem solving, language, and abstract thought all reside in the neocortex. This 'sweet spot' becomes disturbed whenever threats, stress, anxiety, or trauma are perceived, thereby inhibiting the effectiveness of the neocortex and instead activating the 'downstairs reptilian' brain and limbic system so that memory, attention span, and mood now become compromised. A person is regulated when they can identify and manage their emotions to be in a balanced, relaxed state with the neocortex in charge and, likewise, dysregulated when the limbic system takes over.

Learning to regulate oneself is a valuable skill that educators need to master so they can model and teach regulation to their students and thereby improve the conditions for learning in the classroom. Equally important is an educator's ability to recognize the signs of their own dysregulation or the 'triggers' in themselves and their students so that appropriate interventions can happen to get the brain back on track for learning. Consider for a moment how your body



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alerts you to the fact that dysregulation is happening, and your 'downstairs brain' is taking over: increased heart rate, tense muscles, dizziness, rapid breathing, dry mouth, tightness in the chest area, stomach discomfort, a headache, and noise sensitivity. Furthermore, think about the visible clues that are associated with dysregulation: a flushed face, dilated pupils, pacing, fidgeting, tapping, rocking, clenched fists, sweating, verbal, and physical aggression (Place 2021).

When dysregulation is noticed or experienced, then it is important to take the necessary actions to bring regulation to the forefront as soon as possible. Deep breathing can calm the nervous system, especially when practiced with a caring adult. Movement can also help, so going for a walk, sitting in a rocking chair, or doing simple body stretches can release the tension in one's muscles. Being in the company of a regulated adult can also help others become regulated. This contagious ripple effect of calmness is known as the co-regulation model, and stresses the importance of adults in a school arriving to work as regulated as possible so they can be role models of regulation for their students and colleagues. According to Heather Forbes "When teachers can model their regulatory state in front of students by acknowledging how they are feeling and explaining what they are doing to get regulated, it becomes a powerful example to students." (Forbes 2020, page 114). We do not need to be perfect. We are human beings inclined to make mistakes. What we need is to be aware of our body's state of regulation or dysregulation and recognize when we need to change our behaviour.

With relationships cultivated and regulation optimized, '**Resiliency**', the third R of education, now takes its place on the centre stage. In her TED Talk, Lucy Hone (2019) emphasized the notion that adversity does not discriminate. We all experience tough times. The key is being resilient by thinking and acting in certain ways to be able to bounce back from hardship. As we all know, teaching has difficult tasks that must be completed on a daily basis. According to Julie Causton and Kate Macleod (2020) "As educators, we can often be overwhelmed by the emotional aspect of teaching and working with students who have

challenging behaviour... Taking care of your own emotional and mental health is paramount to your life, well-being, and work to effectively support your students". Educators can then provide the conditions for their students to develop resiliency by creating routines and a nurturing classroom that stresses safety and predictability.

Resilient people are proficient at carefully choosing where to direct their attention by accepting what they cannot change and focusing instead on what they can change. Resilient people tune into the 'good' and acknowledge on a daily basis what they are grateful for in their lives. This intentional ongoing effort to hunt for the 'positive' is a trait of resilient people and an asset for educators.

According to Kathryn Meisner we can all learn to become resilient. At the end of each day, take time to reflect by thinking about one thing you handled well; list ways you showed support to your students; say one positive remark to yourself about the day; or commit to doing something kind for yourself during the week. Resiliency is not a skill acquired or developed overnight; it takes time and intentional effort to become resilient, but the end reward is worth the effort.

According to Michele Lew (2018), educators can help students build their resilience and self-awareness by teaching students how to identify their stressors when they feel sad, upset, or frazzled and then assist students with brainstorming alternate ways to cope with stress. Kenneth Ginsberg (2020) highlights seven aspects of resilience for children and teens and offers practical advice that adults can follow to help foster resilience in youth. The guidelines listed below can become the compass points by which educators steer their behaviour as they build resilience in their students:

- Reminding children to focus on their strengths
- Recognizing when children have done well
- Providing a safe environment for youth
- Helping children to see themselves as caring individuals



Resilient

people are proficient
at carefully choosing
where to direct their
attention by accepting
what they cannot
change and focusing
instead on what they
can change.

- Stressing the importance of serving others by modelling generosity
- Demonstrating positive coping strategies on a consistent basis
- Ensuring that children know there are adults in their lives who believe in them

With relationships, regulation, and resiliency prominently placed in your 'backpack' for work, you are now better equipped to effectively support and coach your students. You can become a better version of yourself ready to face the ongoing demands of being a teacher, and navigating the challenges of living and thriving in a COVID-19 world. As Julie Causton and Kate MacLeod (2020) state in their Morning Promise: "Today is a fresh start. I will remember these are someone's children. They want to be successful. They communicate with their behaviour. They need my patience. I will welcome them into my classroom space. I will forgive any past mistakes. I will continue to figure out what they need. I will watch for and remember their successes."



Jane Arbuckle (jane.arbuckle@cmsd.bc.ca) is enjoying her sixth year as principal of Parkside Secondary School in Terrace, British Columbia. As an experienced teacher and administrator working in elementary, junior, and senior secondary schools for thirty years, Jane is passionate about helping students and staff reach their full potential. Jane maintains an optimistic 'can do' attitude, inspiring others to be creative and to take risks with their learning. Her hobbies include baking, taking relaxing walks with her wife Linda, watching British mystery shows, and cheering for her favourite sports team, the Toronto Maple Leafs. Go Leafs Go!

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(2020 Mentee)

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by
Lee Smith

One day in April 2014, I spent nine hours and sixteen minutes in the custody of China's Public Security Bureau.

I was escorted from my office at an accredited BC Offshore school near Shanghai by two plainclothes officers, then driven for more than an hour to a nondescript office building in a nearby city.

Though I was treated well, and spoken to politely, I was disconcerted. In that room, I was given a choice, but I truly felt I had no choice at all.

Moral Distress



As the school Principal, I could order the immediate removal of the Counterpoints textbook we were using, which at the time was the required textbook in a required course towards graduation with the Dogwood diploma. We had used that book for many years in Social Studies 11, but now three graphics inside the book were flagged by an official in the national Ministry of Education as offensive to the state.

If I opted not to order the removal of the textbook, the BC program would have its permission to operate in our Chinese host school cancelled that day, a move with immense consequences for 55 BC-certified teachers and nearly 800 students. Additionally, I would be deported from China within the week.

I did the only thing I felt I could do. But when I agreed to remove that textbook, I assented to a directive that runs counter not only to my own beliefs, but also to the values and principles which imbue the BC curriculum. I was upset and shaken. I was angry. I tried to process and articulate my feelings, but I couldn't find the right words. With time, I felt I settled on a kind of 'ethical consternation', a deep frustration on being forced to act in a way I knew didn't feel right or just.

I left China in July 2019, after a decade in BC Offshore Schools, to work full-time towards my Ph.D. at the University of Alberta. My doctoral supervisor, Dr. Bonnie Stelmach, had recently been commissioned by the Alberta Teachers Association to talk with school leaders across the province about the moral dimension of school leadership. The participants reported issues such as work intensification, increased calls for accountability and public scrutiny, and feelings of being expected to do more with less. These issues sometimes resulted in a kind of tension between the leaders' inner convictions and the actions they felt forced to take to meet external

expectations. And this study was completed before the pandemic even started!

My own issue was with censorship in an international context, with navigating a misalignment in the values which infuse BC's Curriculum in a country which doesn't hold the same values in the same way, with not being able to provide the standard of ethical leadership I feel compelled to provide. When I started my doctoral studies, I learned that what I felt, but couldn't properly articulate, actually already has a name. Moral distress, identified first by Andrew Jameton in 1984, is a phenomenon now well-studied in health care scholarship. Other than Dr. Stelmach's recent work for the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), and now in my own research, moral distress has yet to be considered in education scholarship.

The concept and understanding of moral distress in health care literature has evolved since the mid-80s. I use Alvita Nathaniel's (2006) definition, modified by me to refer to Principals instead of nurses: "...moral distress is a pain affecting the mind, the body, or relationships that results from a situation in which the [Principal] is aware of a moral problem, acknowledges moral responsibility, and makes a moral judgement about the correct action, yet, as a result of real or perceived constraints, participates, either by act or omission, in a manner he or she perceives to be morally wrong" (p. 421).

The real or perceived constraints in Nathaniel's definition mirror a distinction made by Garros, Austin, and Dodek (2020) between external constraints, such as institutional policies or structures, and internal constraints such as lessened autonomy, decreased levels of psychological empowerment, and increased levels of self-doubt. With the continuing uncertainty brought on by the pandemic, as Principals and Vice-Principals in BC are trying to navigate continually

evolving information in unprecedented times, there will be those who feel compelled to act in a way that doesn't sit well or feel right. There will be school leaders who feel mired in morally distressing situations.

There's power to being able to name one's feelings, a kind of comfort or relief in knowing that anger and frustration and feeling disconcerted are natural in reaction to being unable to act in a way that one believes to be morally correct. The cause of the distress and the context in which it was borne may not change, and the capacity to effect change so that the morally distressing situation disappears may never be possible. But being able to recognize that moral distress exists, that the affective and psychological reactions that a school leader may be experiencing are normal and expected, could ease some of the tensions that Principals and Vice-Principals currently and inevitably face.

Lee Smith spent six years as a school leader in BC offshore schools near Shanghai, and was part of the first cohort of BC Offshore Principals to go through the Leadership Development program offered by the BCPVPA. Lee is a PhD candidate whose doctoral research involves understanding how BC Offshore Principals navigate their experiences administering a BC program outside of the province, with a specific focus on the concept of moral distress.

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With the school year well underway, this is as good a time as ever to review, re-assess, adjust, and re-establish your wellness plan. Here are three ideas that might help you better succeed with this process as we work towards the holiday break.

Assess

What is working?

This seems obvious, but in the midst of a busy fall, many don't take the time to assess their work wellness needs or acknowledge which wellness strategies are working – or not working. Commit to reviewing your wellness strategies and identifying what habits are working for you. For many educators, this is the time of year their wellness begins to suffer. You can break it down into three columns: physical, emotional/mental, and professional health wellness. Write down what is working for you, and identify any gaps in the three columns that emerge as you review your plan.

Adjust

Make adjustments on the fly

After you have identified what is working well, and where you might have wellness needs that are lacking, adjust! Remember, establishing smaller, achievable goals (micro-goals) that you can reliably sustain is most important. We are striving for consistency here. Seek support from others – whether they are professional peers or friends – if you are stuck on how to implement a strategy, or to identify the means to address a missing piece in your wellness needs. Many professionals find wellness apps helpful in keeping track of their wellness accomplishments, or guiding them through wellness activities such as mindfulness, yoga, and meditation. If you are comfortable doing so, buddy up where you can when embarking on new wellness initiatives.

Attend

Focus on what you can control

At this time of year, it's easy to begin to feel worn down, overwhelmed, and to have a hard time keeping up with the demands. For some, it gets hard to remain focused on what we have control of, and what we don't. Spending energy on issues or dynamics where we have little or no control can draw on energy reserves when we have little to spare. Focus on what you can control, and how you choose to engage in relationships. It starts with you leading by example, and the contributions you make to create a more positive outcome.

We can't control outcomes, but we can control our input, so be mindful of what you can contribute to situations. Focus on the problem, not the person, and maintain constructive relationships in the process. It's easy to over-respond when we are worn down or overwhelmed: allow yourself some time, if possible, to engage objectively and with your emotional temperature in check. The holiday break is right around the corner.

 @humanworksCA

by

Jack MacNeill

*MEd (Coun.Psych.), RCC, CVRP, RRP
President, humanworks*



THRIVING IN EDUCATION

Principals and Vice-Principals touch the lives of more than half a million students in British Columbia. They are a beacon of calm in their schools, ready to support, to solve, and to advise.

An element of their work is to establish an educational climate that enables students to thrive, which they can achieve through working directly with students, coaching and motivating staff, partnering with parents, and collaborating with multiple community stakeholders.

by
Rochelle Morandini
*Director, Member Health and Well-being,
BCPVPA*

Like most people, Principals and Vice-Principals are best able to help others reach their potential when they themselves operate within in a climate that enables them to thrive.

Through previous surveys and conversations with our members, it has become apparent that some BCPVPA members work in environments where they thrive, versus others who work in environments where they are struggling to succeed, and where the outcomes can be physical and/or emotional distress for those leaders. In addition, there is an increasing body of research that speaks to the demands and impact on school-based administrators both here in Canada and globally. This knowledge led us to the question: what are the working climates that help Principals and Vice-Principals to thrive?

There was no better time to ask this question than during one of the most trying years our members have ever endured. And, with that intent, we launched the Thriving in Education survey to our members in the spring of 2021. More than 1,000 members – nearly 40% of our membership – answered more than 150 survey questions, and offered candid and vulnerable responses and commentary.

How well a Principal or Vice-Principal thrives in their role is based upon two elements:

- 1) Their own health and well-being: their ability to cope, their level of burden, and personal life factors
- 2) Their work climate: the tone and behaviours in the environment, work responsibilities, and stakeholder relationships

The Thriving in Education survey focused on the second element: the work climate. Although the survey asked about the prevalence of coping or not coping, and the symptoms of burnout, we did not delve into the behaviours and beliefs that define how an individual supports their personal physical and mental health. While important, that is for another survey.

The BCPVPA provides resources, education, and one-on-one support to guide members on the journey of

enhancing their own recovery and health. This survey takes us to the next step of learning, determining the workplace factors that strengthen our members' ability to thrive. Identifying these factors helps the BCPVPA to work with sector stakeholders and better understand the characteristics of successful workplace environments.

This is the story of our Thriving in Education survey participants.

THE STORY OF A LIGHTHOUSE IN A STORMY YEAR

*"You'll be quite undisturbed here. It's just you and that light, guiding [people] home safely. It's a lonely life, but you'll save thousands."*¹

The analogy of a lighthouse is fitting to the role played by Principals and Vice-Principals during the 2020-2021 school year. Our members may have felt isolated at times, but stood true and held the foundation for staff, students, and parents. They weathered the storm, regardless of what was thrown their way. For some, their core stayed strong despite the battering of the waves; for others, there were cracks. What prevalent factor distinguished these two groups?

THE PREVALENCE OR ABSENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Have you heard of, or practiced, the deep lake meditation (or, in our analogy, deep ocean)?

Here is the premise. In the depths of the ocean, all is calm. Regardless of what goes on at the surface – the waves, the storm – we can remain calm, and connect with the inner stillness, depth, and acceptance of the ever-changing moments in our lives. To be still and calm while the surface surges is a very internal process of personal practice and resilience. However, the permission to cultivate that ability at the workplace requires a psychologically safe environment.

¹ "The Lighthouse" Short Story by Noelle Currie, August 2020 25TH AUGUST 2020 <https://www.imagecurve.com/author/noelle/Left Page>

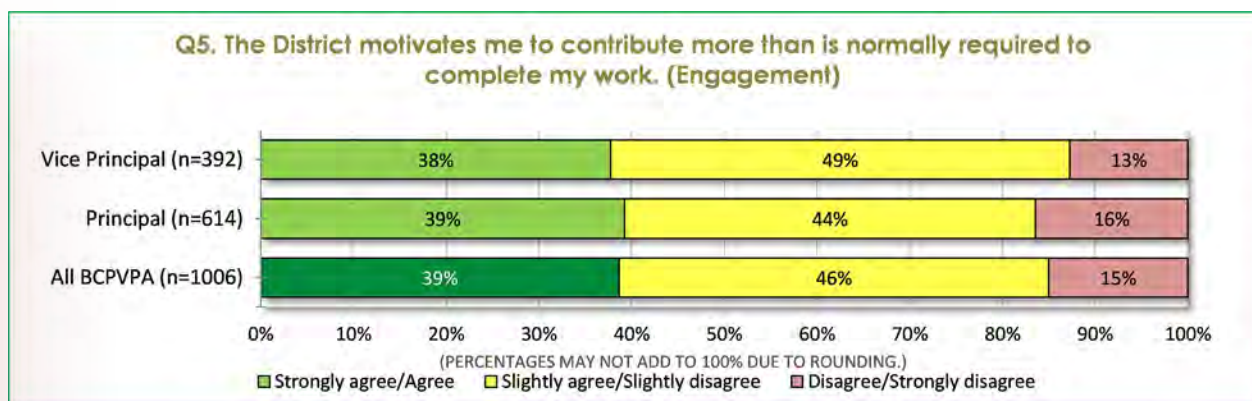
A DISTINCT POPULATION

Our members will likely agree that we didn't need a survey to demonstrate that Principals and Vice- Principals are a distinct population. However, the survey results better illuminate *how* Principals and Vice-Principals differ from many other workers and leaders.

COMMITMENT ISSUES

To begin, we tend to have commitment issues. No: I am not talking about the romantic kind, but about a difficulty in committing to an acknowledgement of being fully well – or of burning out. In our survey, the majority of participant responses hovered in the Slightly Agree/Slightly Disagree zone, which we have affectionately dubbed the 'I'm Fine' group.

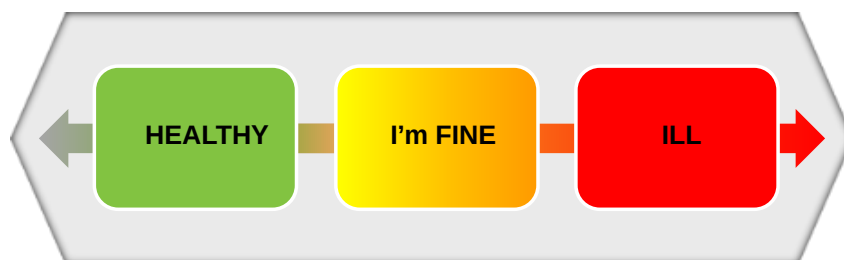
As you can see from this diagram, the 'I'm Fine' group can equate to a significant percentage of the survey respondents.



Having this large group in the “Meh!” zone limits the movement in the data. Analytical math fans know that this makes it difficult to find relationships and correlations within the results.

However, with the data we have, we surmise that the yellow wave indicates that:

- Principals and Vice-Principals are setting a new bar of effort as a hard-working group that deals with significant complexities and responsibilities – with the intensified layer of pandemic leadership – and who, when asked, “How are you”, typically respond “I’m Fine”.
- While a percentage of our member population is doing well, a larger percentage is hanging in there, trying not to move further towards the red end of the mental health continuum. The key will be to help them move towards the green end.



- It is not the norm for this population to exhibit vulnerability and share that they are struggling; they will continue to show up regardless of the toll on themselves.

Which leads us to the second observation ...

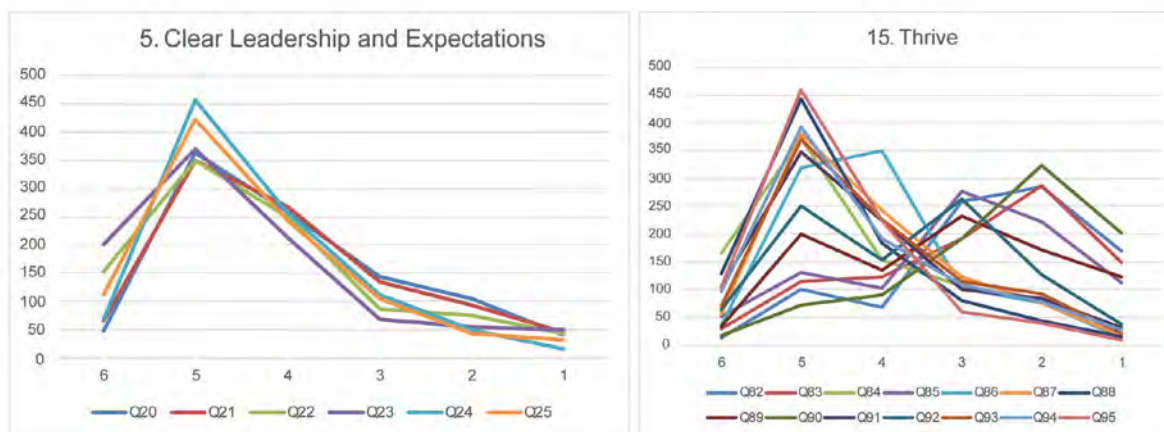
DRIVEN BY PURPOSE

Aside from the characteristic of 'being fine', Principals and Vice-Principals have another trait: a powerful and purpose-driven internal motivation that can trump their own health.

Let me explain.

Research in engagement and burnout would reveal that people who are struggling – physically and mentally, with their battery levels low – also experience a significant reduction in their job motivation, commitment, and mindset.

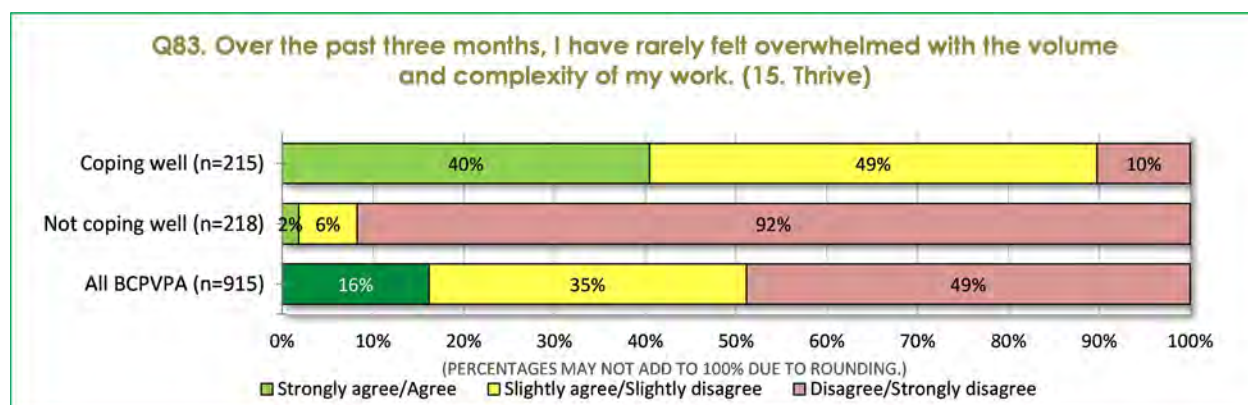
But not this group. In the diagrams below, each line represents the responses to one question. By comparison, in the Clear Leadership and Expectations graph, the responses follow an aligned pattern that usually indicates that each question is measuring the same thing. However, with our 'Thrive' metric, the visual becomes *very* messy, with two peaks. *How is that possible?* Well, one peak is created by the responses to questions that relate to motivation and commitment, while the other relates to energy, cognitive function, and overall health. We would expect the lines to more clearly match the leadership chart, but here is where our group diverges from the norm.

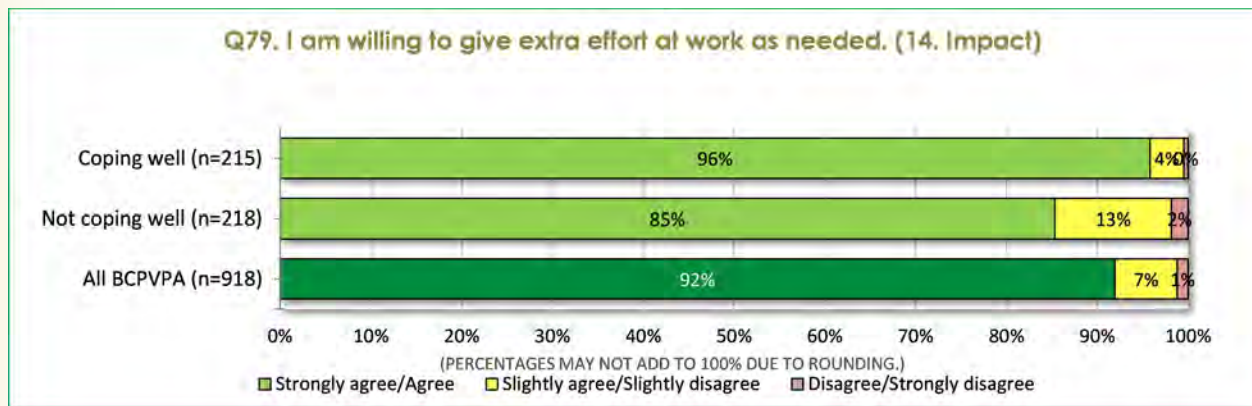


Our external survey and research partner guiding us in this research noted that they have seen other occupations with a similar pattern in survey data sets, a group with a level of commitment to others, and one that may put their own health and well-being at risk: first responders.

A DUALITY OF RESPONSE

The two questions that follow have what seems to be a contradictory finding.





Of the total survey respondent population, 50% of respondents felt overwhelmed by the complexity of work, 35% are in the “I’m Fine” zone, and only 16% are not feeling overwhelmed.

However, despite the impact of the volume and complexity of their work, an overwhelming majority of Principals and Vice-Principals still want to give that extra effort as needed.

MINING THE INSIGHTS

To effectively mine the insights of our data, with the help of Verita HR and their statistician, Adam Hunter, we separated the ‘health’ questions from the ‘commitment’ questions in the “Thrive” section of the survey, to get a ‘coping’ score per respondent. We then reduced the dampening impact of the “I’m fine” group by isolating the top 200 ‘coping well’ respondents and the bottom 200 ‘not coping well’ respondents – which equals about 40% of our survey population. And – bam! – the results were there. This applied method of data mining shed the light needed to reveal the impact that workplace factors can have on member well-being!

The findings, and solutions, for our population are not linear; they are complex. However, a lens of psychological safety brings light to guide us in the necessary direction.

UNPACKING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Psychological safety is becoming an ongoing narrative in leading workplaces. In the United States, organizational behaviour expert and researcher Dr. Amy Edmonson published the type of environmental work factors that promoted psychologically safe teams. In reviewing the findings from the Thriving in Education survey, and in consideration of Edmonson’s model, we can illustrate the difference between a safe and unsafe workplace.

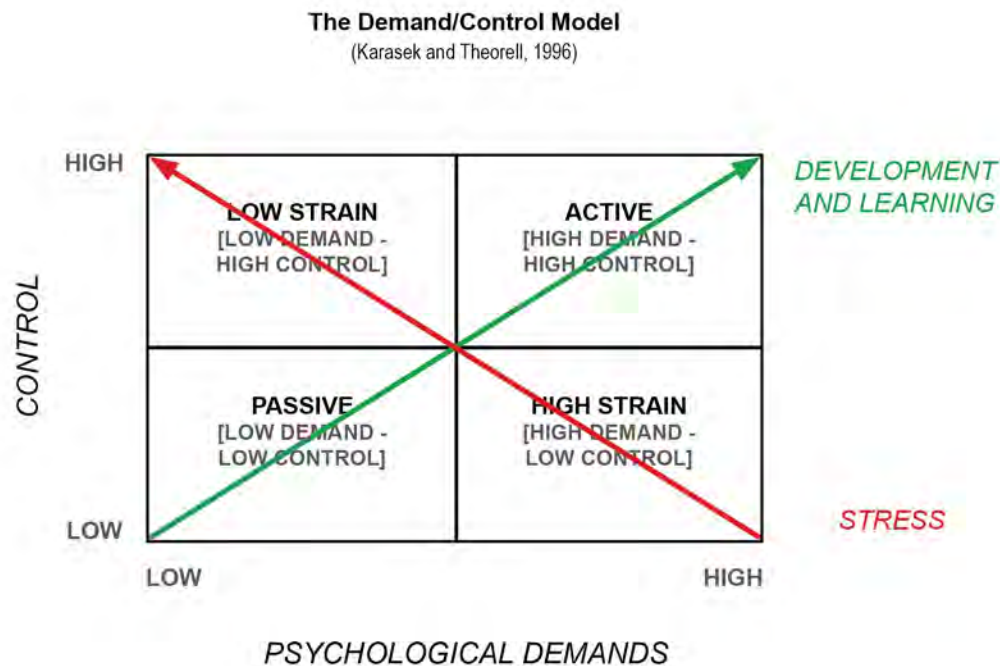
ENVIRONNMENTS HIGH IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- Input and contribution is encouraged from all team members
- Respect and appreciation
- Active listening and learning from each other is valued
- Freedom from chronic hostility and anger
- Members can speak candidly with ideas, questions, concerns, even mistakes
- No retaliation for speaking up
- Leverages the benefits of diversity, belonging

ENVIRONNMENTS LOW IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- Members fear to speak up or question
- Favourites and/or regular "go to's" for ideas and information
- Dismissive, or exclusion
- Discrimination or unconscious bias
- Leaders who 'know it all' and do not acknowledge gaps
- Passivity or aggression
- Not feeling valued

This brought to mind the Demand/Control Model seen here, and how having high demand and complex jobs – where an individual has limited control – leads to a high stress and high psychological risk environment:



This Model reflected the experience of our member respondents, particularly this challenging past year, as demonstrated by their open comments in the survey.

In 2013, Canada became the first nation in the world to launch the National Standards in Psychological Health and Safety, a voluntary management system framework that promotes continuous improvement of the psychological health and safety of employees with a similar intent to that of occupational health and safety systems for physical injuries. From this work, thirteen risk factors were identified:

- Engagement
- Growth and Development
- Psychological Support
- Organizational Culture
- Clear Leadership and Expectations
- Civility and Respect
- Involvement and Influence
- Workload Management
- Balance
- Psychological Protection
- Protection of Physical Safety
- Psychological Competencies
- Recognition and Rewards

Many of these risk factors parallel those measured in employee engagement surveys, and these are the factors we explored in our survey. As noted earlier, the responses to these risk factors were compared to the coping responses of Principals and Vice-Principals to understand which workplace factors may be having the greatest influence on their health.

MOST NOTABLE WORKPLACE FACTORS

We identified the most notable workplace factors by determining which of the 13 risk factors illustrated the greatest difference in responses between the 'coping well' and the 'not coping well' groups. We also thoroughly combed through more than 4,000 open comments and identified themes that further solidified our findings.

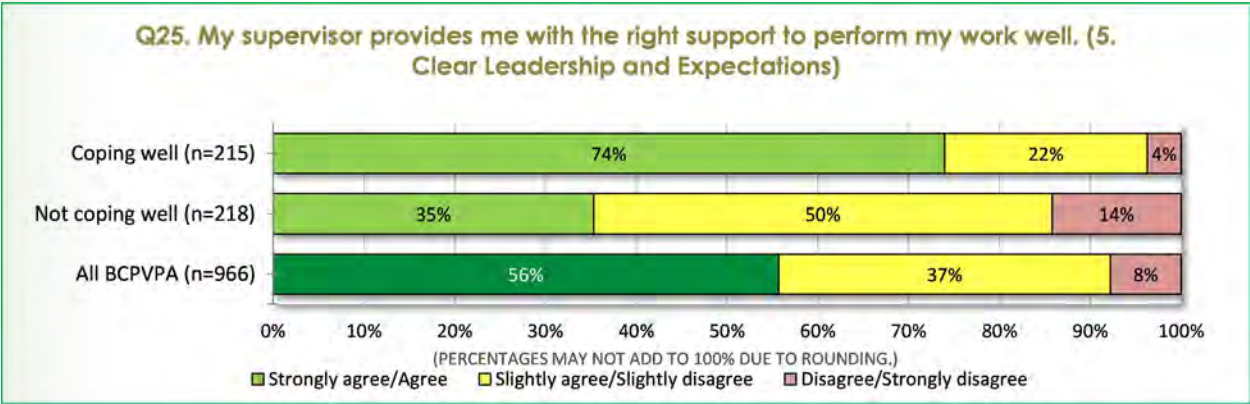
The top notable workplace risk factors associated with both positive and challenged levels of coping are:

- Clear Leadership and Expectations
- Civility and Respect
- Involvement and Influence
- Workload Management and Balance

CLEAR LEADERSHIP AND EXPECTATIONS

My previous work with engagement surveys, particularly those that aligned measures of health and/or absence, have repeatedly shown statistical significance as it relates to the relationship between the employee and their direct manager. The better the relationship with their manager, the better the coping, and the lower the absence rate.

So, it is not surprising that this risk factor tops our list. The survey responses to the questions in this section demonstrate a distinct difference in responses between the 'coping well' and 'not coping well' groups. For example:

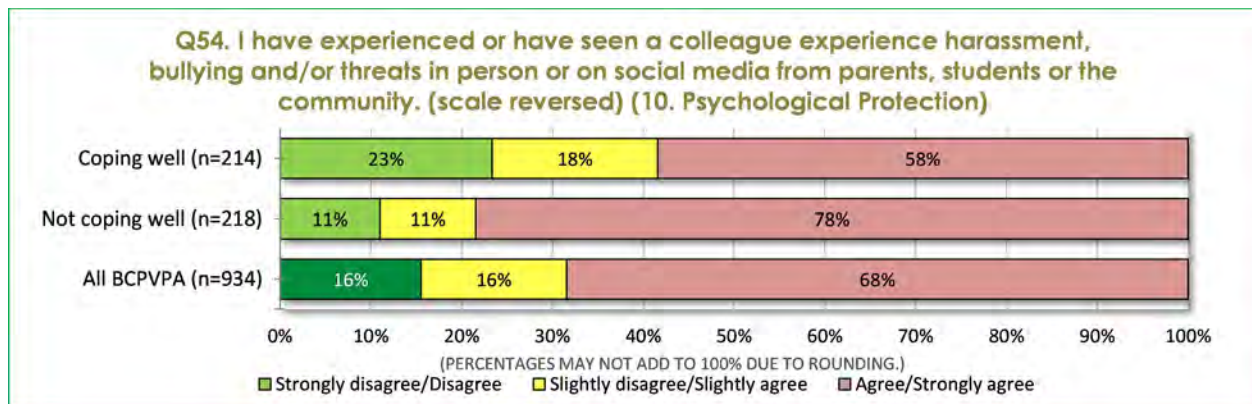


This diagram reveals that almost 75% of Principals and Vice-Principals who are 'coping well', agree, or strongly agree that their supervisor provides the right support to perform their work well. This is compared to only 35% of those 'not coping well'.

CIVILITY AND RESPECT

There were concerning comments about the degree of civility and respect experienced by many respondents, and the challenging workplace behaviours that Principals and Vice-Principals can face daily.

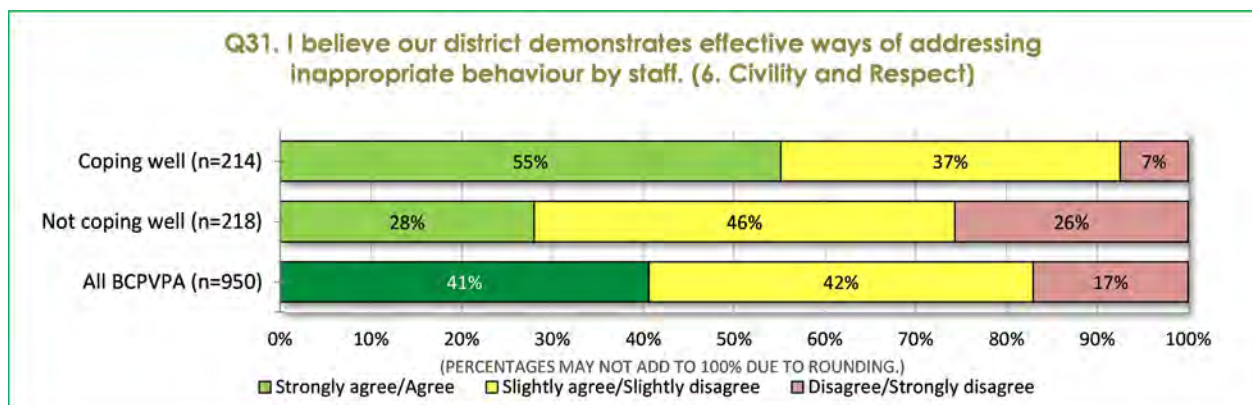
One of the more alarming findings from our study – both for respondents who are 'coping well' or 'not coping well' – related to the factor of psychological protection:



**Please note that the scale here is reversed: the red bars represent those who agree/strongly agree with the statement*

How this factor unfolds when focusing on Civility and Respect is in how these situations are addressed, and the resulting level of psychological safety felt by the individual.

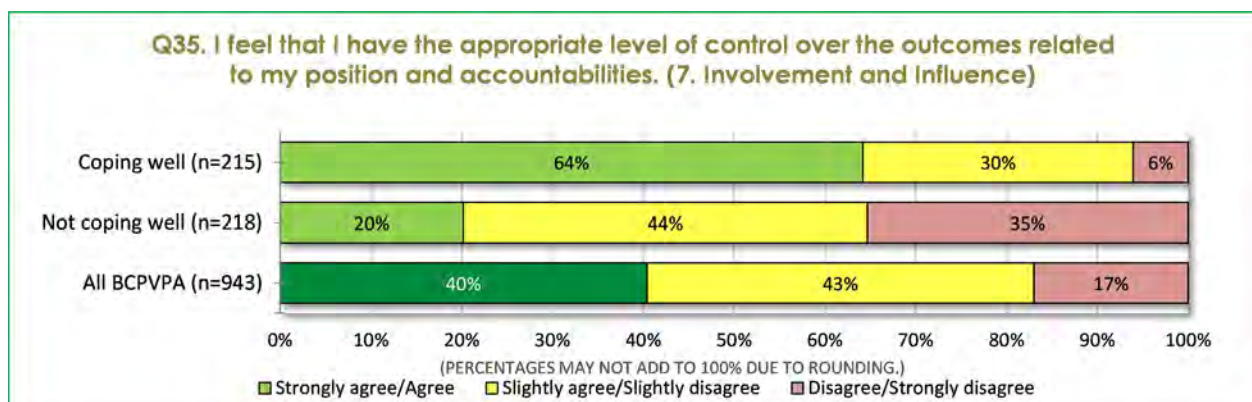
In considering the chart below, the overall score of 41 percent agreeing across all survey respondents is not a resounding finding on its own. However, the significant difference between those 'coping well' and 'not coping well' is demonstrated not only in the green and affirmative zone, but particularly in the red zone. More than one in four Principals and Vice-Principals are 'not coping well', and disagree or strongly disagree that their district deals effectively with inappropriate staff behaviour.



INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCE

This psychological risk factor is a significant factor relating Principals' and Vice-Principals' coping ability.

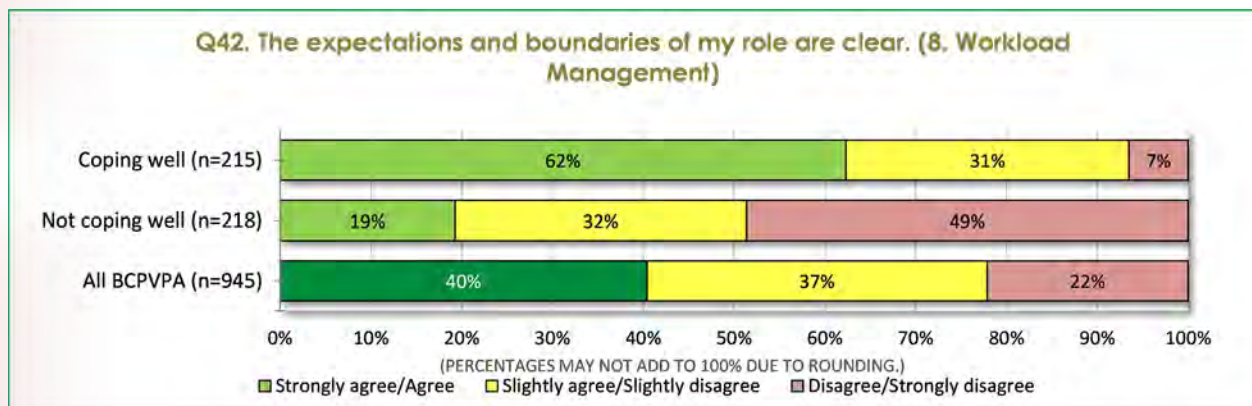
In the diagram below, more than one in three of the 'not coping well' respondents disagree or strongly disagree that they have the appropriate level of control over the outcomes related to their work. This is a significant finding when you consider that 64% of those 'coping well' agree to strongly agree that they have the appropriate level of control; only 6% feel they do not.



WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT AND BALANCE

Principals and Vice-Principals, 'coping well' or 'not coping well', or somewhere in between, have busy and complex jobs that they love. Workload has steadily increased the past few years, and intensified during the pandemic, with the work buckets of our members spilling over into their personal lives.

In the diagram below, the 62% 'coping well' agree that their expectations and boundaries are clear. That is in contrast to a whopping 50% of those 'not coping well' who disagree with this statement. These individuals may be working in very ambiguous environments where the clarity between their responsibility and the responsibilities of others is gray, or perhaps non-existent.

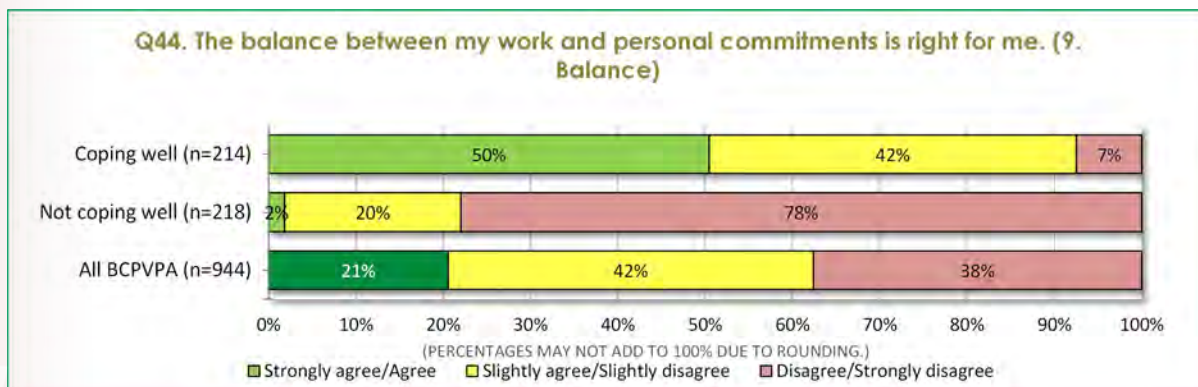


In the open question section of the survey, there is a question: *What are one or two things in your working environment or working relationships that you find negatively impact your health and/or success in your role?*

The most frequent response theme was one of work volume, unrealistic expectations, and competing priorities. This reality can lead to an intrusion of the Principal's or Vice-Principal's job into their home life, exercise schedule, community commitments, and – importantly – their rest.

In the diagram below, on the third bar which represents the responses of all survey participants, it becomes evident that this is a significant issue. Of the total respondents, only one in five felt the balance worked for them – almost 40% disagreed.

The story becomes more serious when we look at who is coping and who is not. For those 'not coping well', nearly 80% **disagree or strongly disagree** that their balance is right for them.



It does not take a PhD in neurology to grasp that this type of workload and life imbalance can have a significant effect on the nervous systems and mental health of Principals and Vice-Principals. The ideal situation would be to reduce this load, which may or may not be feasible. Alternatively, we can help Principals and Vice-Principals to develop

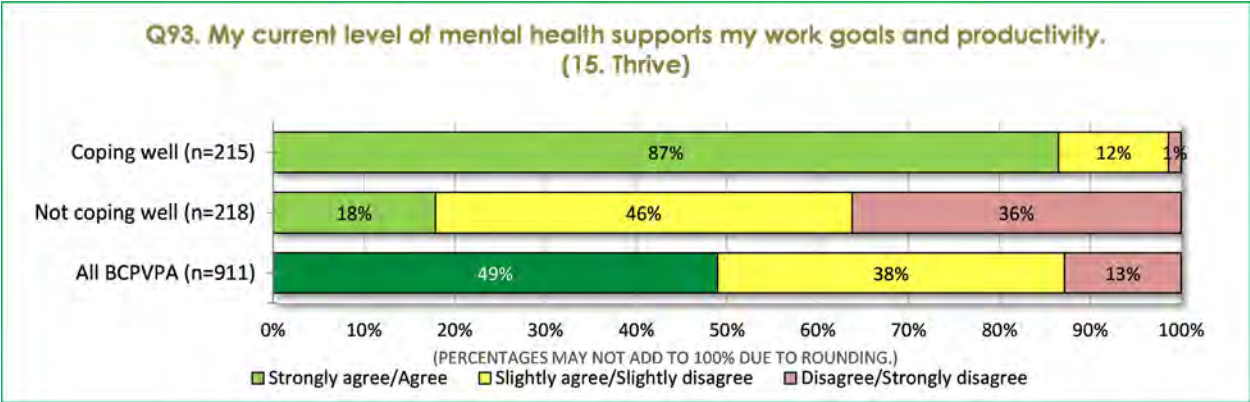
stronger coping skills, enhance their resilience, and put a focus on finding ways to influence and support the workplace factors that enhance our population’s ability to thrive.

THRIVING LEADERS

Our objective is simple: strengthening the ability of Principals and Vice-Principals to thrive. The question is, “How?” and the answer is two-fold: with strategies for the individual, and strategies for the system.

SHINING A LIGHT ON THE INDIVIDUAL

In this finding, the “I’m Fines” in the ‘not coping well’ group is almost 50%. But even in the overall respondent population, the “I’m Fines” are a significant 38%. Just under 50% of all respondents agree that their mental health supports their work goals and productivity.



Intervention and resources are necessary, albeit different, for members in the green, yellow, and red zones. The largest area of opportunity is to move the needle on the “I’m fine” group towards the green, healthy zone, and prevent them from slipping into the red.

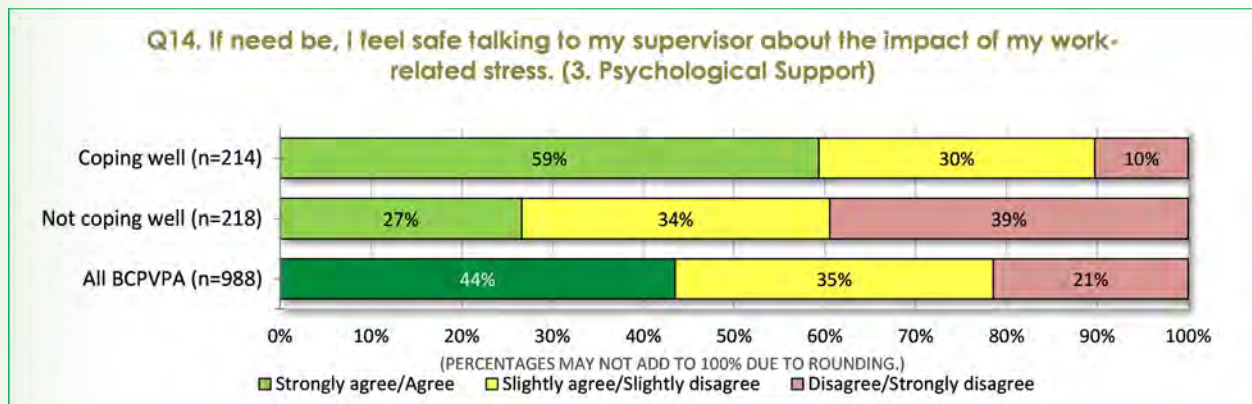
The uniqueness of our population brings distinct challenges in enhancing the green zone. The ‘overcommitment’ and Type A personality of this population can be a tough mindset to mold, as their core values and beliefs are what make Principals and Vice-Principals strong leaders. And, while a deep sense of purpose is important and a key value, how do we balance this with an ability to set boundaries and allow the same level of commitment to ourselves?

The answers lie in self-awareness, moving forward with intent, and the skills to support that growth. In the March 2022 Principl(ed) magazine, we will take a deep dive into how to set boundaries, be assertive in expressing needs, and boost individual coping skills.

SHINING A LIGHT ON THE SYSTEM

Make no mistake, enhancing the individual coping and resiliency foundation helps to a certain degree. However, it is important to note that this foundation does have its limits based on the size, volume, and frequency of those waves in the ‘ocean’ of the workplace as, over time, even the strongest of foundations will falter.

This is where the tenets of psychological safety apply. The diagram below shows that a key place to start can be in creating safe environments and relationships that significantly increase the percentage – currently 44% -- of those who feel safe talking to their managers about the impact of work-related stress. When a Principal or Vice-Principal is struggling, it is imperative for open dialogue to happen in a safe, compassionate environment so that adjustments can be made to support the individual’s path to health, and to boost the positive impact of that individual on the school environment.



One of the open-ended questions in the survey asked respondents about one thing the workplace is already doing well or could enhance to support their overall well-being and job success.

The top themes from the comments were:

- Provide clear priorities, expectations, and a manageable workload
- Have compassionate leaders that provide direction and recognition
- Ask for input/feedback on school-based decisions and provide more autonomy to school based leaders
- More administration time (particularly for Vice-Principals)
- More qualified staff in the system
- Increase the accessibility of district leaders including regular check ins

While enhancing administration time and increasing staff are solutions requiring enhanced resources, the other themes revolve around the relationships between school leaders, leadership skills, caring, and engagement.

The identification of the workplace factors that enhance thriving is learning that the BCPVPA is bringing to our own members, the Ministry of Education, and partner associations in the sector. These factors translate into workplace actions that are intended to calm the waves and allow Principals and Vice-Principals to manage the up and downs of the tide from a safe, valued, and involved position. From this survey, we believe the key areas to consider are shown in the diagram below.



The March 2022 issue of Principled will continue to explore the recommendations for enhancing psychological safety in the workplace and enabling our members to thrive. We will keep our members updated on our discussions with stakeholders, and any initiatives that are being implemented based on the survey findings.

ON THE HORIZON

In a manner similar to last year, the 2021-2022 school year started off with fog on the horizon, and uncertainty about how the second school year in a pandemic would proceed. And there we find our members, the lighthouses in their schools and districts, continuing to provide that sense of stability and safety.

Know this. The BCPVPA is here to:

- Be the lighthouse for our members, and a safe haven when you experience storms
- Bring together colleagues to connect and support one another
- Provide resources and education to help enhance our members' health
- Advocate for workplaces that are psychologically safe and compassionate, to allow not only Principals and Vice-Principals, but also the 500,000 students, 50,000 teachers, 34,000 support staff, countless families, and community volunteers, to thrive in BC's education system.



Thank you to all of our members for your participation -- your candour and vulnerability contributed so much to the Thriving in Education findings.

If you are a BCPVPA member with concerns about your health and well-being, we are here to help.

Contact Rochelle Morandini rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca

All survey data cited in this article: BCPVPA Thriving in Education Member Survey, 2021, Verita Strategy Group Inc.

It was the early 2000s and our young family had moved to Kenya, where a brilliant Canadian scientist's discovery offered a potential cure for AIDS. A group of sex workers in Nairobi were found to be immune to the HIV virus. Dr. Richard Lester, co-captain of our family, was joining the research mission to help find the cure. Simultaneously, the World Health Organization (WHO) was responding to one of the greatest public health crises the world had ever seen, and so they set the mandate known as three by five: 3 million people on AntiRetroViral (ARV) medication by 2005. This was the atmosphere as our family entered a new chapter, and where the WelTel story began.

While contributing to the science being led by the Universities of Nairobi and Manitoba, Dr. Lester noticed that almost everyone coming to the clinic had a cell phone. Africa had pretty much leapfrogged over legacy technology like landlines, and many Kenyans were proficient users of texting long before Canadian fingers were tapping the tiny keypads on their mobile phones. At the same time, more than 60% of people

initiating ARV therapy were being lost to follow-up within six months; the AIDS virus was mutating as a result, requiring stronger treatments, causing more deaths, and leaving more children orphaned.

The situation was dire, and called for a creative solution. Why not use cellphones to engage people in their care? And so, WelTel Kenya¹ was born: the world's first research to demonstrate how 2-way text messaging could improve health outcomes and save lives. Patients who were supported using WelTel were more likely to be engaged in their own care and adhere to their medication, which meant that they were unable to transmit the virus. This promised to be a game changer. And it was. Published in *The Lancet*, one of the world's most prestigious medical journals, WelTel became a star overnight.

Launched as a research project, the WelTel concept was imagined with a vision to change the way health care is delivered around the world. Since our humble beginnings in 2004, we have continued to do world-



Gabby Serafini and Richard Lester

In early 2021, the BCPVPA launched a partnership with Vancouver-based WelTel for a pilot project to support member well-being, tracking the day-to-day well-being status of 100 participating members through a text-based messaging system.

In the words of BCPVPA Executive Director Kevin Reimer, "I've been part of a pilot with WelTel, and when I receive the text, I do pause and consider: '*How am I?*' So far, I have been able to answer, '*I am fine,*' but being able to stop and consider that question in my day has been very valuable."

We asked WelTel CEO Gabby Serafini to share the story of this innovative approach to supporting well-being.

How are things going?

I'm good!

Fine!

I still have a fever

Can we video chat?

Not okay.

Doing great.

thanks for the check-in



by
Gabby Serafini
CEO, WelTel

people and their known care providers builds trust and strengthens relationships, crucial ingredients for improving health outcomes.

Through WelTel's use of open, natural language and an iterative, evidence-based design process, we have developed, tested, and proven an outreach communication protocol that embraces intentional messaging for meaningful outcomes and delivers value at every stage of the care journey.

You are probably wondering how the BCPVA formed a partnership with a digital health company that began as a research project in Kenya. As a huge supporter of the public education system and a mother of three, I am passionate about our schools and those who formulate the right recipe for a meaningful educational journey. Societal demands for excellence seem to permeate every facet of our children's lived experience. The expectation of educators to produce high-achieving, productive citizens is equally present. We have seen anxiety and mental health issues continue to escalate as the years have passed, much of this burden being taken on by educators and administrators, creating a cycle of ever-increasing demands that result in burnout.

It was 2019 and there was plenty of media feeding on school issues. The news was full of discussions about bullying, racism, anxiety, and the mental health crisis across the nation. A friend said, "Wouldn't it be great if every student could have access to WelTel? If someone was sending them the simple message — 'How are you?' — how might that impact their lived experience?"

Realizing that WelTel had a solution that could be of benefit, I reached out to David DeRosa, at that time the President of the BCPVPA. We sipped coffee while meandering through WelTel's journey. I saw the wheels turning and knew at that moment that he understood the extraordinary power of the 'ask don't tell' approach. David believed that three simple words might save a life, and that conversation led to more discussions when David introduced me to BCPVPA's Executive Director Kevin Reimer.

When meeting Kevin, I was envisioning WelTel as a mental health support tool in the schools that would

"Establishing connections
between people and their
known care providers
builds trust
and strengthens
relationships, crucial
ingredients for improving
health outcomes. "

connect students to their counsellors. Kevin's focus darted straight to the members, and his vision of connecting with them in innovative ways that were discreet and meaningful. We cannot begin to imagine the pressures felt by the leaders of our educational institutions, the Principals, Vice-Principals, and so many others expected to ensure seamless operations in the face of natural disaster and pandemic alike. Kevin's plan was methodical and fine-tuned; he knew exactly who the right players were to pull it off and soon looped in Rochelle Morandini, a brilliant and innovative thinker who understands human engagement better than any person I know. We strategized the approach collectively before being interrupted by the pandemic, but nothing was going to bring us down. We were like the Three Musketeers — fully committed to seeing this idea come to fruition — and in May of 2021, the WelTel-BCPVPA pilot project was launched.

This is how it went down. Kevin emailed members asking if they would like to participate in the WelTel Wellness Check-in Pilot. Interested members signed up through a Google intake form sharing their name, mobile phone number, position (Principal or Vice-Principal) and school district. This is the simplistic beauty of WelTel: once enrolled, people are connected via their mobile phones to their known care team. Members receive a weekly check-in message by text at an appropriate time that asks quite simply 'How are you?'. Members can respond, using open natural language, in any language, and with anything of concern. Algorithms categorize their responses

based on the need for follow-up, and with Kevin and Rochelle at the helm, the members are assured that support is but a text message away.

For the triage team, they can log in from any device and view the incoming responses on an intuitive dashboard that allows them to respond by text, share resources, launch into a video call, or refer the member to more appropriate support services. This strengthens the relationship and builds trust, which is critical to improving engagement and results in better outcomes for health and well-being. It has only been a few months but already members have noted incredible appreciation for receiving this simple message that gives them a sense of being supported by people who care. Many have said that they find

the program valuable, and research has shown that asking someone ‘How are you?’ encourages them to self-reflect and report back in a way that facilitates meaningful dialogue, self-management, and an increased sense of well-being. Those triaging the responses report feeling more connected to their community through this low-touch and powerful communication modality.

It has been a true honour to work with the BCPVPA these past months, and humbling to learn more about the great services provided to our communities by the members. Educators and school leaders alike are helping to build a nation of critical thinkers and self-starters. With such a task in hand, no wonder these three simple words have had such an impact.



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Inquiry Mindset Assessment Edition Scaffolding a Partnership for Equity and Agency in Learning by Trevor MacKenzie

Reviewed by
Dr. Diane Charles SD 68

“Am I doing something for my students that they should be doing for themselves?”

This is the key premise of Trevor MacKenzie's newest book, *Inquiry Mindset Assessment Edition Scaffolding a Partnership for Equity and Agency in Learning*. Ron Ritchhart's foreword sets the stage as he shares a two-dimensional mapping tool of assessment practices focusing on the intersection between integration and evaluation in relation to both formative and summative assessments. Keeping this model in mind, Trevor shares an inquisitive look at the process of evaluation and assessment, one that challenges some of the traditional methods employed by teachers around the world. The narrative of Trevor's book comes from his own experience as a teacher of inquiry, supported by research on best practice by Dylan Williams, Angela Duckworth, and Adrienne Gear, to name a few. One of the strengths of Trevor's approach is his use of Sketchnote images to visually display his ideas, followed up by detailed descriptions of the key points.

I read this book through the lens of a Principal of a K-7 school. Written from a middle to secondary school viewpoint, teachers of younger students may need to adapt some of the strategies. However, building a school-wide vision and culture of assessment is a universal need, regardless of the age of the learners

we work with. Trevor continually emphasizes the importance of building relationships, in getting to know our students as learners, and in the students getting to know that their teachers are invested in their learning. Learning is a verb, he reminds us, “in which there's movement, action and deep thinking. When students are not given an opportunity to reflect and have a voice in the assessment process, they lose sight of the exact skills human beings need to navigate the world and beyond” (p. 202).

For educators and leaders in BC, Trevor's reference to the big ideas and core competencies aligns directly with the redesigned curriculum for all grades. The permission to let go of assessment and evaluation practices that have teachers doing all the heavy lifting is fully supported by our BC Curriculum. What Trevor provides are some tangible ways of doing just that. “Imagine if each school and classroom started the year with the big idea, an inquiry into self: Who are you and what shapes your identity?” (p. 208) and used this to guide the learning that was to follow? Instead of teaching programs, teachers would be teaching learners who have agency over their own learning, and who have a voice in setting their goals for improvement, celebrating their strengths, and fortifying their stretches, and – potentially – co-writing their own report cards!

"For educators and leaders in BC, Trevor's reference to the big ideas and core competencies align directly with the redesigned curriculum for all grades. The permission to let go of assessment and evaluation practices that have teachers doing all the heavy lifting is fully supported by our BC Curriculum.

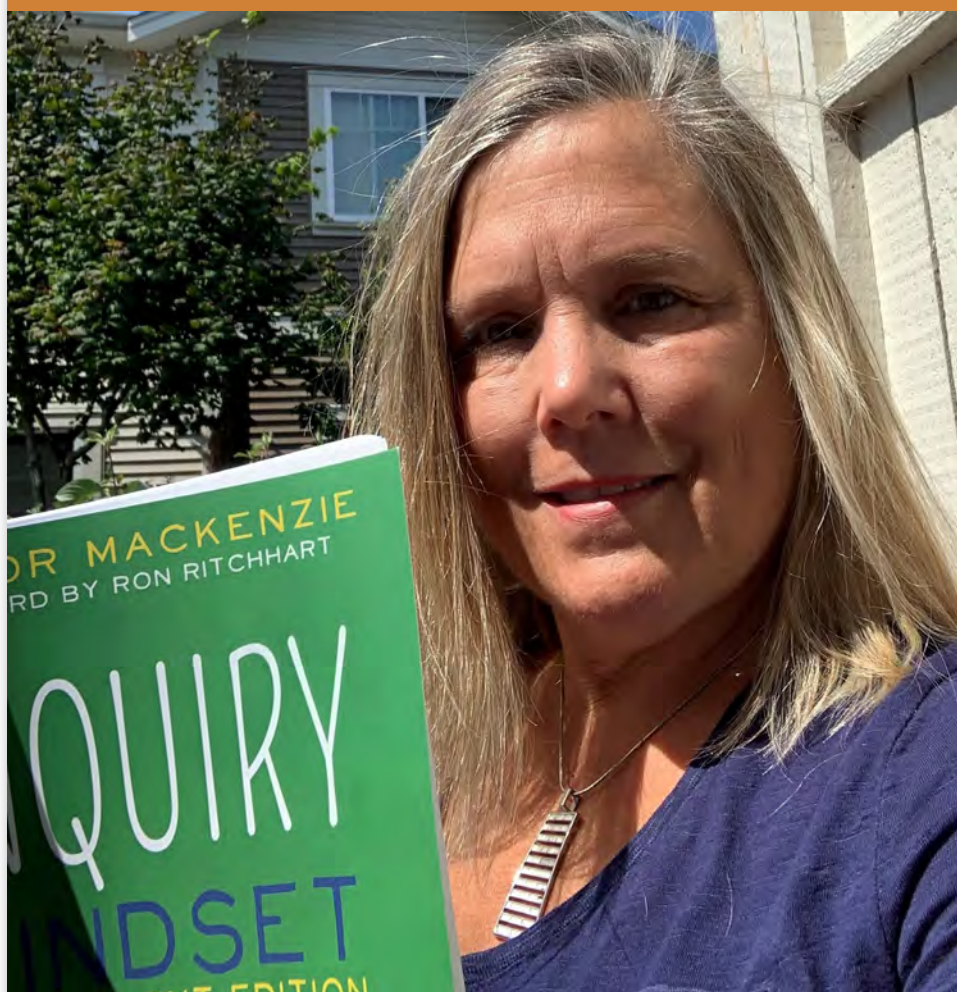
What Trevor provides are some tangible ways of doing just that."

Reader? Writer?

Share what you love
as a Princip(ed) reviewer!

Contact

sandra@bcpvpa.bc.ca



Diane is entering her 34th year as an educator, and 21st year in administration. Her EdD focused on Teacher Efficacy working with Marginalized Students. Supporting her staff in creating classrooms where students thrive is a focus of her work. Diane likes to imagine a world where students and teachers work together in support of shared goals and authentic learning, and where – when asked, “How do you know?” – the answer is rich and meaningful.

The Black Friend: On Being a Better White Person

by Frederick Joseph

Reviewed by
Carmen Eberle

BCPVPA

Prior to joining the staff of the BCPVPA, I worked for the Learning Support Services Department in Langley where there is a district-wide commitment – and time set aside – to engage in discussions around anti-racism. Following one of the discussions, a colleague of mine ordered us both a copy of Frederick Joseph's book *The Black Friend: On Being a Better White Person*. Frederick is an award-winning marketing professional, philanthropist, and writer. He was selected for the 2018 Root 100 Most Influential African Americans, a list that honours the innovators, leaders, and game changers recognized for breaking down barriers and making way for a better future.

Reading Frederick's book has been a game changer for me. This book is written from the "perspective of the friend everyone should have". He offers "an essential read for white people who want to be better about race — and for people of color who long to see their experiences validated". This book has given me a chance to re-learn through education and storytelling that evokes empathy and understanding. Every chapter features the voice of one artist or one activist through diverse representation. Frederick provides relevant examples of systemic racism and significant instances where racism exists within the TV, film, and music industries. He eloquently captures what microaggressions are and how they feel, as well as identifying proactive actions people can take to be anti-racists. The book also shares the importance of learning from people who are more culturally aware. Readers will find definitions, source notes, a list of people to learn more about, materials to read, things to watch, and – one of my favourite sections – "The Black Friend Playlist" starting with "Naima" by John Coltrane. If you have not listened to this ballad before, you can easily find it on YouTube.

Throughout the book, Frederick uses humour and sometimes painful yet powerful retellings of his own experiences with racism and White Supremacy. He touches on his personal reflections about how his thinking has changed and evolved over time from childhood into adulthood.

Although I loved each chapter, what resonated the most was the chapter titled "In the End: We Don't Need Allies; We Need Accomplices". This important chapter is about making change instead of wanting change. As highlighted in the book, the difference is that an ally, as defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary, is "someone that aligns and supports a cause with another individual or group of people." Whereas an accomplice, as defined by the same source, is "a person who knowingly, voluntarily or intentionally gives assistance". The main point from Frederick's perspective being that an accomplice is a person who actively participates in some way; instead of just knowing something is wrong, one might actually step in and do something about it. For example, if one were to witness cultural appropriation, one might speak up and explain what they noticed and why it could cause harm or offend someone. A willingness to engage in calm and respectful dialogue could lead to positive change.

Reading this book has led me to share Frederick's literature with others, to follow him @fredtjoseph on Instagram, and to continue to ponder and reflect upon the words of wisdom he shares. Without a doubt, he is masterful at taking a serious topic and relaying his message with care and kindness. He has written this book in an attempt to make things better and eliminate historic oppression, as a conversation starter that can lead to next steps for positive change. A big thank you to Ms. Kathy Keyworth, the colleague and friend who sent this book my way. Enjoy the read, and maybe you too can order a copy for yourself, a family member, a friend, or a colleague!

"(Joseph) eloquently captures what microaggressions are and how they feel, as well as identifying proactive actions people can take to be anti-racists. The book also shares the importance of learning from people who are more culturally aware."

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Carmen has recently joined the BCPVPA as a Director of Member Support Services in Vancouver. She worked previously as a District Principal of Learning Support Services in Langley, BC, and is the proud mother of an 18-year-old son who has recently enrolled as a student at BCIT.

Kevin Reimer is the Executive Director of the BCPVPA, a previous Director of the Board and served as President 2016-2018.



BCPVPA members have demanding jobs, with a high degree of volexity. 'Volexity' is a term coined by former Member Support Services Director Harold Krische to signify both the volume and complexity of the work of school leaders. Perform a Google search of Principal caricatures, and you are likely to find images of happy, yet overworked Principals balancing a range of tasks. Over the years, education researchers have done numerous time-use studies to attempt to better understand the relationship between the time that Principals and Vice-Principals spend on specific tasks, and the impact on their school communities.

The most recent research on this subject has been captured in the book, *How School Principals Use Their Time; Implications for School Improvement, Administration and Leadership* (edited by Moosung Lee, Katina Pollock and Pierre Tulowitzki). The researchers present international evidence from school systems across the globe, building a case for the implications for school improvement and leadership. The book consists of empirical studies that provide fresh perspectives and provide evidence-based findings on how Principals use their time, and how their use of time can impact their school.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book is how a set of researchers chose to quantify the time used by Principals. Traditional time-use studies have looked at a Principal's day and attempted to ascertain the percentages of time that are used on specific leadership or managerial tasks. This has some advantages, as it can more clearly define the



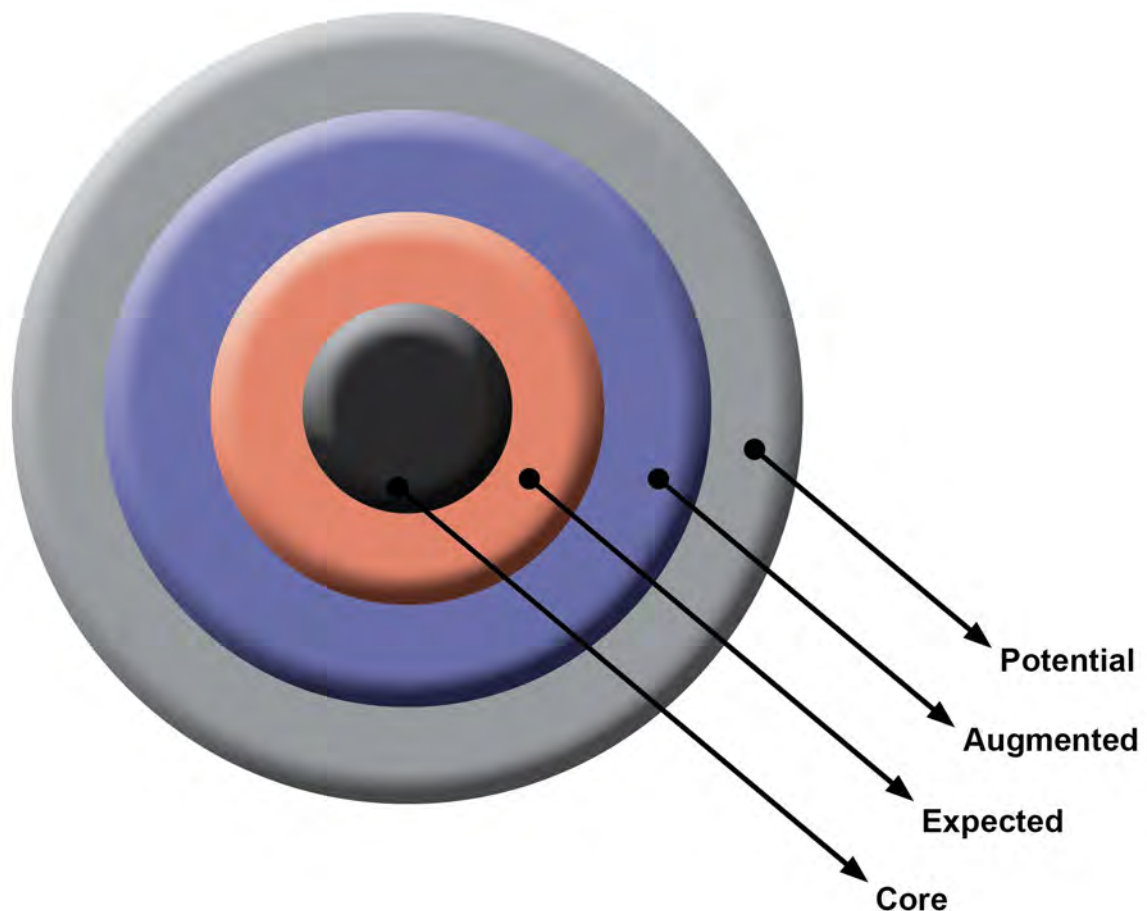
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Principals...

and their Most Important Resource

complexity of work that Principals and Vice-Principals do both inside and outside of school. Australian Principals who were studied found that they spent about 60 hours a week on traditional Principal duties. However, when you factor in the amount of time spent reflecting and wondering about their work, a number of Principals reported working 80-100 hours per week.

In one instance, the researchers chose not to focus on tasks but to take a Total Role Concept (TRC) approach. The TRC is a framework that defines leadership and management as complementary – but often very different – tasks. The assumption is that Principals need to balance these roles to lead their school communities capably and effectively.



Rather than focus on the clock, the researchers argue that conceptual models should focus on the interplay between leadership and management. Adapted from the Total Product Concept, the model contends that any consumer product is, in part, a promise. When purchasing a new car there is the tangible element of the car itself, as well as the intangible promise of expected performance, longevity, and so on. School leadership is not vastly different. The tangible managerial expectations are blended with the less tangible leadership expectations. Both models speak to the promise of the model.

In the Total Role Concept framework, the authors use a model of concentric circles to illustrate the model:

The Core represents the duties of a school leader's role that are often formalized in legislation or Board policy.

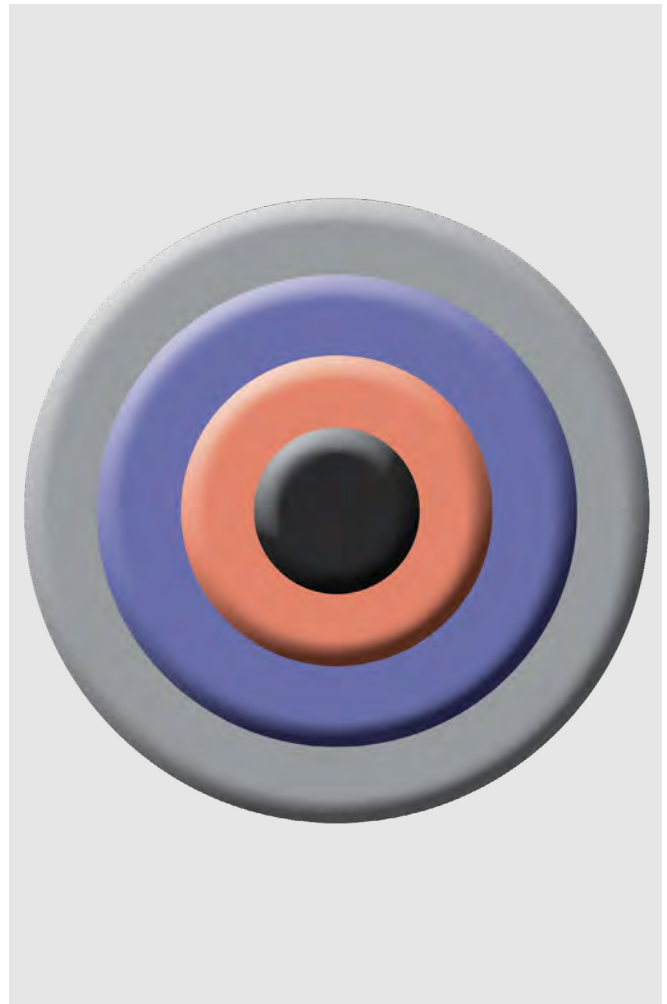
The Expected circle represents a set of expectations that various groups have of the Principal's duties in leading the school.

The Augmented circle represents those elements of the job that the Principal believes encompass their responsibilities, but are neither explicit nor implicit. They are the things that the Principal believes are important to the role, but can be difficult to find the time to achieve (e.g. creating a collective vision, collaborative communities, etc.)

The Potential circle represents the creative and innovative initiatives that are more entrepreneurial in nature.

The managerial tasks of Principals tend to live in the Core and Expected circles, while the leadership initiatives live in the Potential and Augmented circles. The Core and Expected tend to be defined by the district, Board and Ministry, and encompass those often urgent, but not important priorities that Steven Covey would have defined in Quadrant Three of his model. The Potential and Augmented circles are less easily defined and tend to be more abstract. At the risk of being glib, if we thought of the concentric circles as a donut, then the hole of the donut would contain the duties and responsibilities of the Principal, and the donut itself is what Principals can do in their roles to go beyond those managerial expectations. I believe that many of us would agree that the donut itself is much more appealing than the hole in the middle. Insert your own metaphor here.

According to the researchers, Principals who focus more on the donut than the hole are considered post-heroic. Post-heroic leaders transcend the model of Command and Control, and strive to create school



communities that are modelled on collaboration and shared responsibility. While heroic leaders move a school forward by sheer will, post-heroic leaders have a clear sense of their own values and work to access the collective wisdom of the school and distribute leadership. Principals that focus their time on the donut and not the hole can make substantive and meaningful change for their school communities.

A Principal's influence on the learning conditions of the school is influenced by the time that they spend leading the organization instead of managing the organization. Experienced Principals tend to have learned the tips and tricks of addressing the managerial aspects of their jobs quickly and effectively so there is more time in their day to focus on leadership initiatives. The TRC model could help Principals and their supervisors better analyze the use and impact of their time as they strive to make meaningful change in the lives of their students.

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