

The Last Word

“Self-care and consideration must be the main priority and prime concern for all school leaders. Leading a school through the changes and challenges that accompany COVID-19 and post COVID-19 will require school leaders who put their own health and well-being first, so that they will be able to help others.

Increasingly, school leaders are managing the emotional responses of others to this crisis including anxiety, frustration, loss, and anger. Consequently, self-care must be a priority for those leading schools at all levels.”

Harris & Jones, 2020



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



@Optimus_Rime

At this time, BC's short-term future is in the hands of health workers, essential service employees, teachers, and school leaders. As a school leader, your experience and training did not prepare you to lead during a pandemic. Nobody has the answers to the current challenges that face Principals and Vice-Principals today, but it has been gratifying to see our members reaching out to each other for assistance, offering support and doing all that they can to stay connected with their colleagues. Part of an important self-care plan when leading during a crisis is to ask for the support and encouragement of others. The ability to talk with others about dilemmas and to ask for assistance when needed will be essential ingredients as we move through these challenges together.

As the provincial body, we have attempted to stay closely connected with our members through our Town Hall series, Coffee Connections, and many other opportunities as we broaden our supports and services to members while advocating for their needs. For me, hearing regularly from our members and better understanding their experiences has reinforced a few core leadership values.

Trust Your Instincts

Leaders understand that authenticity and humanity are at the centre of their work. Hold true to your values, particularly when faced with the myriad of important decisions that you need to make.

The Relationship is the Message

During these challenging times you may be required to share concerning – and perhaps heartbreaking – news with the people you lead. How those messages are received will signal the quality of the relationships you have built with others. Bad news seems less worrisome, and good news more

encouraging, when there is a strong relationship between leaders and staff members.

Solve Problem; Before They Become Problem;

I have come to believe that problems and conflicts are downriver symptoms. Often, the real problem that needs to be addressed is further up the river. Take the time to deal with downriver problems by investigating and understanding what is happening further up the river.

Acknowledge Anxiety, Encourage Resolve

Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President during the Great Depression. In his inaugural address, he assured Americans by sharing his faith in the ability of the country and its citizens to meet the crisis head on, "This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously." Remind your staff members of their ability to face this crisis head on, and why their work matters now more than ever.

Crises – particularly those that are long-lasting – take a toll on all involved. During times of intense turbulence, it is important to keep your finger on the collective pulse of the people that you lead. Accurately assessing the needs of your school community during a crisis means that your leadership radar must be functioning effectively. As we continually strive to make sense of the shifting priorities and challenges, remaining true to our values and leading authentically may help to lift the clouds in our schools. Remaining capable, focused, and effective is a function of both your physical and mental well-being. If you are struggling to maintain appropriate levels of overall well-being, please reach out to the BCPVPA so that we can work with you to address the upriver issues that you may be facing.