

Principl(ed)

VOL. 1 - ISSUE 3 - June 2020

President's
Perspective

Connecting
in a Crisis

Sharing
Student Voice

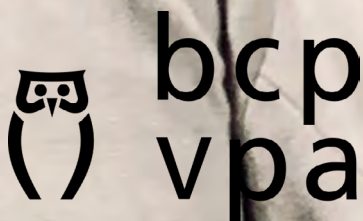
Creating
Community

Flames
of Burnout

A Day in the Life

of a
Secondary
Vice-Principal

Beth Applewhite
shares her perspective
on leadership, learning
and diversity



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

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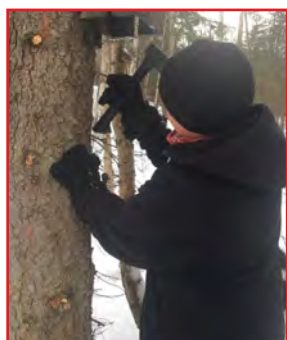
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Principl(ed)

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Designed and edited
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Contact:
Sandra Murphy
Director, Communications
sandra@bcpvpa.bc.ca

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 2500 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

**As my two-year term
draws to a close,
this is not the way
I anticipated Spring 2020
would play out.
It is not the June that anyone,
on a global scale,
could have envisioned.**



David DeRosa
is the 2018-2020 President of the BCPVPA,
and a former Director of the Board

My heart breaks for the loss of life and the impacts this epidemic has had, and is having, on families everywhere. I feel for those kids that rely on their schools for so much more than their education and learning, and I acknowledge the incredible efforts of those who are doing all that they can to connect with, and sustain, our vulnerable learners and families. What many of us took for granted – food, structure and a sense of connection – has been disrupted in ways we could not predict. As the days have stretched into weeks and months, societies across the globe now recognize that schools are a foundation for hope for many children. COVID-19 has exposed this reality in the glaring light of each day.

**"As the days have stretched
into weeks and months,
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now recognize that schools
are a foundation for hope
for many children."**

In the face of these incredible hardships and challenges, we are also witnessing unprecedented kindness, care and compassion. Patience, once an aspirational virtue, is now a daily practice. I see it in stores, schools, hospitals and homes. We see familiar attempts in media outlets to stir controversy to generate a story, but we're not engaging like we once did. No: things are very different and the resilience of the human spirit is glowing and is revealed in how we continue to support each other. Humankind is being reminded of the power of connectedness. I marvel at the creativity and innovation used to allow a grandparent to hug a child. The simple touch of a family member or friend is also something we once took for granted, but no longer. I choose to reflect on these warm moments in this challenging time.

During this time of isolation, I also find myself reflecting on my BCPVPA journey, as I accept the realization that it is coming to a close in a few weeks. What was a whirlwind of engaging meetings and Chapter visits; trains, taxis, airports and car rental counters; Chapter Councils, Committee and Board meetings; has transformed into a steady flow of Zoom meetings from my basement office in the Kootenays.



David with BCPVPA Executive Director Kevin Reimer



David with former BC Teachers Federation President Glen Hansman

Fortunately, the office has a window that looks out onto a green space and allows the sunlight to stream in, encouraging me to daydream a little and reflect on how grateful I am for the past two years.

I am grateful for the opportunity to directly serve and support the Board of Directors and our members, to speak on your behalf, to share the perspective of leaders that lead from the middle, and to support the public education system by shining a light on the exceptional work of Principals and Vice-Principals in their diverse and contextual roles across the province. While there are many reasons for my gratitude, I am most grateful for the opportunities to meet, learn from and work with so many amazing people, including many of you who are reading this magazine.

You have influenced my personal and professional

"You taught me that balancing work and life is not about less of one and more of the other."

practice. You taught me that balancing work and life is not about less of one and more of the other. Balance is a practice that blends intra/ interpersonal awareness with self-care. By giving ourselves permission to breathe and taking the time to ask the simple question, 'How am I arriving?', we are able to identify and address what is moving within us. This awareness is the bridge to empathy, and eventually compassion, where action awaits. This compassionate practice has the capacity to sustain us, as we support the growing needs of our school communities. I hope I have given the many lessons you have shared with me some space to take root.

I have learned the importance of incorporating systems research into strategic planning. Early in my term I was told that stories are 'just anecdotes', but data to accompany your contextual and compelling stories is a powerful force for advocacy and influence. Researcher John Sterman said, "Research shows that showing people research doesn't work." Stories connect us, to each other and our communities, as we see our own experiences in the experiences of others. Building community through connection, familiarity

and common vision 'does work'. You showed me this each time I visited your home, school, District, Chapter or community. By sharing your collective stories in conversations, at sector tables and in the media, I hope I have advocated effectively for you and for public education.

"Building community through connection, familiarity and common vision 'does work'."

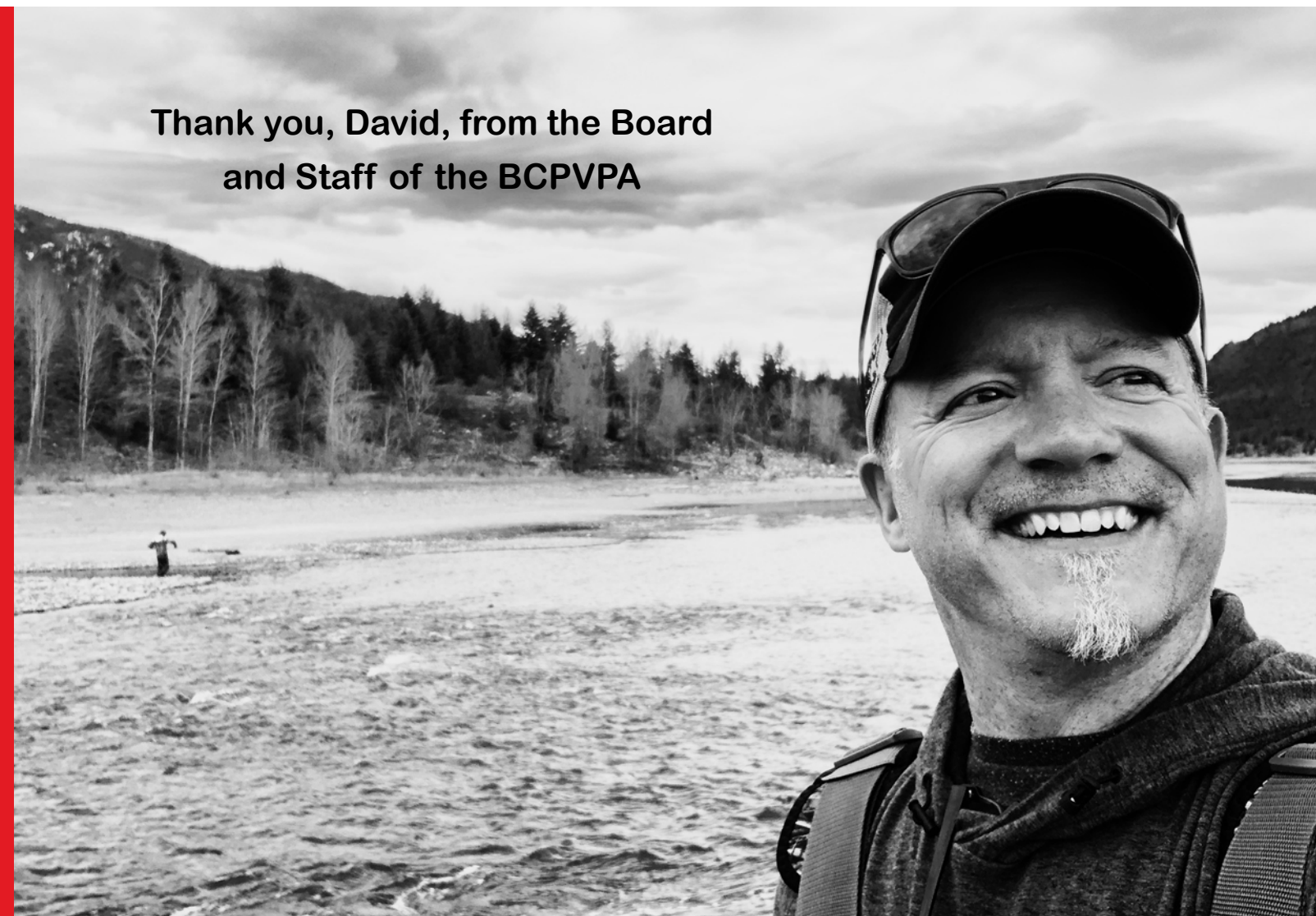
COVID-19 reminds us that educators and education systems play critical roles in our communities and around our globe. During my two year term, I have been consistently reminded of why: the children, of course. As the saying goes, 'children are our future' and the world relies on their success. Although the BCPVPA has our members' needs at the core of our

own 'business', indirectly – and often directly – we support school communities and the thousands of children we connect with every day. At some point, hopefully in the near future, we will look back at COVID-19 and reflect on our collective journey. When that future arrives, I will remember the unprecedented kindness, the care and the compassion that I see people extending to each other. Margaret Wheatley must have had a crystal ball in 2004 when she said, "It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be. The way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we know and trust one another."

As I reflect on the past two years, I am so grateful for the opportunity to build community through connection and for the many new relationships that we have developed together along the way. Thank you for putting your trust in me.

Take Care,
David

**Thank you, David, from the Board
and Staff of the BCPVPA**



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 contemplations, their focus on their practice, and why they love what they do.

In this third installment, we meet Beth Applewhite, Vice-Principal at Pinetree Secondary School in SD43 (Coquitlam).

"I love the energy of adolescents; they have their whole lives in front of them and they're so excited. And still, for the most part, hopeful."
- Beth Applewhite

Beth Applewhite's journey to leadership took a sideroad that gave her a different perspective on the work and the sector. She began teaching English and some Home Economics in 1995 in the Burnaby School District. After six years, Beth took a break from teaching to open her own business – a tutoring centre – that she ran as the sole proprietor for two years and helped run for one more year after she sold the business. "I came back to teaching because I really missed public education, and I missed the collaboration of a larger staff and having a team," said Beth. "I had made that change around 2001, when teachers didn't have a great reputation in the public: I decided to be a tree outside of the forest for a while, and to get a different perspective. That's where I got the leadership bug, because when I came back to teaching from being a business owner I could see that bigger picture."

Beth became a department head before joining the Vice-Principalship pool in both Burnaby and Surrey. She started her first Vice-Principal appointment in Surrey in January 2011.

A Day in the Life of a Secondary Vice-Principal

Beth worked at her first school for three-and-a-half years, and her second school for four years, before jumping back to Coquitlam where her mother had taught for nearly 30 years. "I was one of those kids who played school as a child, all the time. I was always the teacher, and never the pupil." Beth adds, "I think it was seeing my mom in the classroom, and seeing her creating units and writing report cards: that was a big part of my family life. My father taught in Trinidad-Tobago before he immigrated to Canada to earn his engineering degree, so education was very important in our family."

Being a staff rep in the union also helped Beth, as she learned about things that she wasn't able to see from the classroom, like stakeholder interactions and board meetings. "It opened up my perspective, and then moving into the world of small business – the combination of those things – made me thirstier for leadership. And a big part of my path towards administration has been that I can make a difference. I've always been interested in anti-racism education,

that is my passion, and I realized I could have more of an influence as an administrator, and better networking opportunities that will ultimately support kids."

Beth learned early on that she connected well with adolescents and received positive feedback from those interactions. That genuine rapport led her naturally to secondary education. "I chose secondary because I love how, with teenagers, it's black and white. I try to help them see the gray areas. They're at an age where they're maturing, so they are able to sit and be attentive, and you can encourage them to see things from a different perspective. When I see them do that, it excites, energizes and motivates me." Beth smiles. "I love the energy of adolescents; they have their whole lives in front of them and they're so excited. And still, for the most part, hopeful. They're right there on the cusp of the next steps in their lives. It's fun to be a part of that, and it can be quite moving too. I meet teenagers who at their young age have been through more than I have been in my lifetime, so the resiliency that I see in high school students is inspiring."

Beth considers the meaning of graduation for grade 12 students in 2020. "Some people downplay the graduation piece, but you have to remember that for a teen, they've been looking forward to that moment their whole school life. It's an important milestone that is not going to be anything like what they expected it to be, or want it to be. But they're staying strong."

While Beth is now a Vice-Principal, she still has a passion for teaching. "In most high schools in the province, Vice-Principals have teaching responsibilities, but in the Lower Mainland most Vice-Principals don't teach. Whenever I'm asked to do a presentation or to teach, I jump on that. I just love those opportunities. I do miss the different type of relationship you have with students. I still feel so rewarded in my job, but there is a special connection when you have a group 25 or 30 students working with you, and you're having great discussions."

That opportunity to connect with students and their families is a critical component of Beth's work. One of her portfolios is Indigenous students and learning, and she supports students and their families, and



works with both the District and care workers. And connecting with staff is equally important. “Something that I started doing is lunch and learns. You think about the needs, have conversations with teachers and identify the subjects that people may be yearning for more information. You tap that expertise in your own building, you don't need to go out and find a guest, but you order some lunch and create community by breaking bread together every couple of months.”

Those connections in the school extend to what's happening within each department. “I love collaboration, and I'm working closely with the English and ELL departments and helping them to collaborate. ELL students end up in English classes, so it was a huge triumph in the Fall when the departments came together and did a cross-grade summative assessment and a marking calibration session. They now share common language and are on the same page.”

One of the initiatives closest to Beth's heart is anti-racism work. At her current school, she has established a student committee of about 30 students, and for the past two years they have mounted an anti-racism youth conference involving students from all over the District. “I was really surprised I could pull it off my very first year in the school — that's a real testament to my team, and how amazing my Principal and Vice-Principals are”, said Beth. “Back in 2007, there were a few serious racial incidents at my school, and that was when I created the first Black Student Committee in Western Canada. The group eventually morphed into an inclusive Anti-Racism committee. This is something I've established at every school I've been in ever since.”

“For the past four years, the Anti-Racism Youth Symposium has become an annual Metro Vancouver event hosted by the Surrey Aboriginal Education Department. We have had incredible guest speakers including Indigenous leaders, artists and RCMP officers; Black judges, writers and music artists; an ex-Neo Nazi member who now works in anti-terrorism; and activists advocating for LGBTQ rights. This year, we were able to host a powerfully moving Maori speaker from New Zealand. It's all about diversity and seeing the beauty and the strength in

diversity, and that we all need to be allies. There's an amazing feeling in the room, and great feedback from students and from educators who can't believe the positive vibe in the space. They learn so much from what the kids have to say about their experiences with racism and prejudice and discrimination.”

“I'm very much a believer in the core competencies, especially personal identity and social responsibility combined with the First Peoples Principles which support this work. Students feel validated at these events. They can see themselves in the room, and feel like they belong. I'm biracial and I've learned the importance of embracing one's personal identity. I know firsthand the challenges of not seeing yourself in the curriculum or in the staff or on the walls of your school. I lived through that and so I can relate, and I know that those challenges are real for kids. It's the same for the family, if they don't see themselves represented. It is my hope that all students learn to respect diverse identities, not just tolerate each other but respect each other and become allies.”

“Students feel validated at these events. They see themselves in the room, and feel like they belong.”

In such an unprecedented and challenging year, Beth has hopes for what students will have gained. “Normally I hope they feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of a school year, and I've been worried it'll be tougher for some of them to feel this way in this unexpected remote learning environment. I hope that they have learned, that they've been reflective and are aware of their strengths. I hope they've started to discover what their passion might be, and I think this may be even stronger now because of COVID-19. I hope they have a stronger understanding of who they are, and that they have a sense of gratitude for some aspect of their lives. I know they're seeing, hearing and learning about so much tragedy and struggle, so I hope they have developed some resiliency. I hope they still have a sense of excitement about what lies ahead and hope for their next stage.”

Beth has been acknowledged for her significant accomplishments in education. This year, she was nominated for a YWCA Women of Distinction Award, and she was nationally recognized as a 2020 Honouree for 100ABCWOMEN. Last year, she was the recipient of a BC Achievement Community Award. Beth appreciates the recognition. “I never feel comfortable celebrating my own awards, but I acknowledge that recognition does bring me joy and I'm very grateful. It's not the accolades so much, but knowing that my peers, my colleagues and my mentors put in the time and effort to honour me. It lets me know that the work I'm doing is making a difference, and it encourages me to continue. It may mean some late hours, but it's worth it.

And the long hours can be one of the most challenging aspects of the role. “There are not enough hours in the day, said Beth. “You are always being pulled in different directions. I did expect it to be demanding, with so many meetings and planning sessions. But I didn't realize how unbelievably ridiculous some days are, where you look at each other and shake your head in disbelief: you can't believe that you just did that many things in that short amount of time. You feel like a health professional, a psychiatrist, a counsellor, a teacher and more, all in one day. I thought I would get to be a decision-maker and have some influence, but now I realize the impact of my decisions on staff and families, even for seemingly small decisions, can have a huge impact on the people I work with and the people in the community. It shows you really have to think about your decisions, and think about all the different stakeholders.”

“Often teenagers feel that people don't understand them: when they are truly heard and seen, that's a great reward.”

Beth is grateful for the support that she receives in the role, and knowing that she is supporting others. “I think that for me the best thing is when students are feeling supported and are feeling heard. Often

“I love bringing diverse members of the community into the school or to the youth conferences because it forces students — and adults — to re-examine their biases.”

I bring in community members who I know will challenge the stereotypes, speakers of colour, Indigenous speakers, speakers who have survived unbelievable challenges and speakers who have thrived, not just survived.

These people inspire you, and students learn not to use their own colour, or their circumstances, or their race, or their culture as an excuse.

Kids actually love the opportunity. It's worth the risk to see the ‘A-ha!’ moments, and then I can tell it's going to change their lives for the better.

I know it's become a bit of a cliché to say this, but they are our future, they're the next generation of leaders.”

teenagers feel that people don't understand them: when they are truly heard and seen, that's a great reward. I know as well that we are doing a great job of supporting vulnerable families, and that's something that I couldn't do as much as a teacher. In an administrator role, I have more influence and opportunities to support families and to connect them with resources. I am also grateful for a strong Principal who allows you to build capacity in yourself, who recognizes and acknowledges your strengths but challenges you to grow."

Beth has some words of advice for teachers who may be interested in transitioning to a leadership role. "I love it when a teacher seeks support thinking, 'where can I grow in this role?' It's actually one of my favourite things to do, to help someone figure out how to develop their leadership, and help prepare them for their first Department Head or Vice-Principal interview."

"I want them to know that what some teachers are worried about, that the student relationship will be different: that's true. I often don't get to know the students as well; I won't have that same relationship with the students. But I do have pretty amazing

relationships with kids, and it's even more powerful because it's not just with the child but with the family, the parents."

"I want them to know that yes: it will be different, but you won't completely lose that connection with students. You still believe in the work, and that doesn't have to end when you become a Vice-Principal. Just don't take no for an answer, and you can still find ways to be in the classroom, you can still coach, sponsor a team, or a student club."

"I want them to know that yes: it will be different, but you won't completely lose that connection with students."

"I'm going to say one last thing especially to female administrators. You may walk into a room especially at secondary, and you might be the only woman. Know that you are enough, and that you have every right to be there. You have as much right to be there as anyone else."

Beth emceeding the Anti-Racism Youth Symposium



A Day in the Life

"The first thing I think about on a working day is: what kind of day will it be, what meetings do I have set, when and where am I supposed to be. I don't usually answer my email first thing, I look at the subject to see if there something pressing: if there is I will address it, but usually it's okay. I know who I need to see, or an email I need to answer as soon as I get to work. But I do check my texts – if it's an emergency, they will probably text me. There's nothing worse than that feeling when you get to school and someone says, 'didn't you see the text?'"

And the day will drive what you select to wear: is there an earthquake evacuation drill, or is it the Terry Fox Run, or am I making deliveries to at-risk families? Am I covering someone's PE class, or do I have an important meeting at the board office? I have a supportive husband, and we make sure our son is on track for the day by doing our check in: who has what planned, who is at the late night band performance or who has a parent-teacher evening. We are able to empathize with each other and understand where each other is coming from.

I usually get to work around 7:45, but it's been different during COVID-19. I've been making sure my son is on track with his schoolwork, and we have breakfast together. The first thing at work is email and making sure that we have coverage for teachers who are away. I'm part of a team of four, so it's not just me doing that. I'm checking voice messages and making phone calls. Often we have a parent meeting or a counselling or administrators' meeting in the morning, and every two weeks we have a District All-Administrators' meeting where we can connect with other leaders and learn together.

Over the course of the day, typically in secondary, there's some discipline that needs to be handled whether that's someone being sent to the office, or students vaping in the bathroom, or not being where they're supposed to be at the time, so that can be something very minor but some days it can be something more serious and can take up a lot of your time. My school is great, we don't have too

A Day in the Life of a Secondary Vice-Principal (should the day not be derailed by an unexpected fire alarm or incident in the community)

- 6:30 am** Coffee – check texts and look over email
- 6:45 am** Check Work and Family Calendars
- 7:45 am** Get to School – check voice mail, start answering email
- 7:55 am** Greet students at the door and supervise the foyer (quick check-in with the team)
- 8:10 am** Check, if needed, for TOC coverage
- 8:15 am** Typically 2 or 3 students waiting to meet unexpectedly during their off block (no appointment) re: courses, lockers, fees, student initiatives, reference requests, etc.
- 8:30 am** School Based Team Meeting – collaborative dialogue addressing referrals and complex student needs
- 9:15 am** Check email and prepare for Meeting with English Department Head (Rubric/Assessment Examples for cross-grade write)
- 9:30 am** In-school Suspension Resolution Meeting with Parent(s) and Student
- 9:50 am** More email and inform teachers, Counsellor and Receptionist about student returning to classes
- 10:00 am** Meeting with Parent, Student, Case Manager and Counsellor to update student's IEP and discuss adaptations and supports
- 10:43 am** Hallway/foyer class change supervision – connect and check-in with vulnerable students
- 10:50 am** Teacher pops in to ask if I can meet to discuss a student concern – advocate for the student while supporting the teacher
- 11:00 am** Youth Care Worker drops in to discuss a student/family's food security issues – create a plan for support
- 11:15 am** Counselling/Admin. Meeting
- 12:00 pm** Check more email, grab a snack and jacket for Lunch Supervision

many serious discipline issues but, you know, they're good kids who can make bad choices. We need to teach them how to make better choices, give some appropriate consequences, inform the parents — who most often see that it's coming from a place of support — and try to get them to learn a different choice.

I spend time connecting with the team, so my partners are my go-to, my Principal is my go-to, and sometimes I'll reach out for support to other administrators in the District. I'm lucky, because I can get perspectives from colleagues in many different Districts.

I sit on the Executive for the Principals' Association, and did this as well in Surrey, so sometimes there are executive meetings and events outside of school hours.

During the day, we try to get out to the halls in between classes and we are definitely out and about during the lunch hour. We have a large campus, so it's great to be out and to walk, and there is a forest in the back that we often have to check. Sometimes lunchtime makes for more work, because you discover things – more opportunities to help students make better choices. Sometimes we have meetings with support care workers, and we do check-ins to make sure vulnerable students are being supported. On any given day, an RCMP officer could drop by with an issue or just to drop in to connect about what someone is doing or to let us know something is happening in the community – sometimes someone in our neighbouring community rec centre accidentally sets off the first alarm, and that can put a wrench in our day. Sometimes there's a medical emergency, a bad asthma attack or a sport injury. And sometimes there is good news, that one of our sports teams has been recognized, or that someone in the school has gone to their citizenship ceremony.

Each of the Vice-Principals and the Principal take on different portfolios, including three or four subject areas. Under these new COVID-19 circumstances there has been more placed on our plate. I have been managing the support staff and their changing duties, while organizing a plan for the return of school resources, as one of my partners works tirelessly on tracking our most vulnerable learners while building next year's timetable. And my other partner, who is

brand new to the role, has the Health and Safety portfolio which has been an extensive undertaking during the pandemic. We help and support each other. Having three VPs makes a big difference, as more can get done. I feel for schools where there is only one VP. At our school we have more time for culture-building and for team-building, and I love that.



Beth speaking at the 2020 Anti-Racism Youth Symposium

- 12:05 pm** Students start arriving to see if I have a moment – book time with two at the end of lunch, and walk and talk with the third
- 12:50 pm** Arrive back at office – two students waiting to see me (meet with each student and then try to eat lunch off the side of my desk while answering more email)
- 1:05 pm** Take a call from BC Children's Hospital – **Psychologist requests a confidential student inquiry survey; receive the Doctor's request and fill out the document** (collaborate with the student's Counsellor)
- 1:40 pm** Meet with Counsellor to discuss updates for three vulnerable students who are not connecting well, have attendance issues and are at academic risk
- 2:06 pm** Try to get out to the hallways to supervise class change, but do not quite make it in time as a **small crowd of students have come to confirm** their scheduled time for the Provincial Numeracy Assessment
- 2:10 pm** Walk the halls and encourage stragglers to get to class; walk one student to class and explain her locker troubles to the teacher so she won't be marked late
- 2:15 pm** Visit English 9 class for a Formal First-Year Teacher Evaluation
- 3:30 pm** Meet with the teacher for a short debrief and **confirm a date to meet after having read my notes/** feedback
- 3:45 pm** **Back to the office to meet with SOGI Student Committee members who want to propose initiatives for Anti-Bullying Day and Pride Month, while finishing my lunch.**
- 4:00 pm** Interview two teachers for a temporary position (teacher off on sick leave)
- 5:30 pm** Debrief the interviews with VP team member and Principal
- 5:45 pm** Check voice mail, more email and start packing up for home
- Homework To Do List** Read/answer email, including contacting the successful candidate for the temp. position, and sending the rationale to HR; complete reference letter for a teacher's MEd application; chapter readings for District Leadership Training Session

THE BUDGET COMMITTEE

MORE THAN JUST NUMBERS

From day one, BCPVPA has had a history of member involvement to ensure transparency of its finances. This is reflected in budget development, which is a part of the larger strategic planning process. This year, the Association has been engaged in the strategic planning process for the upcoming three budget years: 20/21 to 22/23. Strategic input has been gathered from the BCPVPA Board of Directors and staff, through a survey of members, and through feedback from our educational partners, Advisory Committees, and Chapter Council representatives.

Since the environment BCPVPA works within changes continually, the plan is monitored and altered as new challenges and opportunities appear. After a plan review in January, staff develops an operational plan that outlines activities, responsibilities, measures of success and resources that are needed to work towards BCPVPA's goals and objectives. At this point the budget process begins, as illustrated in the diagram below.

Based on the operational plan and the Association's core services, staff develops a draft budget for the upcoming year. This budget is then sequentially reviewed by the Budget Committee, the BCPVPA Board – along with the Budget Committee's recommendations and advice – and Chapter Council representatives prior to the final BCPVPA Board approval.

The Budget Committee fulfills two important functions:

1. To review the proposed budget prepared by staff, and prepare advice and recommendations to accompany the budget when presented to the BCPVPA Board; and

2. To ensure alignment between the budget and the Association's strategic plan.

A typical Budget Committee meeting consists of much more than just ensuring that the numbers add up. First, the Committee is informed about the status of the Association's three-year strategic plan. Goals and objectives are thoroughly reviewed, along with plans for the upcoming year. Members are given the opportunity to ask questions to help determine the needed resources. Committee members are then led through the draft budget, with explanations about funding included in the various line items and how they tie into the core services and strategic objectives. This is not just about the numbers. The presentation tells the story of the Association's priorities and plans. It increases the members' depth of understanding of BCPVPA's activities so that Committee members are better prepared to provide advice and recommendations to the BCPVPA Board, and to ensure that strategic activities and core services are adequately resourced.

Recommendations are made about anything that has an impact on the budget, including finance policies and procedures. Recommendations have been made related to the Association's travel allowances, accommodation policies, reserves, and funding to support activities.

The Board of Directors relies upon the Budget Committee's commitment in thoroughly reviewing and questioning any budget line item. It is an essential step in the budget process.

The Committee meets once a year, and is comprised of two BCPVPA Directors and a minimum of five other members. Committee members can serve up to three consecutive two-year terms. Because BCPVPA's activities are designed for diverse needs that encompass urban or rural; elementary, middle, secondary or district; and new or seasoned members, the Association strives to ensure that the Budget Committee reflects this diversity. If members are interested in being part of the Committee, look for opportunities advertised in a Fall edition of eNews.

Review of
current
strategic
plan

Staff
drafts
an operating
plan and budget

Budget
Committee
reviews staff's
proposed budget
and prepares
advice and
recommendations

Board reviews
staff's proposed
budget, along
with Budget
Committee's
advice and
recommendations

Proposed
budget is
presented to
Chapter Council
for comments

Board approves
budget and
operating plan

“The name ‘Connecting Leaders’ is what it is all about. Whether it is with your District buddies, colleagues from another city, or educational professionals from around the world, it is about connecting educational leaders in different ways.”

Read Jorgensen, Principal,
Northridge Elementary, Victoria
Connecting Leaders 2018

Our colleague Read Jorgensen made this observation when invited to offer his thoughts about being part of the planning team for Nanaimo’s 2018 Connecting Leaders Conference. For more than three years, teams of Principals and Vice-Principals have worked with BCPVPA staff to envision, plan and operationalize the BCPVPA Connecting Leaders Conference to take place in a different region of the province each year. Our flagship conference has not only been held up as a model of professional learning and development but, and as Rayleen Larmet, Co-Chair of the 2019 conference Penticton commented, “The opportunity to connect with colleagues from around our region is incredibly rewarding.”

Prior to COVID-19, the concept of ‘connecting’ had a simpler meaning – or perhaps it was just different.

With the onset of COVID-19, our interactions have changed drastically in order to respect individual and community needs. At first we bumped elbows, then we ensured two meters of distance, and now we mostly meet online. While we might think of this

by
Elizabeth Bell & Jessica Antosz
Directors, Professional Learning &
Development, BCPVPA

as communicating in a new way, communication has been an evolving concept for generations of civilizations. Cave drawing, smoke signaling, drumming, storytelling and eventually ‘libri manu script’, which translates to ‘book written by hand’, all provided the connection people craved. More recently, we continued to evolve from the telegraph, to the telephone and now we are reliant on our cell phone and wireless computer communication, all in service of forming connections with others.

Leaving aside the evolution of the modes of communication, the driving concept behind each is the need and importance of human connection and relationship, both in person and over a distance. Human connection is part of our fundamental character and is defined by Brené Brown as ‘...the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.’ (Gifts of Imperfections: Let Go of Who You Think You’re Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are, 2010)

With the necessity of closing schools and many businesses due to COVID-19, we found ourselves in a space and place that required us to lean more on ‘communication over distance’ and less on direct human connection as we strived to have others ‘feel seen, heard and valued’. While we engineered virtual ways to make that happen, we knew that there would be a time when we returned to meeting our students, staff and community face-to-face. June will be a complex but good time, as we partially open schools in the hope for days ahead when hallways can be full, classrooms buzzing and collaboration spontaneous.

In many creative ways, educators in BC have managed to provide for the continuation of learning largely through virtual means. But in so doing, we as

CONNECTING LEADERS DURING CRISIS



**While the Definition of a
Conference May Change,
the Connection of
Leaders Never Will**

educators recognize that a critical component to learning is still that direct human connection. In her well-known TED talk of 2013 – Every Kid Needs a Champion – Rita Pierson references George Washington Carver as saying that ‘all learning is understanding relationships’ and James Comer as saying that ‘no significant learning can occur without a significant relationship’. Being in close physical proximity enhances significant relationships by allowing us to pick up on the unspoken nuances of conversation that often do not transmit over a screen. We know this to be true of learning, and we know this to be true of leadership as well.

Hence the continued importance of the times that we gather as leaders, to learn together, share common experiences and feel seen, heard and valued, and to do so by sharing physical community as well as in a virtual capacity.

And, that brings us full circle to the 2020 Connecting Leaders Conference. Three years ago, we changed our delivery format for the conference. While still a provincial conference that welcomes Principals and Vice-Principals from all sixty Chapters to participate, the conference became mobile and each year is situated in one of four regions – Vancouver Island and the North Coast (2018, 2022), the Okanagan and Kootenays (2019, 2023), the Metro area (2021, 2025) and the Center and North (2020, 2024). The conceptualization of each conference belongs to the members in the region, and offers them an opportunity to showcase both their communities and their unique approaches to learning to their colleagues from across the province.

Past chairs and committee members have generously shared some thoughts on the experience:

Allowing local level PVPs to plan the conference was a brilliant idea. From my point of view, what a

powerful experience it was to have agency; allowing us to act purposefully and constructively to direct our own professional growth and to contribute to the growth of our colleagues.

Sue Tonneson CL 2018

Sometimes those of us from smaller, more remote districts don't have as many opportunities to collaborate and connect with our peers. I felt that we had a voice throughout every stage of the process and that the 2019 CL conference really reflected our school leaders and what we were looking for in regards to professional development.

Kirsten Odian CL 2019

Being a part of the Connecting Leaders Conference was a great experience for me. I appreciate the ability to work with colleagues from all over the island and getting to plan and deliver the conference with them is an experience I will cherish for a long time. This has had the added benefit of finding familiar faces at subsequent events.

Kelly Amodio CL 2018

It was a great experience to work so closely with the team at the BCPVPA. They are a positive and encouraging group of individuals that supported and guided the work so that we could reflect the regional flavour in our activities and meet regional needs in the presentations. The local nature of the conference also allowed our local chapters to attend as teams and encouraged local districts to support these teams in attending.

Burt Bergmann CL 2019

Being part of the organizing committee has built relationships across districts. We all work so hard and that work is more rewarding when we do it together.

Andrea McComb CL 2021

For the past two years, we have worked with our accomplished and enthusiastic 2020 committee led by Co-Chairs Brenda Anderson and Jacqueline Borosa, and have planned for a unique event in Prince George where attendees could experience

the flavour of the north and reignite the power of personal connection. The title 'The Changing Nature of Leadership' was established by the committee at the beginning of their tenure: who knew it would be so apropos!

Up until early April, we believed that we could plan with optimism for an October conference. We all wanted to believe that we would be safely on the other side of this pandemic, and could reconvene, renew relationships and recall how we once were.

Instead, shortly after issuing our hopeful registration announcement, we came together in agreement that this year is like no other and that we needed to do as leaders do and make a hard decision. We reviewed a variety of options for the conference but ultimately, in order to ensure that we can continue to offer content, collaboration and connection – without that less desirable 'c', cancellation – we have moved to an online conference. As we have heard in conversation with others about similar changes that they have made, our objective is to offer not a dressed-up webinar, but a full conference experience that respects the creativity and commitment – more 'c's – of our committee, attending members, keynote speakers, workshop presenters, sponsors and exhibitors.

In the face of the 'changing nature of leadership', leaders do what is needed and find ways to innovate and grow. While we don't ever want to let go of the joy of reuniting with a friend, meeting new colleagues over table-talk, or sharing the *aaaahhh* moment of new learning with others, we hope that our 2020 Connecting Leaders Conference will introduce new ideas and new experiences that will continue to inspire you.

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

2020 BCPVPA
Connecting Leaders Conference

The Changing Nature of Leadership

October 22 - 23

Registration Opens In June

bcpvpa.bc.ca/connectingleaders-3



BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

ESSENTIALS

For New School Leaders

Becoming a New Vice-Principal?

Transitioning from Teacher to Principal?

What do you need for your New Role?

BCPVPA

**Essentials for New School Leaders
July 6 - July 9, 2020**

This special online program explores the leadership perspective and the skills needed by school leaders. Through online facilitated conversation with practicing Vice-Principals and Principals, you will have a window into what to expect as you step into your new role.

bcpvpa.bc.ca/essentials

FIPPA

BC's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

and the Role of the Principal

Principals and Vice-Principals deal with written records in the normal course of their everyday work.

They create written records: emails to staff and parents, text messages, minutes of meetings, notes about phone conversations and newsletters and reports.

They receive and handle documents from their School Districts, medical professionals, staff, parents and other inter-agency organizations.

by
Ellen Roberts
Director, Member Support Services
BCPVPA

Alongside the responsibility of organizing those records, Principals and Vice-Principals bear a huge responsibility for ensuring the privacy of documents in their possession.

BC's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA or FOIPOP) was put into legislation in 1992. FIPPA sets out two competing objectives. The first concerns access whereby citizens have the right, through freedom of information, to access their own personal records that remain in the custody or control of a 'public body'. Secondly, FIPPA has outlined in legislation measures to protect the privacy of information held in the custody or control of a public body.

As School Districts are a 'public body', records created within and for the School District must be protected under FIPPA legislation, but are also subject to disclosure upon request. In addition to establishing an individual's right to access records, FIPPA also sets out the terms under which a public body can collect, use and disclose the personal information of individuals.

When sensitive information is not adequately protected, a privacy breach may occur. We have all heard about – and likely experienced – situations in which personal information has been exposed when an organization's security system was breached. When this occurs within

a school system, such as when personal information about a child or family is shared without consent, School Districts must inform the Office of the Privacy Commissioner and an investigation into the breach of privacy is conducted. This is serious, and can be an onerous task for the school administrator and the School District.

So: how do Principals and Vice-Principals ensure that they are 'FIPPA-compliant' and avoid putting their District at risk? There are ways in which Principals and Vice-Principals can minimize the likelihood of a FIPPA concern, as well as ways to ensure their compliance if records should be requested. The following tips address some questions that members have asked regarding FIPPA and their work.

What records are subject to disclosure?

- Any record you create in the course of your employment, no matter where you create the record. Even emails created on personal email accounts that are used for work reasons may be subject to disclosure
- Personal information about someone that is contained in documents and/or files. If a parent requests all documents relating to them or their children, that may include information in confidential files
- Texts and voicemail messages
- Personal notes and working papers
- Calendar, agenda and diary entries
- Documents you keep at home, if related to work, may be subject to disclosure
- Non-School District business created on personal work emails are not accessible. This could include your personal medical appointments that might be on your work calendar: this is your personal information and therefore not subject to someone else's request. However, District staff or lawyers who are responsible for the redaction of your personal information before your records are disclosed will be able to see your calendar. So, if you want to ensure privacy, you may consider not putting personal appointments on your work calendar.

Should I stop writing things down to avoid a potential issue with FIPPA?

It is very important to document our work. To ensure compliance with FIPPA regulations, we can consider the kinds of records we are creating in our work:

- Keep in mind that every record you create in your workplace is potentially accessible under the FIPPA.
- Record-keeping is important. When you have meetings with parents or staff, it is a good idea to follow up with a record of that meeting (via email, for example) to ensure clarity and transparency. It is what is included in that record that matters: stick to facts. Do not include personal commentary, opinion or remarks. Even in your personal notes, leave out the commentary.
- If you don't need to create a record, don't!
- Be mindful of email: keep content clear and concise, and limit your audience. Avoid hitting 'reply all'. And, if sending to a group of people using non-School District email accounts, use the 'BCC' line so that their email addresses are kept confidential, and they cannot 'reply all'.
- Be very careful with confidential documents that you may have on your computer. Ensure documents (like scanned records) are accurately labelled to avoid mixing up documents in error.
- Marking emails or documents 'sensitive' or 'confidential' can help in the case of a FIPPA request. "Confidential" records are not necessarily inaccessible under FIPPA, but it may help establish that the document was meant to be confidential.
- Don't promise confidentiality to others. You cannot control other people's requests for documents you may have created, so you cannot assure confidentiality.

What do I do when someone makes a FIPPA request?

- Individuals are entitled to their own 'personal information', including you.

- If someone makes a written request for information, it will be done at the District level, not to you personally.
- Someone in your District will contact you and ask for all records pertaining to the person. You are obligated by legislation to turn over all records to the District: emails, notes, phone records, and anything else you may have.
- The 'duty to assist' means that your efforts in searching for records and processing access to information requests should facilitate (and not frustrate) access. It can be tedious, laborious work, but you cannot hide or try to delete documents.
- The School District employee who deals with school protection and FIPPA will explain the process to you. As you are also entitled to have your own personal information protected, it is likely that the information gathered will go through a 'redaction' process where any reference to you or your personal information is taken out for your protection.

What if I have a privacy breach at my school?

- If confidential information is shared without consent, it is your duty to report the breach to your School District as soon as you discover the breach. The person whose role it is to manage School Protection will contact the Office of the Privacy Commissioner and may launch an investigation.
- Depending upon the type and scope of breach, different actions will be taken but usually all affected individuals will be notified about their information being shared.
- If you are the cause of the breach, you may find yourself and your actions under investigation. Contact the Association for support in this matter.

www.oipc.bc.ca/resources/guidance-documents/
don@bcpvpa.bc.ca
ellen@bcpvpa.bc.ca
magdalena@bcpvpa.bc.ca



Up To SPEED

Following a year as President-Elect, Darren Danyluk is ready to take on his new role as President of the BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association. And, as an English teacher with a passion for language, he's already deliberate in his narrative.

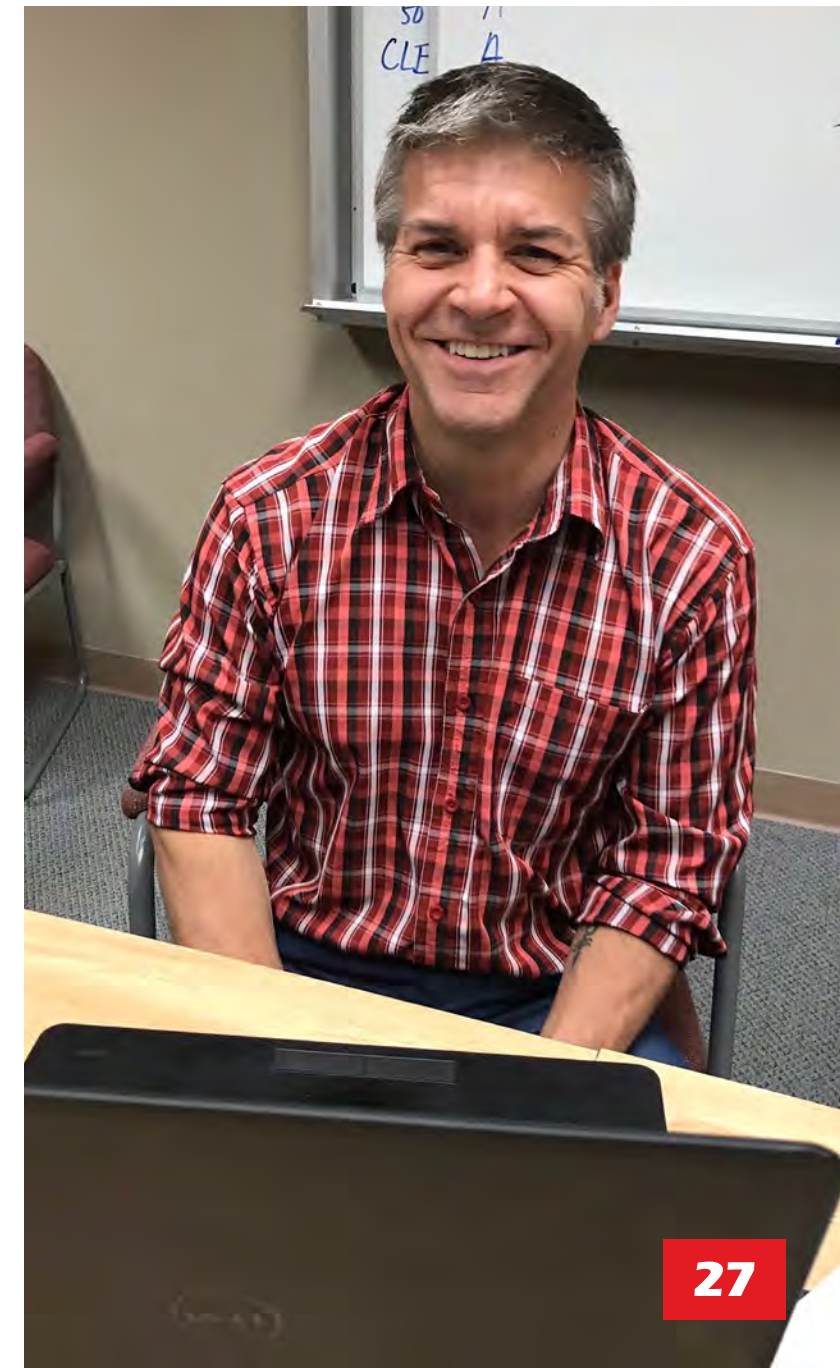
"I like metaphors," says Darren, "and I've been thinking about the metaphor of a relay race: how you get up to speed and match the pace of the runner that's currently carrying the baton. The handoff has to be accurate, and skillful. (Current President) David DeRosa has set a clear direction, and I have to pick up the baton from him at the same pace. There's a lot that is unknown about our future related to the current health situation, but I need to keep my head up, my footing steady and secure, and I need to reach my hand back for that baton."

Darren will take hold of the baton and begin his two-year term as BCPVPA President on July 1, 2020. He'll take the lead during interesting times, with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing restrictions on how we all live and work, with a significant challenge being mounted on behalf of the membership towards achieving status as their negotiating representative in contract discussions with their employers, and with a burgeoning concern about protecting and enhancing health and wellness in the education sector. Considering the challenges, Darren was ready for the race. "There was a moment for me at a Chapter Council meeting when I was Chapter Rep: one of our members was very concerned about our contract, which did not include language for maternity leave. She was a new Vice-Principal, and anticipated the kind of representation she had with the BCTF. She wanted advocacy and more, and pressed for representation of her views at Chapter Council. While I spoke to her concerns on the floor, I was struck deeply by the limitations of my advocacy and the sixty different contract realities on this point. I imagined a future wherein I could serve my colleague and all our members more effectively, having overcome the limits on our voice. That was a moment for me."

Darren continues, "Before I became a Director, and David had joined the Board a year before me, he would talk to me in general terms about how the Association was moving to try to correct some of the disparities in our circumstances. That was another big driver for me ... we're now working hard towards this goal ... I want to be there as we continue down the path."

Darren was born and raised in the BC Lower Mainland, primarily in Port Moody and Port Coquitlam. His inspiration to enter teaching was kindled by the words

of his own English 12 teacher. "Up until that point, I had first wanted to be a pilot, and then in junior high I was going to be an architect. I was a pretty good student generally, but I wasn't doing well in Drafting 12: I won't blame the teacher, because it was probably me. I had an English teacher, Mr. Eis, and he seemed to really like his job. One day we were passing each other in the stairwell, and I said 'Hello', while going down the stairs and he returned my greeting while going up and added, 'Haven't seen much of you this semester.' I laughed, and said sarcastically, 'Yeah, pretty nice, huh?' And he said, 'No. I kinda miss you.' Here's an established teacher, he's taught me once, and he made a difference for me. It was pivotal. I had been taught by many good teachers, but until that



2018
Contract Advisory Committee
BCPVPA Short Course II Facilitator

2017
Elected to BCPVPA Board of Directors for third term

2015-2017
BCPVPA Short Course Facilitator

2016
Exam Scheduling Committee

2015-2017
Governance Committee

2015
Elected to BCPVPA Board of Directors for second term

2014
Short Course Committee
Elected to BCPVPA Board of Directors

2005-2015
BCPVPA Chapter President

2005
Appointed secondary Principal
Master's in Administration and Supervision, Gonzaga University

1998-2005
BCPVPA Chapter Rep (Rocky Mtn.)

1996-1998
BCPVPA Chapter Rep (Nechako)

1995
Joined the BCPVPA as secondary Vice-Principal

1993-1994
Taught secondary school on the Isle of Man, Language Arts

1989-1993
Secondary school counsellor and teacher, Language Arts

1987-1989
Alternate School coordinator and teacher, Language Arts

1987
Bachelor of Education, Simon Fraser University

moment – until that comment – no teacher had made me feel as valued and as worthy as Mr. Eis did with five simple words. And I had to wonder, what would it be like to arrive at a job where each day is filled with the potential to send child after child home with a warm sense of worth glowing inside?”

Darren attended SFU and did his practicum in the Lower Mainland, but when his fellow students started to report that they had secured jobs, he was eager to do that too. “I hadn’t been to many places in BC at that point, but I applied all around the province and I got a call from this place, Fort Saint James. The Superintendent flew down to conduct interviews, and he met me at a hotel near the airport. I was 22, in a skinny tie and white shirt – I even carried a briefcase, but I think I only had my resume inside. The Superintendent showed up in jeans, cowboy boots and an open collar shirt, and we sat and talked for maybe 15 minutes...and that was my first teaching job. It’s funny, moving from the city and all the things in Vancouver to a small town. I thought that I would stay there for two or three years, but I was there for 11 years.”

Darren’s journey as a school leader would include time as both a Chapter Representative and Chapter President, roles that helped him to gain a better understanding of the BCPVPA before he ran successfully for a Directorship in 2014. Through his time on the Board, he has learned a great deal about BC’s education ecosystem, the needs of Principals and Vice-Principals and his own leadership development. “I’m an inclusive leader, and not autocratic in any way. That doesn’t mean I’m not able or willing to take the responsibility to make a decision. But I don’t make rash decisions; I like to gather information, and sometimes it takes time, but I think it’s very important to step back and take a breath, to collect information and hear other points of view. I intend to do all of that and make the best decisions possible for the organization.”

Darren has clear goals for his own term as President, and for the Association’s future. “I recognize that much is overshadowed by the current health crisis, but to achieve negotiation representation for our members would be a success. I’d like to see our membership thriving as a population that is not

under duress. Looking ahead, I would like to see negotiation representation moving through a cycle over the next five years: we would be operating with a provincial template of limited common terms that we have established, and in four years’ time we would be sitting down for a regular review of that template.”

“I would also like to see our Association represent 100% of the active Principals and Vice-Principals in public education in BC, and I’d like to work towards that. Having all of the Principals and Vice-Principals in the province as voluntary members ... would be a very important aspect in the health and welfare of our members, as we would be clearly representing everyone.”

“And, I’d like to see more development around the organizational pieces of being a school leader. I’m not at all critical of our current professional learning. We have great programs out there for members to which we could expand foundational pieces, supporting Principals and Vice-Principals with learning and guidance for the operational details of the role.”

On a more personal level, Darren is ready for the move to Vancouver, when it’s appropriate to do so under public health guidelines. “I’ve always loved Vancouver, and the ocean. I’m looking forward to that, but I don’t know how to feel about the rain. I think I’ll miss more sunlight during the year.”

Darren will also miss many aspects of life in a smaller community. “I’ll give you an example of the difference: on Canada Day, there are fireworks in a small town, starting at midnight ... We can leave our house at 11:53 pm, and we can drive there – there’s parking – and we can enjoy the fireworks for 20 minutes and then be back at the house by 12:27 am. And for paddle boarding, it’s literally five minutes until I am parked at the lakeshore and the board is in the water, and three more minutes until I’m looking back at the shore. I’ll miss those things, but there’s a lot of convenience in Vancouver that I don’t have access to here. I’ll find that balance.”

Darren adds, “I’m prepared for this personal and professional transition at this point in my life. I think often of the Ralph Waldo Emerson quote *‘If you would lift me up you must be on higher ground.’* I come back to this quote time and time again; it’s my North Star as a Director and soon as President. My decisions, my directions, my behaviours must serve as the model, placing people, compassion, and relationships at the core. The opportunity to do this, to bring people along on this venture, this long and exciting run, is an unparalleled privilege. I am excited to begin!”

**Darren Danyluk begins
his two-year term as
BCPVPA President on July 1, 2020**



The Gift of Teaching and Learning from the Land

by
Katie Marren
Vice-Principal
DP Todd Secondary School, SD57

Any good education idea usually springs from a need, and our Land Based Learning Program was no exception.

DP Todd Secondary School in SD57, Prince George, is an 8-12 school with 650 students, 210 of whom are Indigenous. We have a wide range of economic diversity, and a significant demographic that experiences social and economic challenges.

We were experiencing a lack of engagement by some of our most fragile learners. These students were exhibiting some telltale behaviours that told us that we were not meeting them in a place where they felt success. These behaviours were telling us that we needed to explore new ways for these learners to feel connection, success and relevance in their learning and within their school experience.

The idea for this program was hatched earlier this school year during a discussion with teacher Reid Roberts about alternatives to suspension. He suggested that he could take students out on his trapline as a way for them to build connections and to gain new skills. He thought that using the trapline and land based education as a way of incorporating restitution and restorative practice might break down students' barriers to learning and engagement.

Reid had already been running a program supported by an Indigenous Learning Team Grant in SD57 one day each week. Beginning in September 2019, he was taking Indigenous students out to his trapline. Reid is a licensed trapper, and owns a trapline that is 50km east of Prince George in the Bowron Valley and up an access road. Students prepare and maintain trapping sites, and build snares, box traps and cubby traps. They set and check traps, and learn about bushcraft. They skin and prep the furs, make bait, build fires, roast squirrels and learn about animal behaviours and tracks – how they move and how they hunt.

Because students accessing the trapline were having success, experiencing engagement and developing

positive connections – and because I was becoming acutely aware of the need to find different ways to support students both academically and behaviourally – Reid and I co-developed a full-time land based resource program. We proposed to make Reid a Landbased Resource Teacher full-time.

We developed five objectives:

1. To support students with behavior challenges who might benefit from an alternate learning setting, with a goal of building a positive self-concept and stopping the suspension cycle.
2. To build for students new connections and engagement, both to their learning and to the school.
3. To support and enhance student interest in land based learning.
4. To provide opportunities for students to engage in Indigenous knowledge, learn cultural practices and language, and connect with elders.
5. To support cross-curricular learning, and to connect land based learning to the classroom.





District. Indigenous Ways of Learning and Knowing have become embedded in what we do and how it is presented. Reid has involved his students in all of this as the subject experts, and they are able to showcase their learning to other teachers and especially to their peers. Not only is success on the trap line expanding where and how kids were learning, but we are seeing the success experienced by these students outdoors spill over into their other classes.

We are excited about yet another expansion of the program next year. Reid will teach this program as a cross-curricular and comprehensive semester for selected students. Students will uncover curriculum in many core and curricular competencies that will either be taught within the program, or as part of classes at the school. Student interest is high, and there has been much to plan.

While there have been many successes to date, there have been challenges too. Transportation to and from the trapline can be limited. Remote access to medical support and limited communication in the bush are also problematic. But we have tried to address risks and challenges with a safety mindset, while keeping “Yes if...” as a means to remain solution-focused.

Not only is success on the trap line expanding where and how kids were learning, but we are seeing the success experienced by these students outdoors spill over into their other classes.

Their parents and grandparents are excited about this new program, and the engagement and satisfaction shown by their child.

As the program has developed, we have noticed that some of the participating students have previous bush experience. Some of them come from families of trappers or hunters, and already lead outdoor lifestyles. Their parents and grandparents are

excited about this new program, and the engagement and satisfaction shown by their child. The program is an onramp to success at school: many families know this, and enthusiastically contribute to it.

There is a lot of interest and curiosity about this program within the school, and we are continuing to find ways to build on our success. We want to take advantage of hands-on learning gained in the field to attach more meaning to classroom based learning, both for the students in the program and for the whole school. Furs have been brought into the school so students can learn about the fur trade. Reid has offered skinning and tanning workshops for teachers and students across our





Reid Roberts and Katie Warren

As for the ethics of trapping animals, we try to address that with transparency and flexibility. It is not for everybody, but it has a strong Indigenous, cultural, historical and economic history in our region, and it has been supported and very well received by our school community. Many schools across SD57 are asking for support to develop similar programming in their own schools.

A program like this is so dependent on having the right teacher. I have known Reid Roberts for 15 years: he is a master teacher who also happens to have this special trapping skillset. And I will also say this: the program has changed Reid. His connection,

A program like this is so dependent upon having the right teacher.

understanding, empathy and creativity towards our most challenging kids continues to grow. He was a great teacher, but he keeps innovating, developing and strengthening those skills every day. It shows through the growth of the kids. He has also become a leader and expert for other teachers in the school and across our District.

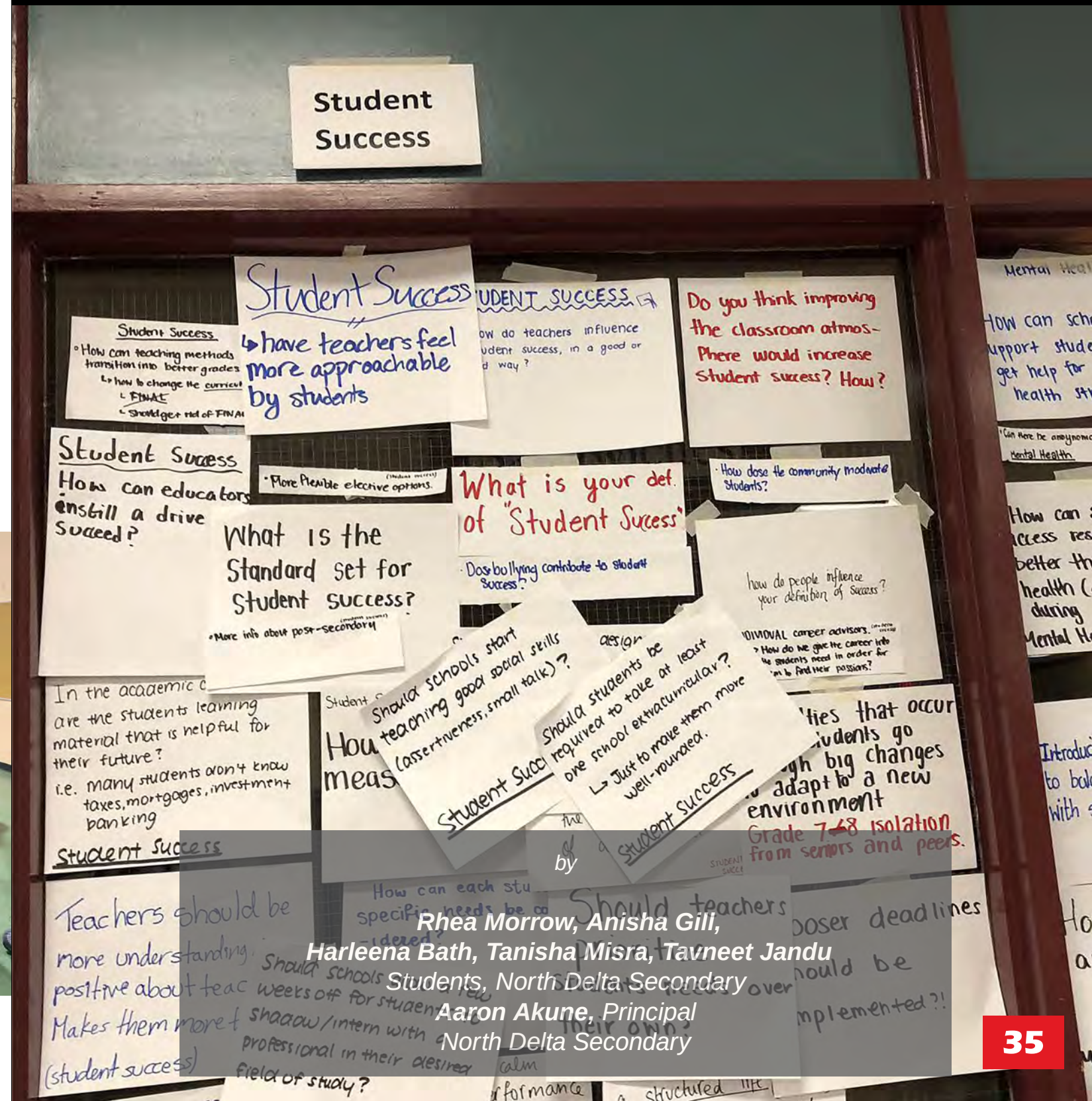
My role in this is – and has always been – one of support, encouragement and facilitation. I clear the roadblocks, and navigate the red tape and policy. Then I let Reid create, inspire and change kids' lives.

I am excited about this program and its early success, but we are always looking for ideas and experienced educators who can help us make it even better. If you have ideas or suggestions, I would love to hear from you. And if you are interested in implementing a similar program in your school, I would be eager to support you.



Voices

When Students Have a VOICE



Student Success

Student Success

How can teaching methods transition into better grades
↳ how to change the curriculum
↳ FINAL
↳ Should get rid of FINAL

↳ have teachers feel more approachable by students

How do teachers influence student success, in a good or bad way?

Do you think improving the classroom atmosphere would increase student success? How?

Student Success

How can educators instill a drive to succeed?

More flexible elective options.

What is the standard set for student success?

More info about post-secondary

What is your definition of "Student Success"?

Does bullying contribute to student success?

How does the community motivate students?

How do people influence your definition of success?

Individual career advisors
↳ How do we give the career info the students need in order for them to find their passions?

In the academic world are the students learning material that is helpful for their future?
i.e. many students don't know taxes, mortgages, investment banking

Student Success

Should schools start teaching good social skills (assertiveness, small talk)?

How many students are required to take at least one school extracurricular?

↳ Just to make them more well-rounded.

Student Success

How can each student have specific needs met?

Should teachers have closer deadlines?

Should be implemented?

Changes that occur when students go through big changes to adapt to a new environment
Grade 7-8 isolation from seniors and peers.

Rhea Morrow, Anisha Gill, Harleena Bath, Tanisha Misra, Tavneet Jandu, Aaron Akune, Principal North Delta Secondary

As adults in schools, we talk a lot about what we think is best for students and schools. We overhear a lot of what students say, we hear from parents, catch the comments from our colleagues and, over time, we formulate our own opinions. We think we know what students are experiencing and what they are thinking. We think we are justified in generating our own solutions to the challenges our students face, and the challenges that our students pose for us. The more we say it and the more we hear it, the more we believe we have ‘the’ answers. The truth is, too often we make decisions without considering what students have to say. And all this does is reinforce the perceived power imbalance that exists between adults and students. If you were a student, wouldn’t you feel discouraged from speaking up knowing that adults are making choices for you while allowing you to have little to no input?

Ultimately, our students are the most important stakeholders in education. We need to show an interest in what they have to say. We need to listen to their concerns and consider their ideas and suggestions. Their voices, albeit sometimes unpolished, MATTER.

When we provide an opportunity for students to speak up, when we truly listen to what they are saying, when we accept their cautions and

embrace their ideas, it informs our decision-making and provides students a sense of validation. They become empowered as learners and more engaged in their learning and more active within their schools.

Back in October 2019, I was fortunate to join three students from my school at the BCPVPA’s BC Student Voice Fall Forum. Over two days, they joined approximately 40 student leaders from different regions of our province in order to network, share perspectives and exchange ideas about student success, mental health and wellness, and vaping. After a couple of days of focused conversations, my students returned to school eager to organize their own forum and to engage others from their region in similar discussions. These three Grade 12 students knew that they would be graduating shortly: in order to create a succession plan that would allow for these important discussions to continue into the future at a local level, they wisely recruited some student leaders from younger grades to join them in planning their Regional Forum. With their five-member team in place, we met weekly over the next two months to plan for the Forum that would be held at North Delta Secondary.

Fast forward to January 28 and, instead of the 100 participants that they had initially hoped for, the team welcomed closer to 200 students from Delta, Surrey,

Langley, Ridge-Meadows and New West School Districts. In addition to the Grade 8-12 participants, a dozen Grade 7 students from Hellings Elementary, a feeder school of North Delta, also joined the Forum. The energy was immediately evident as students gathered in the cafeteria to begin the day. Although students were, for the most part, new to each other, introductions happened naturally and there was an unspoken understanding that everyone in attendance was present for the right reasons: to listen, better understand, share and contribute. The theme for this year’s Student Voice Forum was ‘Let’s Poke the Bear’, encouraging students to step out of their own comfort zone when discussing topics and asking questions.

In an effort to encourage conversation focused on the specific topics of interest to students, the team decided to use an ‘unconference’ format for the Forum. In their school groups, participants were encouraged to brainstorm potential discussion topics related to student success, mental health and wellness, vaping and student transitions. The level of engagement exceeded anything that the team could have predicted, as an overwhelming number of topics were proposed. Students were then given stickers in order to vote on the session proposals that most interested them. While some members of

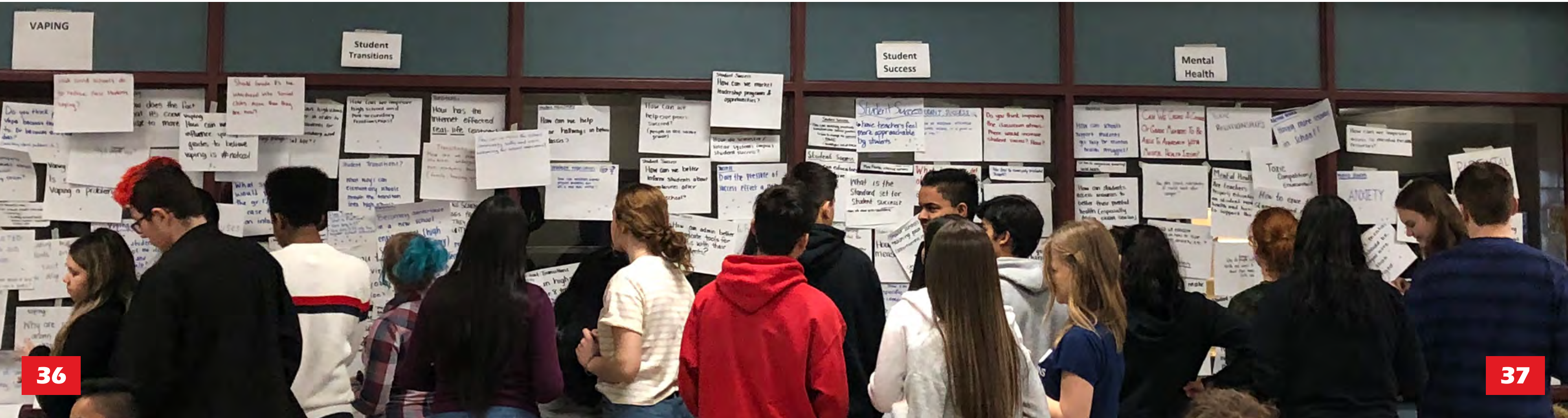
the team quickly used this information to organize a schedule of breakout sessions for the day, others led participants through a live online poll that was used to reveal students’ beliefs and opinions on questions related to the major themes of the forum.

Sessions began after a brief break that allowed participants to find their way to the breakout room where their topic of interest was being discussed. Although some sessions included a small number of educators in the room as listeners, the most impressive aspect was that all sessions were facilitated by students. They created a respectful environment for open dialogue and ensured that all students had a chance to voice their opinions, ideas, questions and suggestions. Leadership students from North Delta Secondary acted as scribes in each of the sessions to ensure that there was a record of the day’s conversations.

What came of the day was an incredible collection of thoughts. What follows is a summary of views and recommendations that have been prepared by the team from North Delta.

Youth & Vaping

Vaping amongst youth is happening everywhere: in schools, on school grounds, at home and in the



community. While schools try to police student vaping at school, it isn't realistic to think that this can be accomplished. In order to slow down this unhealthy trend, students must be educated about the implications of vaping. Students can feel bored or disinterested when learning about vaping through a presentation. They then turn to the internet where a wide range of perspectives are shared, especially through social media. The online world is full of fake news, clickbait and advertising, which overtakes the truth about vaping and often presents conflicting information. Listening to people share real life stories about nicotine addiction and health-related impacts to their body caused by vaping may prompt students to take the issue of vaping more seriously. Schools and administrators should be proactive by educating students about the risks involved with vaping before they enter high school, because students new to high school who do not have accurate information about vaping – and those who are entering a new environment – can be influenced. Peers and older students can easily persuade students to just 'give it a try'. This is often where addiction begins.

Schools should present students with resources when they ask for advice on how to curb addiction. Vaping literacy should also be incorporated into the curriculum so that students become aware of the chemical composition, risks and health consequences.

Rather than facing suspension when students are caught vaping, they should be required to meet with addictions counsellors and participate in workshops focused on stopping addictions. Counsellors and presenters need to approach learning from the point of view of youth in order to truly have a positive impact. Parents also play a critical role in educating and influencing their children. Instead of repeating the familiar 'don't do drugs' line to their children, parents will likely have a greater influence if they are non-judgmental and empathize with their children.

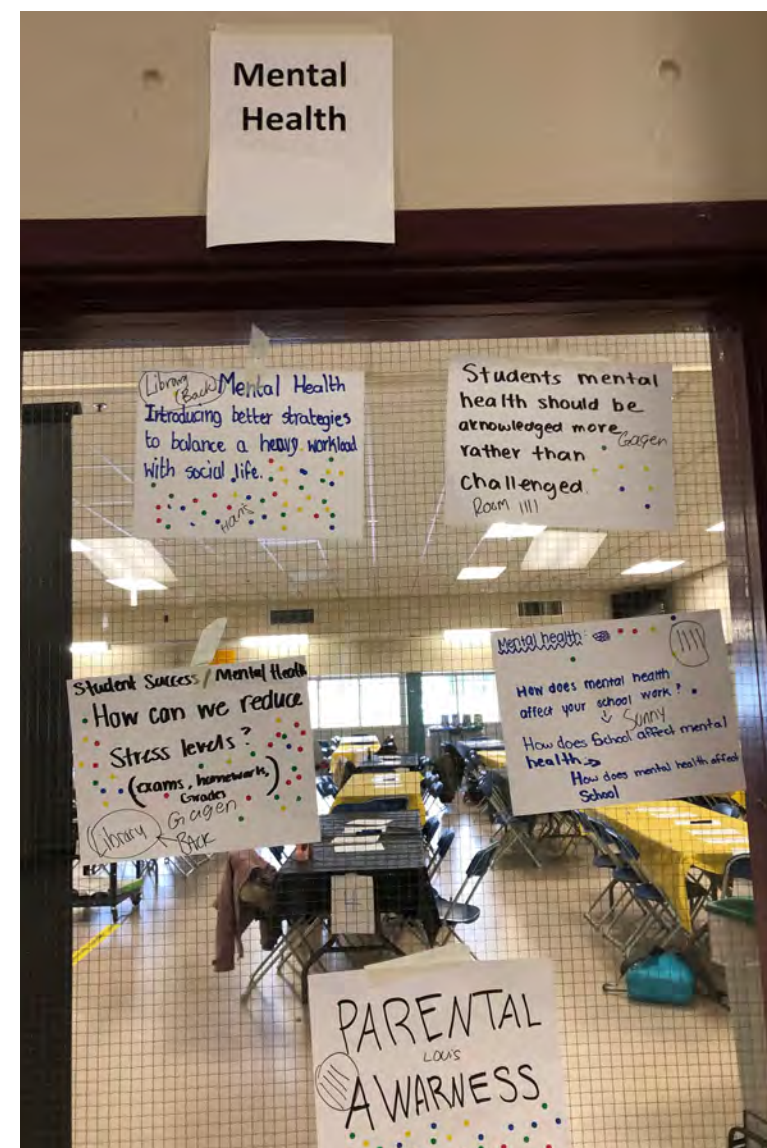
Counsellors and presenters need to approach learning from the point of view of youth in order to truly have a positive impact.

Parents should make themselves aware of the tell-tale signs of youth who vape; inform their children about the effects that vaping can have on a person's health; and support their child who is addicted to nicotine and who is attempting to quit.

Student Transitions

Transitions can be a stressful time for students, whether it's a transition from elementary to secondary school, or secondary school to post-secondary. During the discussions that took place at the Student Voice Forum, participants shared feedback about the challenges these transitions pose, and suggestions that could improve these transitions for learners. A major shift for learners entering high school is the increased number of teachers who teach them, and the overall freedom and independence they suddenly experience. Some learners adapt to these changes smoothly, while others struggle in absence of the guidance they received from a key adult in elementary school. Students commented that they did not receive the personalized support that could equip them for this transition. Schools tend to focus their guidance on a student's adjustment to the structure and organization of secondary schools through course options and bell schedules. Students suggested that a greater emphasis on navigating both social interactions and an increased workload is necessary. Students suggested that these topics, many of which relate to the Core Competencies, could be addressed through Career Education courses. Furthermore, they indicated that having an ongoing opportunity to discuss their questions would lead to a greater sense of comfort.

The upcoming transition to life beyond high school also proves to be stressful for many Grade 12 students. Students indicated that they rely heavily on advice from older siblings and family members, but that sometimes the advice is inaccurate or outdated. And for students who are the eldest child in their family, or whose family members do not have experience with the local school system, they are often left to do the planning for their immediate life beyond high school on their own. Students look to



Students indicated that they rely heavily on advice from older siblings and family members, but that sometimes this advice is inaccurate or outdated.

adults at school for advice and suggestions, and it is those adults who more often share their personal and academic experiences who students feel most comfortable in approaching.

For too many Grade 12 students, the pressures of ensuring they have the required number of credits for graduation and are enrolled in the specific courses they need to access their chosen post-secondary program tend to overshadow the fact that many

of these students also have other questions and concerns about post-secondary life. Participants suggested that students would benefit from listening to a panel of adults share their academic experiences and personal stories while addressing the students' questions and concerns.

Mental Health & Wellness

Often, young people find it difficult to discuss mental health and wellness, especially in a setting like high school. Generally, participants felt that promoting trusted student-adult relationships within schools should increase the likelihood of students accepting guidance from adults, and will help address many student mental health concerns early on. The Forum enabled participants to 'poke the bear' and openly share the challenges students face in being able to address their own mental well-being at school. Students highlighted the large caseloads and heavy workloads of counsellors that limit the time they have available to form strong relationships with students.

Reducing counsellors' caseloads would allow them to have more opportunities to build relationships with students. Participants identified two often-competing responsibilities assigned to counsellors: course planning and course changes, and social-emotional and mental health support. Participants emphasized that a student's social-emotional or mental health concerns should not have to be put on hold because a counsellor is engaged in course planning with another student. Students also shared that being seen visiting a counsellor or – even worse – waiting in line to speak with a counsellor can elicit feelings of self-consciousness. Peer judgment can sometimes lead a student to feel intimidated and reluctant to be seen in, or near, the counsellor's office. The important point that students made is that there must always be supports available to address the mental health concerns faced by young people.

Furthermore, students discussed the important role that parents and guardians have in their child's mental wellbeing, and how parents' lack of knowledge about mental health concerns may affect the way

Peer judgment can sometimes lead a student to feel intimidated and reluctant to be seen in, or near, the counsellor's office.

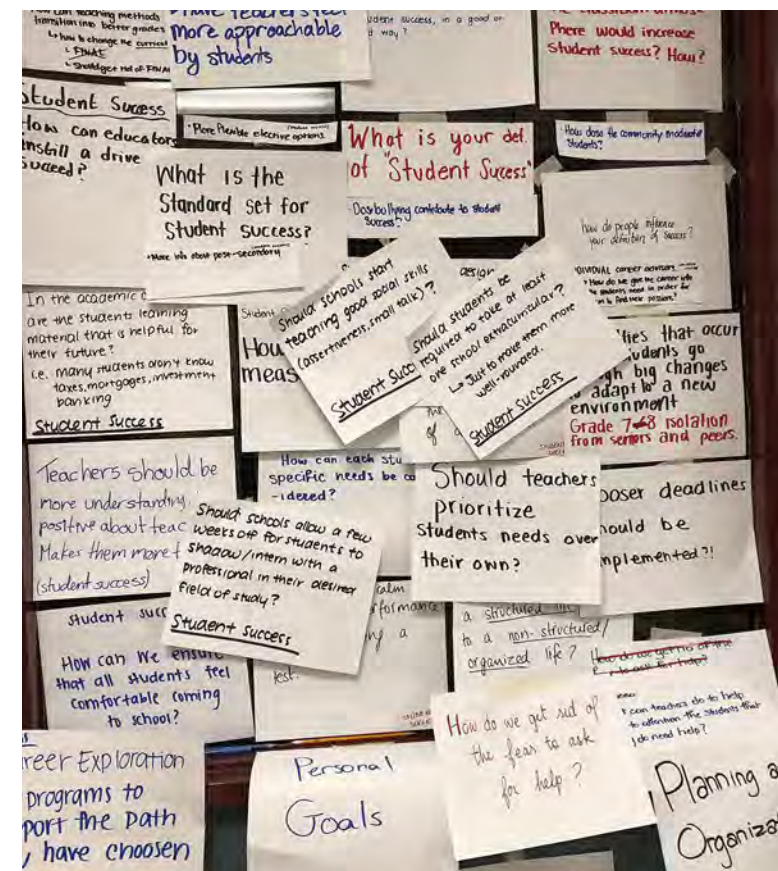
they approach mental health with their children. Students shared that the fears and stigma some adults have regarding mental health often negatively impact a student. Many parents also shy away from discussing the topic with their children because they are uncomfortable talking about a subject that they know very little about. Increased parent education can help, and participants suggested that schools provide resources for parents and adults to better understand mental health. This could include workshops, seminars and open discussions about mental health and how it may be affecting students. Students shared that it would be useful to both promote resources on District websites and social media pages, and to provide opportunities for adults in the school community to engage in positive conversations about mental health.

Greater student education on mental health is also required. 80% of student participants at the Forum were unaware of the difference between being 'anxious' and having 'anxiety.' Many students shared the challenges of overcoming their own personal struggles, and considered themselves ill-equipped to support a peer. It is important for students to know how to manage their own personal stress and help peers who feel anxious or troubled. Participants indicated that the occasional keynote presentation at school is insufficient, and stressed that mental health literacy needs to be implemented in a comprehensive manner across school curricula to help them address the current and future mental health challenges students may face. Students raised the importance of educating all teachers about student mental health to ensure that they are well informed and prepared to help students. Participants also suggested that schools explore the possibilities of creating peer support groups for younger students in order to help decrease the stigma associated with mental health.

Student Success

The student success sessions that ran at the 'unconference' were full of silent nods, raised hands, a few tears, and a lot of laughs. Participants quickly realized that their personal thoughts and perspectives about 'success' were similarly shared by others.

In an attempt to define "student success", participants' conversations focused on three key areas: academics, self-confidence and balance. Students quickly identified the interconnectedness of the three areas. If a student is not feeling good about their academics, their self-confidence decreases. Students who lose confidence in their academic abilities tend to shift their focus away from school towards life outside of school where they may feel a greater sense of self-efficacy. As a result, students' academics continue to suffer, and students feel caught within this downward spiral. In some instances, students are unable to see themselves falling deeper into this spiral and are therefore unable to get themselves out of it. To some extent, all participants acknowledged that they have had experience with this 'spiral'.



Students shared that two main factors impacting the spiral are parent influence and school culture. Many parents have ingrained in their children that achieving better grades will allow them access to better post-secondary opportunities, which will in turn lead them to highly regarded professions. This parental pressure and the mindset associated with it is unsustainable in the long term, and creates significant stress. Participants shared that this mindset leads students to focus on attaining grades rather than furthering their learning. Students who focus on learning give themselves permission to take risks, fail occasionally, reflect and try again. Some participants indicated that because of the pressure from their parents and pressure they place on themselves to maintain post-secondary options, they found that gradually their focus had shifted away from 'learning' to a heavy emphasis on achieving marks and grades.

Students went on to discuss the impact that student and adult relationships have on student success. Participants shared that when students have a few strong relationships with an adult at school, whether it be a teacher, counsellor, or administrator, they saw these adults as people they could lean on and turn to when needed. Students stressed that the role of the adult with whom they shared a strong relationship is not important but, rather, the degree of connection is. Participants emphasized that these types of relationships are not easily built and require time to develop. Adults who reveal a little about their personal experiences create trust, open up space for communication and break down the traditional hierarchy of 'teacher' and 'student'.

Students felt that when an adult is approachable, genuinely cares about them and believes in them, they contribute significantly to that student's success. Participants shared that adults who are willing to help students with course work outside of class time,

Students felt that when an adult is approachable, genuinely cares about them and believes in them, they contribute significantly to that student's success.

sponsor a club or coach a team are often perceived as those who have a genuine interest in their growth and believe in them.

The same perceptions hold true of Principals and Vice-Principals. Although participants acknowledged that the role of Principals and Vice-Principals is changing, some students commented that their Principal or Vice-Principal continue to perpetuate the traditional role of manager, because of their perceived focus on building relationships with staff and an air of unapproachability for students. As an example, students in some schools felt that they need to provide a 'reason' to speak with their Principal or Vice-Principal, and that an appointment needs to be scheduled. Participants also noted that Principals and Vice-Principals who engage with students communicate openness and a sense of accessibility. Students highlighted that as schools attempt to place greater emphasis on the growth and success of students as a whole, never has it been more important that Principals and Vice-Principals be connected to their students, and that through the connections they build with students they have the ability to shape their school's authentic culture.

A Pause for Reflection

The challenges and struggles revealed by the student participants at the Forum are faced by learners everywhere. When we are intentional about building relationships with students, we increase the chances that they will express their thoughts to us. By truly listening to and valuing their perspectives, ideas and suggestions, we engage them in their learning and communicate to them that they are our primary stakeholders and we are there to support their growth. Hopefully the voices of these participants create a pause for reflection and pave the way for future action and change.

BC Student Voice is a BCPVPA initiative that empowers students to address their needs, interests and concerns by strengthening the links between students and their partners in education.

Strong Leadership Builds Libraries

The Vital Role of Administrators in the School Library Learning Commons

by
David Mark, Vice-Principal
Royal Oak Middle School
Darcy McNee, District Teacher Leader
Saanich School District

First published in Canadian School Libraries Journal,
November 2019

Six years ago, North Saanich Middle School was given an amazing opportunity. The school Principal, Vice-Principal, and teacher-librarian were all new to their roles, and our school had a strong, experienced staff who were ready to try new things. At the same time, the District had strong teacher leaders who were laying the foundation for a vision which reinvented the school library as a learning commons.

These crucial factors created the environment to build a vibrant school culture with the learning commons at its heart.

We realize that everyone has their own context and may not have the same opportunities afforded to us; however, over the last several years we have learned many lessons that we feel are transferable to any context. These lessons empowered the teacher-librarian and helped us transform our library to a learning commons. Additionally, they helped us increase student achievement, support staff development, and impact meaningful change.

Trust is Key

It wasn't long before we realized how important trust was between the administrators and the teacher-librarian. School start-up is a very busy time for all educators. As the administration team dove into school management, Darcy dove into textbook distribution and library orientations. After those first few hectic weeks, Darcy was left with many questions.

Increased time for co-teaching and collaboration came with many benefits

Start with a Vision

Our school Principal Kal Russell was instrumental in creating the conditions for our success. When he was a first-year teacher, the teacher-librarian at his school co-taught units with him in English and social studies. She came into the classroom to set the expectations for the unit, provided resources, supported student learning, and then co-assessed student work. This created a rich learning environment for both teachers and students and it helped build consistent expectations and practice throughout the school. Thirty years later, in their strategic vision for the new school, Kal and David Mark hoped to replicate this framework at North Saanich as one of its foundational pieces.

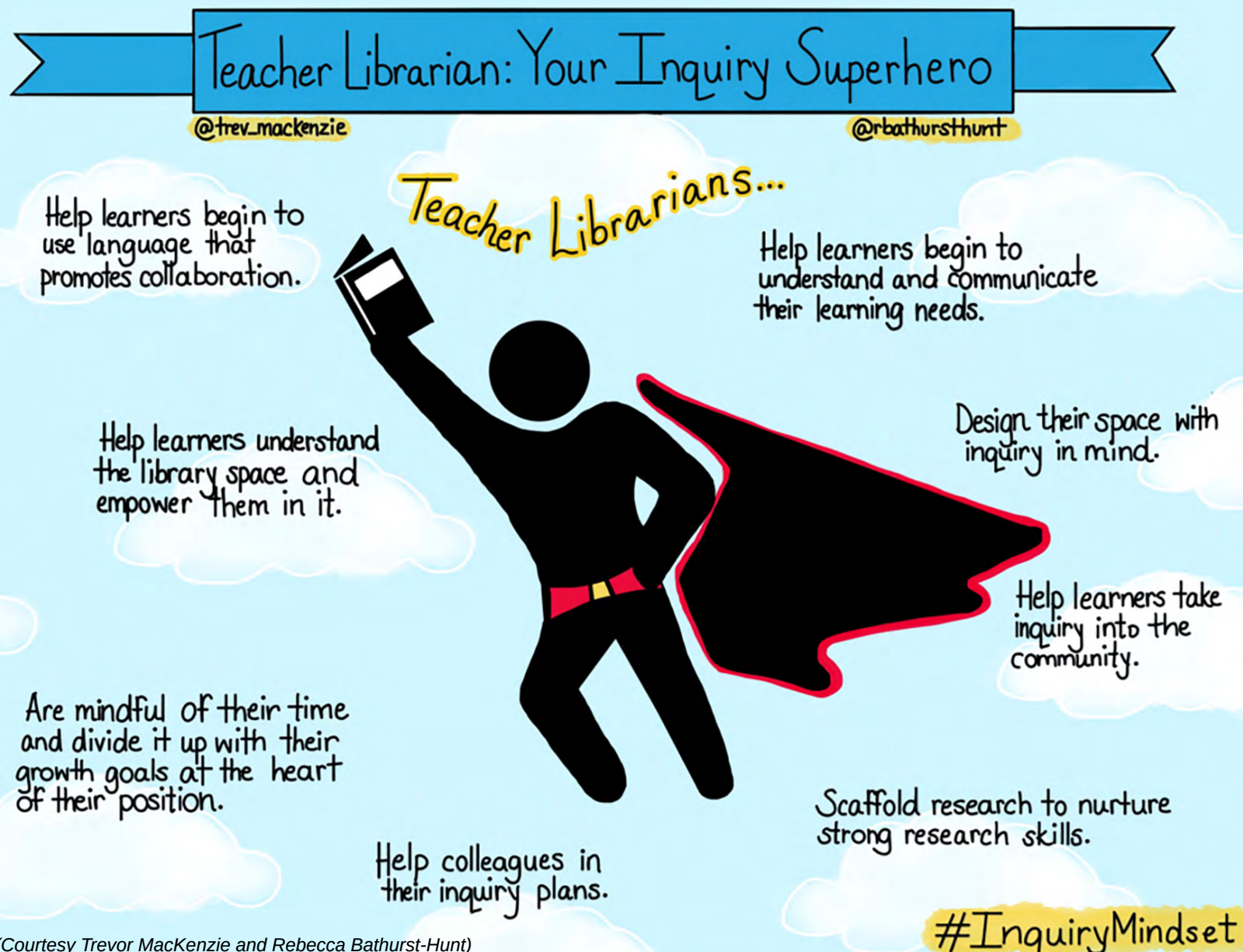
One of Kal's many talents is recognizing people's gifts — often before they themselves know they exist. Kal recognized that Darcy McNee, a classroom teacher at the time, could help him realize his vision for the school library. He encouraged her to consider taking on this new challenge. In doing so, he took some of the first steps toward realizing his vision.

As a new middle school teacher-librarian, she wanted a better picture of where her program fit in terms of what students had experienced in elementary libraries, and what they might expect as they headed toward high school. Darcy went to her administrators to see if she might arrange some school visits to the feeder schools to gain a deeper understanding. Their response was pivotal in terms of Darcy understanding her new position. They told her that they completely trusted her to decide how best to use her time to serve the school community. If Darcy saw the value in making a visit to an elementary or high school library, then she should do so. No permission needed. This trust opened possibilities and allowed our learning commons programs to best meet the needs of our students.

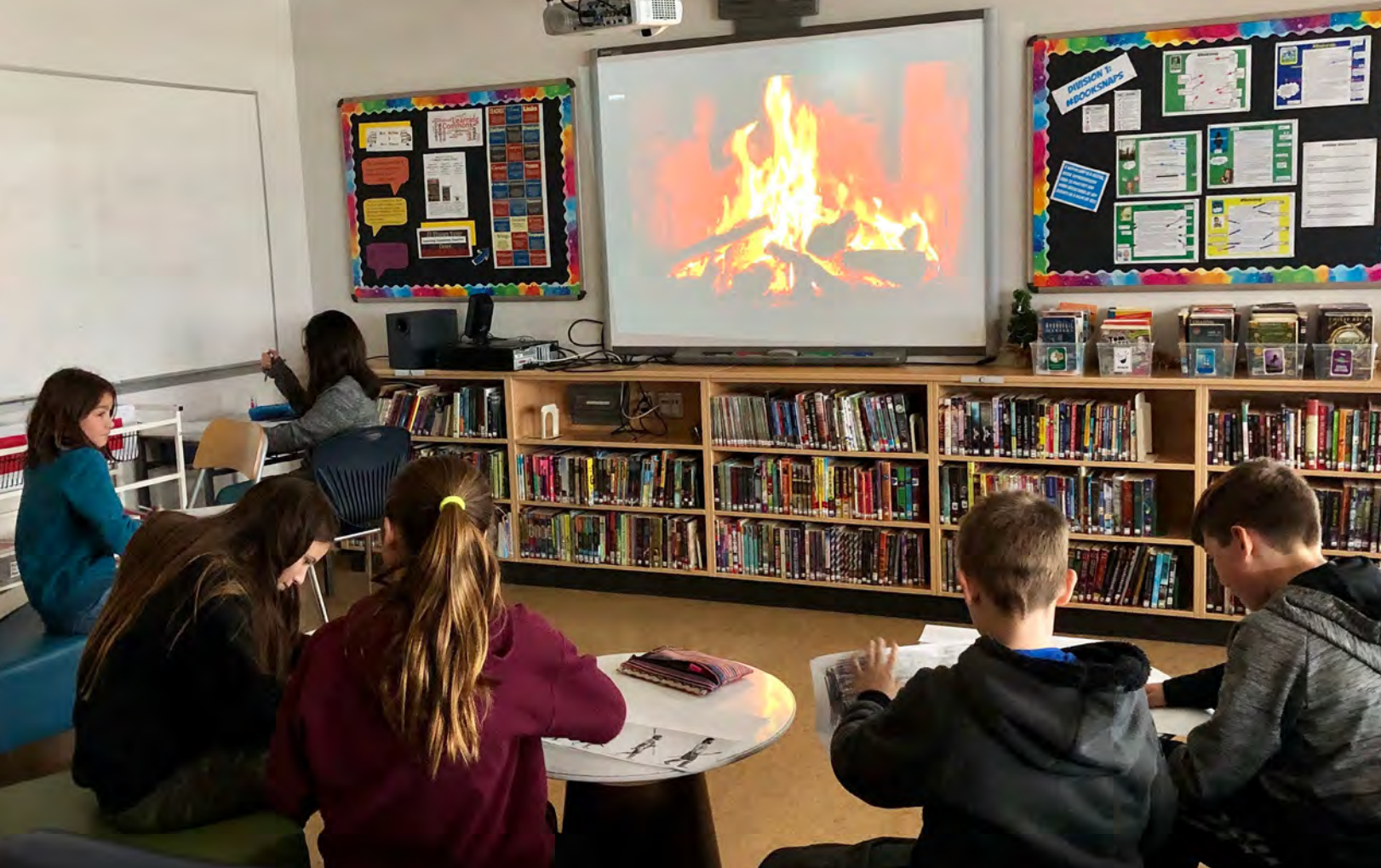
Flexible Schedule

Trusting Darcy to decide how best to use the school library time also meant that administrators trusted her to create a completely flexible library schedule. Book exchange was moved to three times during the school day: homeroom advisory (the first 30 mins of each day), lunch, and recess. During homeroom, three to five students per class were invited to exchange books on an as-needed basis. The library was also open to students during recess and lunch. The rest

One of Kal's many talents is recognizing people's gifts — often before they themselves know they exist



(Courtesy Trevor MacKenzie and Rebecca Bathurst-Hunt)



of the day then became available for co-teaching and collaboration.

Increased time for co-teaching and collaboration came with many benefits. As Darcy worked with more teachers, she was able to help create connections within the school community. In turn, these connections enabled us to build consistent language, practice, and common goals throughout the building. It also helped us develop rich curricular units and sound assessment practices. Additionally, through action research, we found that these collaborative partnerships led to statistically significant growth in student skills (McNee & Radmer, 2017)

Reciprocal Relationships

Flexible scheduling came with additional benefits to the school. Throughout the course of the school year there are several non-negotiables which can create barriers for the daily ebb and flow. These include things such as standardized tests or whole-school

surveys. In some schools, these can create extra pressure for administrators. In our situation we were able to use this as an opportunity to provide extra support for teachers.

With some creative scheduling, Darcy was able to use learning commons time to support these non-negotiables. For example, we booked our whole-school surveys during the week report cards were due. Darcy, with support from the administration team, built a schedule that allowed for each class to complete their survey during a block which backed to their teacher's prep. Darcy would then take each class to complete the surveys, allowing the teacher to have the survey block for reporting. When combined with their prep this created a solid block of time for teachers just when they needed it the most.

Comprehensive Model

Working together to support students, teachers, and school initiatives, the teacher-librarian and the

administrators were able to model a team approach that is needed to build a successful learning commons program. With a background in behaviour support and student advocacy David, our Vice-Principal, knew that planning for diversity is a collective responsibility and requires a collective approach. His vision was to position the learning commons as an integral part of our Comprehensive Model.

*Flexible scheduling came
with additional
benefits to the school*

A foundation of Kal and David's vision was the initiation of the Class Review process as outlined in Learning in Safe Schools (Brownlie & King, 2000). This collaborative data driven process, allowed us to create diversity maps which helped us create access points for all learners and make plans for student success. It provided a consistent perspective that could inform planning and supports at the student, classroom and school level. David asked Darcy to take on a leadership role in this process. As a member of the learning team, and a teacher who worked with all students in all classes, Darcy was able to share valuable perspectives on student learning needs. David also asked Darcy to attend and participate in weekly learning services meetings. Working with Instructional Support Teachers, Darcy was able to learn and model strategies which helped meet the needs of our diverse learners.

Connected Libraries

The administration team also encouraged Darcy to take on additional leadership roles within the school, and in doing so, Darcy was able to connect the learning commons to all members of the school community. For example, Darcy provided tech coaching for educational assistants and presented on adaptive technology for our parent advisory council. In this way, our library became a place where every

person, student and adult, engaged in meaningful learning.

Finally the administrative team encouraged Darcy to make connections outside the school and district. This allowed her to continue to learn and grow within her role.

Administrators play a vital role in creating the conditions for a successful school library learning commons. Through vision, trust, and flexibility administrators lay the foundation. This is enhanced when the teacher-librarian is encouraged to take on additional leadership roles within the school. We realize that we were afforded a unique opportunity when we started together in our new roles. We didn't have to worry about legacy practice and could reinvent the vision of what we wanted our learning commons to be. By sharing our learning, we hope others, no matter their context, can learn strategies to support their vision for their learning commons. Our hope is that administrators and teacher-librarians can work together to realize their full potential. Together they create strong leadership — and strong leadership builds libraries.



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Creating Connection

An International Partnership Between SD61 and Thanda Community School in South Africa

by
Sarah Elford
Vice-Principal, South Park Elementary
Victoria

While I received the Teacher Exchange and Mobility grant from British Columbia International Education in November 2019, this trip was a year in the making. The adventure was born out of a desire to deepen the partnership between SD61 in Victoria and Thanda Community School in KwaZulu-Natal South Africa. This is a relationship that began in 2016 and has involved continual and evolving student and staff collaboration, and the development of intercultural skills. To put this experience in context, Thanda is a community-based school and education organization in rural KwaZulu-Natal South Africa that provides dynamic teacher training to more than 30 educators. Thanda delivers innovative programming, inspired by the new BC curriculum Core Competencies, to more than 800 Zulu learners. Their mission is to empower people to create positive change – change in individuals, change in their communities and eventually changes that will impact the world.

This teacher exchange trip was to be a two-week intensive professional development and cultural exchange, with the intent upon return to share these experiences with BC teachers, students and administrators. I believe that intercultural engagement opportunities for BC students at an elementary school

age will, in turn, lead to higher levels of interest in global engagement and travel as students move into middle school, high school, and beyond. My mission was also to lay the groundwork to create future exchange opportunities that I envision occurring annually during Spring Break for BC and South African teachers. This exchange provided the opportunity to strengthen and deepen strong relationships in a part of the world that is not traditionally a source of student, school or teacher connections for BC school Districts.

Deepening our Understanding of Others Through First Understanding More About Ourselves

Before I was to depart for South Africa, I worked with classes in grades 2/3, 4/5 and 7 at three different schools in SD61 in Victoria. We used art and storytelling to gather and share students' experience of their own sense of place as well as identifying resilience strategies. Students recorded meaningful questions for the Thanda students, to learn more about the South African students' daily lives.

One class focused on an inquiry into the history of Indian Residential Schools and reconciliation. They drew parallels to the South African Apartheid system and recovery.

All classes participated in lessons on South Africa, and the sharing of Thanda student videos. Each class at the three different schools in SD 61 created student books to share with Thanda students:

Something Unique About Where I Live - Celebrating our Sense of Place

Animal Teachings: Social Emotional Wellness

There was also the creation of two class videos which included introductions, a sharing of their sense of place and inquiry through authentic questions. In collaboration with Thanda's Arts and Education administrator, Kris Fowles, I gathered books and resources to support interconnection, empathy, resilience, and sharing our sense of place: Vancouver

Through Exploring and Sharing our Sense of Place

Island, Victoria and the Salish Sea. The intent was to share these resources and student work with Thanda students and educators, and then teach similar lessons with the Thanda students with materials to bring back and share in SD 61.

Best Laid Plans ...

My two weeks in South Africa were to center on the

themes of belonging, interconnection, resilience and empowerment. This was grounded in the First Peoples Principles of Learning, with a focus on understanding and sharing our own sense of place. Students were also connected through developing their own social emotional awareness and social responsibility. My plan had been to visit several classes at Thanda in South Africa in order to teach and share the books, art and letters brought from students at the three different schools in SD 61.

This exchange provided the opportunity to strengthen and deepen strong relationships in a part of the world that is not traditionally a source of student, school or teacher connections for BC School Districts



I was also scheduled to participate firsthand in the curriculum delivered by Thanda teachers. I planned to participate in professional development led by Thanda administrators and educators, with the aim of supporting the BC Curriculum Core Competencies. Reciprocally, I would lead professional development for the Thanda educators. Experiences were framed within art, storytelling and hands-on learning in an effort to promote healing, self-awareness, understanding of alternative perspectives, interconnectedness, belonging and social responsibility.

From South Africa to Self-Quarantine

Instead, after a year of planning, collaboration and heartfelt student contributions, I woke up on my first morning in rural South Africa to the news headline of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau warning international travelers to 'Get home while they can', foreshadowing

unprecedented border closures with 'nothing being off the table.' I left for the trip on March 12, 2020 just before the domino effects of travel advisories and restrictions. By the end of my second evening in South Africa, I had managed to book a return flight to Canada, leaving the following afternoon. It would be a race against time on the way back to Canada – beating border closures by hours in some locations – followed by a withdrawal to self-quarantine for two weeks once landing in Canada.

I was left in South Africa with about 48 hours on the ground that was spent connecting with Thanda's Arts and Education administrator, Kris Fowles. While there, we received notice that all schools across South Africa were closing due to COVID-19. In an incredibly surreal way, as the pandemic news rapidly continued to unfold around us, I was able to spend several hours over two days sharing all the SD 61

Sarah Elford with Kris Fowles



I woke up on my first morning in rural South Africa to the news headline of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau warning international travelers to 'Get home while they can'

student class books and resources. We were able to talk through my lesson plans and the materials I had brought, so that Kris could share them with her staff. Kris walked me through the work at Thanda and the idiosyncrasies of living in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. She shared more about Thanda's 'Journey to Healing' professional development, as well as lesson plans for me to take back to Canada. Together we

brainstormed how we could continue the journey in the face of a global pandemic. We explored how we could pursue connection and hope in an uncertain and rapidly shifting global climate, where access to soap, clean water, medical supplies and food have come to overshadow everything in life as we know it. The loss of this experience for Thanda and SD61 students is echoed in the collective global grief we are all feeling at this time. Sadly, broken connections are often a way of life for the students Thanda serves.

Looking Ahead

When in-class school resumes in Victoria and South Africa, optimistic next steps for this project include the sharing of lessons, student books and resources with Thanda staff and students, and Thanda students making similar books and videos from their perspective, to share with connected classes in SD 61. For SD 61 students, I plan to share a Thanda-recommended storybook / art project.

I am currently connecting digitally with SD 61 students to gather their perspective on what 'Belonging' feels like. This will be shared with Thanda students to help them to understand what this word means in English. Together, we are exploring an evolving project idea where students connect through their shared experience of being in self-isolation during the pandemic. However, without knowing when life will be 'normal' again – or what our new 'normal' will be – it is difficult to predict how everything will actually unfold.

Together we brainstormed how we could continue the journey in the face of a global pandemic

I have been in contact several times with Kris Fowles at Thanda since I returned to Canada, and we remain

committed to collaborating. This experience certainly met the goal of deepening the partnership between SD61 and Thanda Community School in KwaZulu-Natal South Africa, albeit in a way that we didn't imagine when we set out on this adventure. The videos and student books from SD61 where students share their sense of place almost seem like a frozen time capsule of life before the pandemic.

I am grateful for this opportunity, however brief. In light of our rapidly changing world, it feels luxurious that such an important experience transpired, and with no way of predicting when the global pandemic will afford such an opportunity again.



Kris Fowles, Thanda's Arts and Education administrator

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PHONE: 604-734-4130
www.humanworks.ca

Given the impact of COVID-19, there has been little time to think about our own needs and summer plans. Now is the time to begin to envision how we can transition from 'work mode' to 'summer mode.' Here are three (public-health-friendly!) suggestions you might find helpful and inspiring.

humanworks.ca

craft

Start a new hobby or craft

... or re-ignite a dormant one!

Hobbies and crafts are a great way to shift from work to play. They can boost your mood, relieve stress, boost self-esteem and improve cognitive abilities.

And best of all? They're fun.

Most hobbies and crafts can be done in your own home and materials or equipment can be found online. Who knows: you might find a whole new community of folks that you can relate to!

crunch

Develop a summer fitness plan

... or create a fitness challenge!

Developing a fitness plan, as a challenge for yourself or to share with your peers, can really help redirect your energy in a productive and healthy way over the summer months.

Focusing on your personal fitness can be rewarding in so many ways, and can include: improved cardiovascular health, increased metabolism, a boost in self-esteem and self-confidence, and an improved mood and sleep.

There are a number of websites that offer great workout plans, and free resources are available through the EIP program to get you started. Make sure to check in with your doctor before you start your program.

club

Create or join a Book Club

... and share great stories!

Participating in a book club offers a great way to relieve stress and develop a unique sense of belonging and community.

Besides being able to share great stories of common interest and diversity, book clubs offer hours of reading relaxation and provoke stimulating conversations.

Summer time offers lots of opportunity to read and reflect. Go for it!



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by
Jack MacNeill

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

It 'Still' Takes a Village

About Secure Relationships in Times of ~~Social~~ Physical Distancing

by
Dr. Hagar Goldberg
Neuroscientist, Educational
Consultant, Founder of SEEN

The COVID-19 pandemic burst into our lives both suddenly and aggressively, and forced rapid and drastic changes in our daily routines and behaviours. Children are admirably doing their part to fight the pandemic and flatten the curve. They quickly applied the new rules while putting aside their education, social lives, outdoor activities and sometimes much more. We adults keep reassuring them (and ourselves)

that COVID-19 is not a direct threat to their health, and by isolating ourselves we are protecting others who are vulnerable to the virus. This is a great lesson in humanistic solidarity. However, it is our duty as educators to challenge the conception that children are less vulnerable to this pandemic. The truth is that we don't know the short and long term implications of this situation on our children. It will take many years and longitudinal studies to find out. But this does not mean we should 'sit and wait' for the future to unfold and give us the answers, because our actions now can change the trajectory of children's future. Brain science can shed some light on the impact of the current situation on their development and future.



Dave - unsplash.com

Patrick Fore - unsplash.com

The sudden loss of structure in so many individuals' lives simultaneously increases the levels of collective chaos and stress. What does brain science tell us about stress and its effects on children? According to research stress is contagious; exposure to others in stress can activate our own stress system. Sensitivity to stress differ between individuals; some children are (genetically) more susceptible than others to the negative effects of toxic stress on physical and mental health. Human development contain sensitive periods, in which brain systems go through massive changes and remodeling. These periods of enhanced plasticity and malleability are opportunities for growth but also vulnerable to stress, which can have a life-long effect on brain structure and function. Our students may be immune to the Coronavirus, but they are extremely vulnerable to the current stress the pandemic generates.

Fight-or-Flight

In response to danger, the nervous system releases stress hormones to raise alertness and prepare the body to act quickly. Whether it is a physical threat (like a car approaching too fast in our direction), or a psychological threat (like public-shaming), the brain reacts similarly by activating the 'fight-or-flight' survival mode.

We can identify different stress responses based on their amplitude, duration and available coping resources. Mild and brief elevation in stress hormones can actually be positive and useful in situations that require our full presence, high performance, and sharp response. This is the excitement students experience before taking an important exam, or the adrenaline rush we experience after avoiding a car crash by reacting quickly and accurately. When facing difficult life events or sudden changes in circumstances that require quick adaptation (like a world pandemic and schools shut-down) the stress response system is consistently activated for a prolonged time. This chronic stress can still be tolerable, and even valuable

for building resilience, but without intervention, the wear and tear on the brain can be disruptive for its development.

Toxic Stress: Not Just a Metaphor

Chronic activation of the stress system alters brain structure and function. Three key players in the human brain that are highly affected by chronic stress are the Amygdala, Hippocampus and Pre-Frontal Cortex (PFC). The Amygdala and Hippocampus are structures in the limbic system, our ancient and intuitive 'mammalian brain'. Amygdala is central in processing emotional content and detecting threat. The Hippocampus is essential in learning, forming long term memories and spatial navigation. The PFC, the most modern part of the human brain, serves our highest-order cognitive abilities and executive functioning; inhibition, flexible thinking, working memory, emotional regulation, planning and complex decision making. Our students' brains are works-in-progress, and normally during their school years their PFC is still very much developing. In fact, it will reach full maturation only in their mid-20s, a decade after the limbic system.

On a global, societal level we witnessed a clear shift to 'survival mode' in response to COVID-19 pandemic; countries prioritize human survival rates over growth (education, recreation and economic thrive). On an individual level, the human brain priorities very similarly; when shifting to survival mode it directs most of the energy to the fight-or-flight limbic system, and the autonomic nervous system (ANS). The PFC is the most sensitive brain region to the effects of stress. Ongoing stress leads to a PFC "shutdown" so the ability to think flexibly, rationally or regulate emotions drops significantly. In addition, chronic stress leads to decrease in Hippocampal volume, and proliferation of the Amygdala. The stressed brain, therefore, has a narrowed and fixed perception of reality (due to the PFC "shutdown"), and is over-

focused on threat and survival (due to enlarged and reactive amygdala, and shrunken Hippocampus). The more children experience uncontrolled stress, the more their brains practice survival mode activation and build the networks to support this state-of-mind (without intervention this may become their default). Overall, brain studies point at a shortened plasticity period in the developing brain, in response to toxic stress. A possible explanation for that is an early transition from learning and development mode (the biological essence of childhood) to performance and survival mode (the biological essence of adulthood). Early brain maturation as a result of toxic stress and trauma is usually at the price of underdeveloped brain systems.

Secure Relationships: the Antidote to Toxic Stress

The secret ingredient that makes the difference between toxic and tolerable stress is a secure relationship. We are extremely social animals, with extremely long periods of childhood and dependence on parental figures. The research shows that a trusting adult (even just one) can turn around a child's life. In the emotional domain, adults have an essential role in validating children's experience and inner world, as they grow their confidence and self-identity. In the cognitive domain, adults have a critical role in helping children process difficult life experiences, making sense of them and build their coherent narratives. In her recent neuroimaging study, Dr. Immordino-Yang from the University of Southern California, found that adolescents who could make sense of dangerous and potentially traumatic events, and communicate their sense-making in narratives, were more resilient and successful, even years later as young adults. Moreover, those who exhibited a broad-perspective narrative, had a stronger brain



Tayla Jeffs - unsplash.com

extrinsic brain networks (which may point to a higher cohesiveness and integration). Specifically, networks that were involved in detecting emotional-saliency, tuning attention (extrinsic) and reflection (intrinsic). Our brains develop in a social context through our interactions and relationships. We influence, regulate and shape each other's brains. How do we maintain our brains' synchronization in times of physical distancing? What is our role as educators in this new, unfamiliar situation?

Education Can Be Healing. Educator Presence Can Be Life Changing

Educators were among the first responders to COVID-19 crises; working tirelessly to quickly invent a new learning system. Understandably, a big part of that effort was directed at maintaining students' academic learning, but first and foremost, the education system is the modern 'village'. Even though our lifestyle has completely changed over the recent century, it STILL takes a village to raise a child. On top of many other things, COVID-19 reminded all of us, the importance of the village in raising children (because it suddenly was taken from us).

It is our duty to reach out to our students, to actively check-in with our most vulnerable students and not wait for them to approach us (they won't always will, and they need us). We need to create space for our students to communicate their thoughts and feelings and to support them in making-sense of this situation. We need to encourage them to share their stories and we need to listen to them. We must show-up for them emotionally while they navigate through this storm. For some of them we might be the life jacket they desperately need, to make it a tolerable rather than a toxic storm.

 @goldberg_hagar



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BRAIN STRAIN

MENTAL HEALTH 101 - Part One Feeling the Flames of Burnout



by
Rochelle Morandini
Member Health and Wellbeing
BCPVPA

The Final Straw

Pat was good at his job. He was a very dedicated, well-respected Principal who ran an organized ship and cared deeply about staff and students. Pat had a reputation for knowing staff well, remembering their spouses' and children's names, and making the effort to get to know each student. As a Secondary School Principal in a community of 20,000, Pat was very visible and active in the community. Pat had dedicated his career to enhancing the education experience for secondary students, and was often asked to speak at conferences about the amazing impact he has had in his District.

Over the past few years, Pat has found his role to be challenging. The volume and complexity of his role continues to grow alongside the demands he faces from students, staff, parents and the community. There have been additional pressures placed on the school with new initiatives from the Ministry, funding allocations from the District, and the expanding needs of his learning community – especially his most vulnerable students. These pressures have all had an impact on Pat's level of empathy, degree of control, sense of fairness, and self-satisfaction in his ability to do a good job.

This past September, Pat was not looking forward to going back to school. Usually, after the summer break, Pat was eager to reconnect with staff and students. However, Pat had felt less excited about the new school year the past two Septembers. When school wrapped up in June, Pat experienced unusual fatigue and frequent headaches, which he attributed to a lack of sleep. He was anxious about getting everything done to close off the year, as it seemed difficult to keep track of all the loose ends. His physician felt the headaches and anxiety were due to stress and prescribed some temporary medication. The expectation was that over the summer, with rest, the headaches and anxiety would be resolved. Generally, they dissipated. But with the return to school, the ailments had resurfaced within weeks.

Pat was not feeling his regular passion for the job and felt more burdened than energized. His patience was low, and managing his emotions felt challenging. Quick to anger and carrying a pessimistic outlook, Pat

felt very distraught at the leader he was becoming. But, deeper down, Pat was scared. Although previously taking pride in his organizational skills, Pat now struggled with forgetfulness and procrastination. Pat lacked the internal motivation to put in the effort needed to do a good job — doing the minimal to get by and not really caring about the impact. At a deeper level, Pat was shocked at his own behaviour, as this was not the professional he knew himself to be.

Pat's relationship with the recently-retired District Superintendent had been good. The new Superintendent for the District was from outside of the province, and was taking considerable time from Pat's schedule to get acquainted with the community and education agenda.

Pat was not feeling his regular passion for the job and felt more burdened than energized.

Pat was slow in getting information to the Superintendent when it was requested. During a tense meeting with the new Superintendent, Pat felt his professionalism was being scrutinized and that nothing he had accomplished in the past was even being considered in the conversation. Pat left the meeting shaking, distressed and numb. Worse yet, the next morning Pat could not get out of bed, and was unable to find the energy or motivation to go to work.

A Slow Burn

Pat suffered from burnout.

Job burnout is a special type of work-related stress — a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity.

Burnout is a legitimate medical diagnosis, according to the International Classification of Diseases, or the ICD-11, the World Health Organization's handbook

that guides medical providers in diagnosing diseases.

Burnout now appears in the ICD-11's section on health problems related to employment. Physicians can diagnose someone with burnout if they meet the following symptoms:

1. feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
2. increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
3. reduced professional efficacy

Burnout emerges when job and life demands extend beyond an individual's ability to cope with the stress. People in careers focused on caregiving — including educators — report the most prevalent rates of burnout. Over time, jobs that require too much of employees will cultivate feelings of negativity and hopelessness such as when Principals struggle to meet impossible deadlines, deal with difficult Board members, attempt to address unreasonable parent demands, or cope with the emotional toll of professional caretaking.

Burnout now appears in the ICD-11's section on health problems related to employment.

It's a common misconception that the culprit behind burnout is simply working too long or working too hard. However, research indicates that other factors, both individual and organizational, can be just as detrimental. For example, a comprehensive report on psychosocial stress in the workplace published by the World Health Organization identified consistent evidence that "high job demands, low control, and effort–reward imbalance are risk factors for mental and physical health problems." Ultimately, burnout results when the balance of deadlines, demands, working hours, and other stressors outstrips rewards, recognition, and relaxation.

Source: www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/burnout-and-the-brain

The Perfect Fire Storm: Who is at Risk?

Risk factors related to burnout can arise out of personal traits, working conditions, or - in the perfect fire storm - a combination of both!

Source:
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>
<https://www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/>

Personal Traits and Circumstances

- Perfectionism – feeling that work performed is never good enough
- Personally identifying strongly with work
- People-pleasing – being everything to everyone
- Working in a helping profession
- Feeling inadequate about the ability to contribute
- Feeling unappreciated and not valued
- Low social support, feeling isolated at work and in your personal life
- Feeling the effort put forth is not being recognized or rewarded
- Perceiving a sense of unfairness

Burnout emerges when job and life demands extend beyond an individual's ability to cope with the stress.

Job Factors

- High workload, including overtime
- Lack of control, an inability to influence decisions that affect your job, no flexibility, lack of the resources needed to do your work
- Unclear job expectations, a lack of clarity about the degree of authority you have or what your supervisor or others expect from you
- Dysfunctional workplace dynamics, working with the 'office bully', feeling undermined by colleagues or a boss that micromanages your work
- Extremes of activity, chaotic jobs where constant energy is needed to remain focused
- Work-life imbalance, with work that takes up so much of your time and effort that you don't have the energy to spend time with your family and friends or do hobbies or activities that help you refresh

Is Pat's Situation Unique?

No.

In fact, research would suggest that school administrators are at a higher risk of stress and burnout, even more than that seen with private sector managers. The last fifteen years have seen significant changes in education systems that have impacted the roles and nature of Principals' and Vice-Principals' work. From Kim Weatherby's research in 2020 on Principal and Vice-Principal Stress and Burnout, the rapid integration of information and communications technology into the work and life of students and educators, and the growing diversity of students and needs have all been the key drivers in impacting the roles of administrators globally. Add to that the many factors specific to BC such as strained labour relations, work intensification, staff shortages due to the Supreme Court of Canada ruling on class size and composition, budget constraints and other educational initiatives, have all contributed to increased levels of stress.

Source: Principal and Vice-Principal Stress and Burnout, Kim Weatherby, 2020

These workplace realities can be particularly hard on very committed individuals. Principals and Vice-Principals are dedicated and passionate educators who have chosen to take on a role with significant responsibility and impact. Thereby, it is critical that they are operating at their best. Handling difficult tasks, juggling many needs, and solving complex problems with various personalities are all part of the intricate role of school administrators: these factors often make our great leaders thrive. However, as demonstrated in Pat's case, our minds and bodies are not designed for the levels of constant and excessive stress that many school leaders experience.

Source:
<https://www.edcan.ca/articles/burnout-principals-and-vice-principals>

Stress not only affects the ability of school leaders to shape and enhance their school culture and learning environment, but also makes it difficult to retain and recruit new Principals and Vice-Principals. This path to burnout strains their well-being and, sadly, often leads to work absence due to physical or mental disabilities.

Am I Burning Out?

In our case scenario, Pat showed many signs of burnout. Do you believe you are experiencing the early signs of burnout? Reflect on these questions:

- Have you become cynical or critical at work?
- Do you drag yourself to work and have trouble getting started?
- Have you become irritable or impatient with staff, students or parents?
- Do you lack the energy to be consistently productive?
- Do you find it hard to concentrate?
- Do you lack satisfaction from your achievements?
- Do you feel disillusioned about your job?
- Are you using food, drugs or alcohol, or screen time to feel better or to simply not feel?

- Have your sleeping habits changed?
- Are you troubled by unexplained headaches, stomach or bowel problems, or other physical complaints?

Source:
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>

Do you find it hard to
concentrate?

Have your sleeping habits
changed?

If you said 'yes' to most of these questions, you may be at risk of, or suffering from, burnout. It is important to speak to your physician as these symptoms can also be related to other health conditions, including depression. They can also lead to other health challenges as your body's reaction to ongoing strain and stress does not start and stop in the mind. Ignored or unaddressed job burnout can have significant consequences, including:

- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Strained personal relationships
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Type 2 diabetes (especially in women)
- Stroke
- Obesity
- Infertility
- Vulnerability to illnesses



Can Burnout be Cooled?

Part Two of Mental Health 101 — 'Dousing the Heat' — will appear in BCPVPA's *Leading: Back to School* magazine in September. We will speak to mental health experts about how an individual who has experienced burnout can recover and avoid recurrence. *For now, please know that recovery is possible!*

If you feel you are burning out, one thing you can do today is seek help. Like any flame, the longer you 'burn', the greater the damage and the more time and effort needed to 'douse the fire'. See your physician, a counsellor, or go online and learn about micro-behaviours that you can implement today to help you slow your burn.

If you have questions or are looking for resources related to this topic, please do not hesitate to reach out to me (rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca).

Take care, and stay 'cool'!

Community

44 dresses

SD 44 Principal Lisa Upton
Relates How Not All
Cinderella Stories
Must End with a Ball Gown

It began at the Grade 7 Farewell event, when Principal Lisa Upton noticed that there were children who could benefit from support in finding clothing to help them express who they are as individuals. "It came up for me as a theme in our work," said Lisa. "I wanted the children to see themselves – and their success – reflected in the school celebration, and not to be caught up in a specific idea around what kids should be wearing. At the beginning of this very important transition, I wanted to make sure that they had clothing that represents them as an athlete, or an artist, or a dancer or as someone very social, rather than dressing up to meet someone else's expectation of who they are or who they should be."



The concept of 44Dresses evolved from a courtside conversation when Lisa and another mother were watching their sons play basketball. “Elena Grant had a store called Sofiabella in Edgemont Village, and the purpose of her store was age-appropriate clothing for girls, tween apparel. I’ve worked with kids for many years, and I’ve noticed how at their farewell dance, they end up wearing these ‘crazy-high’ heels, shoes they’ve never worn before. They need to learn to walk in them, but they are also internalizing that this is ‘getting ready for high school’. That concerned me. Elena and I were talking, and I asked what she did with the samples that she received in the store, and clothing that needs repairs or when something is defective – and was there a way that I could get access to her suppliers, to help get kids the clothing that they might like to choose. Between the two of us, we came up with this idea that we could have a collection site, access local high schools in North Vancouver and ask families to donate clothing they no longer wear.”

The program was well-received in the community. “I was fortunate to work with supportive staff. We had a nurturing nest for this community initiative to launch. 44Dresses has been held at the Education Services Centre, which is the North Vancouver School District headquarters. They have this beautiful floor called The View: on one end is a beautiful ocean view, and the other end is a mountain view. We decorated the room, and Fresh Street Market for several years has supplied the food donation so when kids come in it looks like a party. Another company donated balloons – we try to keep it age appropriate – and there are these beautiful sandwiches and treats and fruit and veggie platters. We want to make sure that kids feel like their whole being is welcomed at the event. There’s music playing and wonderful different types of clothing available for them to choose from.”

"Congratulations! Such an amazing thing you have done! You should feel proud of yourself for putting smiles onto so many beautiful faces. These are the things that bring communities and friends together and make the world a better place."
- 44Dresses Parent

In their first year, the 44Dresses team connected with the Cinderella Project, and learned a lot from attending their event, including what a setup might look like. “For our event, we had our own version of fairy godmothers and fairy godfathers – we had parent volunteers welcome the kids and talk to them, ask them ‘who are you, what do you like to do, do you play a sport, what makes you feel really strong, what makes you feel really proud, what kind of clothes do you like to wear? No: you don’t have to wear a dress.’ Over the years it’s grown and changed; we are LGBTQ friendly, and we have all kinds of kids trying on all kinds of different clothing. We’re still staffed by parent volunteers,

but now we have Grade 12 students come in. As Elena has moved on from her business, we’ve worked with schools and their Grade 12 student leadership groups to collect clothing at their home high schools and have students help to host the event. That makes it even better. Now in our seventh year, it’s great that some of the first group of Grade 7s were coming back as Grade 12s and seeing their own former elementary school friends. It’s a full circle, when a Grade 12 student can give kids the support that they wish that maybe they’d had.”

44Dresses has had great support from SD44 Superintendent Mark Pearmain and team. 2019 marked the first year 44Dresses moved from a private event supported by the District to a formal School District event. The event is important in the community and has a broad reach. “When we first



started, we had families coming from all over, and that was great. When you think about it, one in five kids in our province lives in poverty and there are lots of people who benefit from all kinds of support. And it’s a realization that there can be a lot of social pressure. Imagine that you are going through major personal or family changes that have financial pressures, and also having the pressure to have two outfits: one for the ceremony and one for the dinner dance. We want kids to be focussing on feeling good, and the families to know that we are there to support them.”

The project is also a green initiative with its support of recycling, reusing and sharing, and it is reflective of the guiding theme of the North Vancouver School District: learning, sharing and growing together. And, as Lisa observes, it’s an important component of a natural cycle. “Launching kids in Grade 7 with a farewell event, it’s about connecting to the next cycle of education and community. You’re making sure that the kids understand that you as an educator care





about them as a whole person, not just as a learner. We care about who you are on the inside. We care about who you value, who you care for: we know that school is just one part of your life, and it's just as important to be an artist or a singer or an athlete, so we care about connecting all the different parts of the whole and nurturing that from the beginning. Supporting kids as they go into high school, that's really important to me. I want them to recognize some of the adults they may have met through 44Dresses as they go into their high school. We really protect the privacy of the students who engage in 44Dresses, and we involve the Grade 12 students because they are not going to be at the school the next year. But it all fits well with our school district commitment to support the transition to high school."

Lisa has some words of advice for educators who may be interested in launching a similar project. "Look at existing systems in your school district, ones that are already in place with people who are already doing good work. Listen and watch for expressions of need from schools or from students. Lean on your colleagues – people want to help, and they want to make a difference for kids. We have people who come and volunteer as seamstresses on Boutique Day, so if a child finds an outfit that they really love but it needs a special touch — a bow here, or something there — then the child can leave with their perfect outfit. For some alterations, I'll collect the outfit and take it to the child at their school. People have big hearts: I think I would go into it assuming that people all want to feel connected."

For Lisa, 44Dresses is also a symbol of the way that BC school leaders connect with students. "I'm so grateful to be part of a community of educators provincially – and in our School District – that really want to know who kids are. This is just one way that we connect with our students as individuals, and I really value the different ways of connecting with people. This has helped us to launch students through a shared celebration. We call it 44Dresses, but it's not just about dresses: it's about so much more."

 [@44_dresses](https://twitter.com/44_dresses)

"I wanted to take some time to thank you ever so much for the wonderful experience of finding a dress for my daughter's grade 7 grad. She was over the moon that she found a yellow dress that fit her so well AND the delight of finding shoes and jewelry to go with it. The care we felt made the whole experience AMAZING"
- 44Dresses Parent

"The Guild appreciates the proverb, 'it takes a village to raise a child'. We are pleased that our quilts, a lasting memory of success and a symbol of encouragement, recognize our place in the global community."

Harriet Tomashewski

Abbotsford Quilters' Guild,
2020 Award Recipient

"The Osoyoos Community response from various sources including School PACS, service clubs, business community, church groups, Town Council, and private individuals has been outstanding and has made it possible to maintain the program for close to 20 years. It is a valuable part of school life for students to know that their community cares about them."

Jim Harrington

Jim & June Harrington,
2020 Award Recipients

"At Nourish Cowichan we clearly understand the connection between learning and good nutritious food. Schools are an integral part of the communities they serve. They do not exist separately from the 'outside world'. This relationship works both ways; the community also holds some responsibility for what happens inside schools."

Rod Allen

Nourish Cowichan,
2020 Award Recipient

"We know that working in partnership with schools increases students' success. When students see their larger community working together to support them, they see their value and they benefit from a network of caring individuals."

Kelsey Prichard

The Summit Youth Centre Hub,
2020 Award Recipient



Announced May 25, 2020

"I have learned the value of partnerships over the years and how 'many hands make light work' when working towards a Common goal ... Collectively we have the chance to work directly with local children and youth in need in both District 33 and 78, to ensure all students have access to supplies, resources and warmth throughout their school year."

Justin Mallard

Murray Honda,
2020 Award Recipient

For more than two decades, the BCPVPA Partnership Awards have been presented in recognition of the immeasurable time, energy and expertise that local people dedicate to supporting BC students and schools.

Nominations are submitted by the BCPVPA's sixty Chapters, and in May 2020, the BCPVPA recognized five groups and individuals who have made a substantial difference over time through projects that benefit their local public schools.



Abbotsford Quilters' Guild

Nominated by Abbotsford Chapter (School District #34)

The Abbotsford Quilters' Guild makes and distributes quilts for several charities, and was nominated for their contribution to Abbotsford's New Beginnings Young Parent Program that provides opportunities for young parents to complete or upgrade their high school education. The Abbotsford Quilters' Guild honours each graduate's commitment to their education with the presentation of a beautiful quilt made with care and love for the children of each graduate. As part of their ongoing support for public education, they also provide a yearly bursary to a graduating student of New Beginnings to help facilitate their post-secondary pursuits.



Nourish Cowichan

Nominated by Cowichan Chapter (School District #79)

Nourish Cowichan was created to feed children in need in the local school district, the maternity clinic at the Cowichan District Hospital and three local daycares, and is run by Cowichan volunteer citizens. Their main goal is that every child is given the same opportunities to learn and succeed, by combating hunger with nutritious locally produced food. Nourish Cowichan's champion, Fatima Da Silva, began making muffins in 2017 and the program rapidly grew to include breakfast wraps, fresh fruit and healthy cookies. Today, three school kitchens are in operation, and more than 50 volunteers deliver home-made nutritious food to schools weekly, with another two school kitchens set to join soon.



The Summit Youth Centre Hub

Nominated by Rocky Mountain Chapter (School District #6)

A non-profit since 1992, The Summit Youth Centre Hub provides a safe and dynamic 'Hub' for Columbia Valley youth. The Youth Hub offers a sense of belonging: it is a safe and positive place where youth can interact and engage in after-school activities. Over the past year, the Youth Centre supported 163 children and youth experiencing food insecurity by providing snacks and after school meals. This year, mental health initiatives have been an important focus of the Youth Hub with information sessions offered both in schools and at the Centre. The Summit Youth Hub plays an integral role in connecting youth with their community.



Jim and June Harrington

Nominated by Okanagan Similkameen Chapter (School District #53)

Jim and June Harrington have been active members of the Osoyoos Schools Breakfast Program for more than 15 years. They are part of the team that meets twice a month to bake muffins in the Osoyoos Secondary Home Economics room. Jim and June, along with 6-8 other volunteers, use ingredients purchased using grants and support from local service clubs and businesses to bake muffins that they know will be healthy and appealing to the students. Jim and June solicit donations, apply for grants, meet with town council, drum up volunteer support and are constantly on the lookout for fresh and local ingredients. They are both valued and appreciated volunteers at both Osoyoos schools and are truly stewards of public education in Osoyoos.



Murray Honda

Nominated by Chilliwack Chapter (School District #33)

Murray Honda (part of the Murray Auto Group) has collaborated with Canadian Tire Chilliwack and Staples Chilliwack for many years to support needy families throughout Chilliwack. Each year, they contact 30 Chilliwack schools to determine the needs of students in the community. They respond by delivering high quality boots, jackets, backpacks, and school supplies. As a Result, they have been able to eliminate barriers and open opportunities so that students can participate in school in an equitable way with all of their peers.



Nominations for the
2021 BCPVPA
Partnership Awards
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Wendy Yu
Principal SD43

Mindset:
The New Psychology of Success
by Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D.
(2006)

Rarely do I find a book that

bridges all aspects of my life. Mindset is one of these books that has relevance to every role I have: teacher, Principal, mother, wife and friend. This book changed the way I teach, mentor others and parent. I love it so much I've used it as my Book Club book at two of the schools I've worked at.

In her book, Dweck introduces us to the concept of two types of mindset: fixed mindset and growth mindset. A fixed mindset believes that talent is something you are born with. You cannot change it. Either you got it, or you don't.

A growth mindset believes that with effort, you can change your achievement. Being successful is based on your desire to learn and not on showing others how smart you are.

Dweck realizes that we all have a combination of fixed and growth mindsets in different aspects of our lives. A person might think they aren't a 'natural artist' and have never attempted to further those skills. That same person can think they can develop as a leader and know that through practice, experience and gained skills they can become better.

She uses many examples of famous people and shares their fixed and growth mindset stories.

**A growth mindset believes
that with effort, you can
change your achievement.**

In Sports, Dweck shares that some of the greatest athletes aren't 'naturals' but became highly successful with practice and hard work. She emphasizes that athletes who have a growth mindset find their success in learning and improving. Those people find sports more rewarding and enjoyable.

In Business and Leadership, a growth mindset encourages people to act as a team, be creative and share ideas openly. They aren't afraid to share their thoughts because they don't feel like they will be judged. Growth mindset creates a culture of rewarding risk-taking. In contrast, Dweck shares the story of Enron, where the focus was so much on talent that people refused to be viewed as failures. They could not acknowledge or correct their deficiencies, which eventually led to their demise.

In Relationships, a growth mindset helps you move from the idea of being 'compatible' to the understanding that every relationship requires work and effort to be successful.

Have you read a book that changed you, challenged you or surprised you?

Can you share your story in 500 words or less?

Your review could be part of the Fall issue of Princip(ed):

contact sandra@bcpvpa.bc.ca to book your spot!

If you've read Mindset, we'd love to hear your thoughts - tweet about it and tag us!

 @bcpvpa

In Parenting, Teaching and Coaching this book has changed the way I praise students and my children. Instead of focusing on their talent ('Oh, aren't you a good artist'), I now praise based on effort ('Wow, it looks like you put a lot of effort into this drawing') and growth ('I can see how you took the things you learned and applied them').

Dweck's book is easy to read with highly engaging stories. I've seen the impact it has had when I have used it as a Book Club book (twice). It has immediately changed the practice of teachers in my building: how they respond to kids, and how they respond to each other. It has even moved one staff to adopt a 'growth mindset' as a school-wide goal. Conversations changed from 'not being able' to 'not being able to...YET'.

**It has immediately changed
the practice of teachers
in my building: how they
respond to kids, and how
they respond to each other.**

The greatest part of this book is the idea that anyone can develop a growth mindset. It will change the way you work, live and love. Happy reading!



Wendy Yu lives and works in Coquitlam (SD43). She has had the privilege of working at elementary, middle and secondary schools and is currently Principal at Gleneagle Secondary, where she works with a hardworking and dynamic team. She is a wife and mom of three kids who keep her life busy and full!

What did YOU think of The Devil is in the Details?
Tweet about it and tag us!



This book considers reasons why
we need a system perspective to
face off with the devil's details ...
and need to make changes.

Right from the start,

Michael Fullan's *The Devil is in the Details: System Solutions for Equity, Excellence, and Student Well-Being* co-written with Mary Jean Gallagher, confirms itself as the right book at the right time. These words loom ominously (given the COVID-19 outbreak taking place as I read this book) "We will argue that the world is heading into the jaws of mass extinction or radical decline of human existence. Whether it will take 20 or 100 years remains to be seen. We need a new moral imperative and a system transformation strategy that goes along with it to have any chance of surviving for the better."

Quite an introduction....

The book considers reasons why we need a system perspective to face off with the devil's details ... and need to make changes. I found the discussion around inequity timely, as decades of growing inequities have to be acknowledged – from food security, to internet access and beyond. The ramifications of being poor (or otherwise marginalized in or by society) have never had such a spotlight on them as they do now. What change(s) must happen for Education to address ongoing inequalities?

I love their call for a new moral imperative where Equity, Excellence, and Well-Being fit together like puzzle pieces. We gotta be good – or get good – at life.

It can't be assumed that 'the individual' will just figure things out. Right now, schools are not necessarily helping individuals, as Fullan and Gallagher point out that two-thirds or more of students find that present schooling is not meaningful and, if asked, that their purpose at school is "to get good grades, go to university and get a good job". The question asked here is: could young

people be attracted to a better agenda? It is not sustainable when at least two-thirds of students are bored, alienated, stressed or all three. Do students continue to come to school with the same excitement they had in kindergarten (acknowledging some do find angst in kinderland) or are they coming to school in grade 12 out of habit and compliance? My wonder is if our students see school as a 'have to' or a 'get to' opportunity.

When considering policies and change, Fullan and Gallagher note that indeed there have been ideas spreading, but not always good ones ... yet for many years, the 'right drivers' have also been available and used by some jurisdictions to great success (they look at examples from Ontario, California and Australia). A key recommendation from case studies was to "Focus on deep learning: Learning is the work." This is where those details lie. Get these right, and other positive factors follow.

One challenge is that those with power and privilege like the status quo, so change is often limited. Those who have been oppressed are not always portrayed in the best light, and instead we see anger and bitterness. So, to affect this, education needs to cause disruptions. Yet I also worry: how many people became teachers because they enjoyed their own school experience ... and how many will change what 'worked for them'?

Fullan and Gallagher's fundamental frame is to consider each of the three leadership levels of local, middle, and macro as equally semiautonomous – a phenomenon they call "universal connected autonomy." Complex systems can not be 'dumbed down' because of their complexity, which makes change likewise complex. Whatever level you are in, you need to be both autonomous and connected with the other two. As such, school (and District) plans need to be streamlined and user-friendly. Using both self and peer assessments, plans need to follow the model of 'implement, improve, revise, repeat'. Complex plans tend to not be implemented.

Coming out of Fullan's last book *Nuance*, the next step for leaders is to become experts in understanding

Ian LANDY
Principal SD47

**The Devil is in the Details:
System Solutions for Equity, Excellence,
and Student Well-Being**
by Michael Fullan & Mary Jean Gallagher
(2020)

context, as that is where the details that matter most reside. Change leaders need to understand what people at all three levels think.

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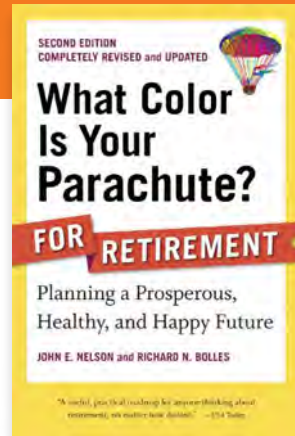
Leaders also need to act as a learner in all interactions and to expand one's own schema, not stay rigidly affixed to it. Networking and collaboration address the details we need to worry about ... yet we might not predict what details will emerge, so our mindsets and practices need to be nimble in order to respond to emerging needs.

The final challenge from this book: acknowledge that our current education system is wrong. Change needs to happen. Dare the school to create a new social order; double dare education to influence evolution for the better!

Fullan and Gallagher introduce challenges and queries with great exemplars that force deep thinking that change isn't just necessary, but inevitable and the time is ... now.

Ian Landy is principal on the pacific at Edgehill Elementary in Powell River on the shared territory of the Tla'amin Nation. He is passionate about Personalized Learning Journeys using differentiation and descriptive feedback via eportfolios. He has more book reviews on his "days of learning" blog site at technolandy.wordpress.com

Retirement Reading



Don Boyd
Director of Member
Support Services,
BCPVPA

What Color is Your Parachute? For Retirement

Planning a Prosperous,
Healthy and Happy Future
John E. Nelson and Richard N. Bolles
(2010)

This book focuses on some core aspects of a successful retirement, including pre-planning, onset of retirement and making adjustments as you move forward through your retirement.

“Without ignoring the importance of economic growth, we must look well beyond it for a successful retirement.”

Amartya Sen, 1998

The focus is on retirement as a ‘life-cycle’ and a gradual process – versus an ‘end destination’ or ‘finish line’ approach – with new doors and opportunities opening up once a person is in their retirement years. Basically, it is a transition to a different way of living. The authors discuss the need to focus on four key elements to a person’s retirement. These include financial well-being, geographical considerations – location, location, location! – medical or physical health, and your psychological state: are you ready

to retire mentally. These elements are discussed in depth with a chapter being devoted to each topic with various worksheets, strategies and self-assessment tools for the reader to use in developing their plans for a successful retirement.

Below is a brief overview of each of these elements:

Financial

Requires a diverse portfolio to ensure a successful retirement. The portfolio may include:

- Association pension
- CPP/OAS
- Personal Savings – RRSPs, TFSA
- Real Estate
- Inheritance
- Investments

Your life span is comprised of three phases: the education phase, which is characterized by borrowing; the beginning/working phase, which focusses on saving; and the retirement phase that sees you spending your savings to provide for a successful retirement.

Geographical

What consideration have you given this element in your retirement plans?

- Sense of place: the meaning that you get from living where you live
- Aging in place: what you hope to do in retirement
- Liveable community: a supportive environment for retirement and aging
- Essential region: where you must live

A person needs to be able to identify how these elements will play out in their retirement plans.

Medical

Who is in charge of your medical plans?

Each person needs to pay attention to this essential element when considering their retirement plans.

- What does your care look like?
- What is your access to health care?
- Who is there to support you with your health care?

Nobody ever plans to be sick or unhealthy. However, as one ages, it is inevitable that the aging process will affect your health in some manner. You need to ensure that you have a plan in place to sustain your health in the later years of retirement.

Psychological

Health from the inside out.

Are you more concerned about staying alive or staying healthy?

The authors state that there are three levels of connectivity related to your social interactions that give you pleasure, engagement and meaning during your retirement. They talk about how you interact with

others at different levels, from light-hearted social interaction, to engagement and working together, to those relationships that have deep learning and share common values.

Many people without plans comment on their loss of purpose, isolation and a lack of relationships once they are in retirement. The authors state that you need to factor in all aspects of the ‘life-cycle’ for retirement, and to share these plans with others to make it happen. These plans need to be developed with a focus on pre-retirement, and the early years, middle years and later years of your retirement.

Overall, I found that this book has something to offer for each person as they begin to develop their retirement plans. There were many useful tools and exercises that help guide you through the various steps of the retirement ‘life-cycle’ and that are of assistance as you begin to build the style of life that you envision for your retirement years.

next issue



Younger Next Year: Live Strong, fit, Sexy, and Smart – Until You’re 80 and Beyond
Chris Crowley & Henry S. Lodge, MD with Allan J. Hamilton MDs

The Last Word

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

More than a decade ago, Clayton Christensen's book *Disrupting Class* proposed that by 2019 half of all high school courses would take place in some type of online environment.

It was a bold prediction given that the technology available to schools, districts and students is not as robust, dynamic and accessible as it is today. At the time that *Disrupting Class* was published, we were still very much a flip phone society.



It was not Christensen's prediction for the future of schooling that has stuck with me all these years, but his rationale for why this was possible. As a leading expert on innovation and growth, he had provided in the book a very credible comparison between the education system and the business world in terms of adaptability and agility.

Compared to education, the purpose of business is quite clear and relatively simple. The purpose of business is to maximize profitability. The goalposts for businesses remain very stable, and in a fixed position. However, the goalposts for education are based on the shifting needs of our society and government, meaning that the goalposts sway and move regularly. Education is designed to fulfill a number of varied goals and, at times, competing purposes. Schools are expected to provide custodial care for children, create educated citizens, overcome societal and family inequities, provide social services and maximize the potential of each student. Above all else, schools are expected to create high levels of learning for all.

Applying a business model to the goals of public education oversimplifies the approach because the business world does not have the same range of complex goals to achieve that schools do.

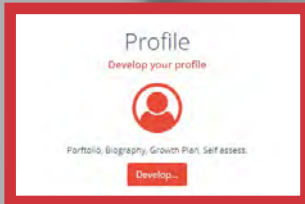
Christensen argues that the school system is significantly more agile and responsive than businesses are because of the varied and complex goals that the system is required to achieve. And while we still have a long way to go to achieving Christensen's prediction that half of all high school classes will be online, his argument about the responsiveness and agility of our system overflows with evidence.

On March 17, 2020, the BCPVPA was notified by the Ministry of Education that due to the pandemic and the recommendations of Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry, schools would be closed to the majority of students. The Ministry's guiding pandemic response was to ensure that while schools were

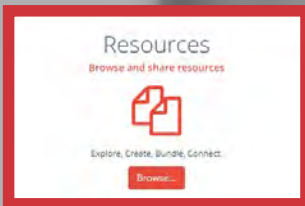
closed to students, that continuity of learning would continue. While Principals and Vice-Principals were expected to be present in schools following Spring Break, the vast majority of teachers were expected to provide instruction from home as we addressed the impact of social/physical distancing on our system. Within two weeks, a seismic shift in how we teach our students was experienced by teachers, school leaders and support staff as we transferred our entire system to new methods of instruction.

It should be noted that public education does to a degree operate a 'monopoly' when it comes to education, free from a great deal of competition. One could argue that holding the market share could actually hinder innovation and responsiveness when there is little or no competition in the marketplace. However, the systems' ability to respond during this pandemic has been remarkable. While we still have room for improvement, teachers immediately embraced new technologies and methods to stay connected to their students. Principals and Vice-Principals provided supports to ensure that positive learning conditions were maintained. Senior teams assisted in creating guiding principles and tools to ensure that the system was clear as to its goals, and that educators had what they needed to address continuity of learning. The response has been remarkable. This system still continues to develop mastery of learning outcomes, and to engage students to develop skills in the same way that in-class instruction would. Above all, educators were reminded that one of the most important drivers in student learning was for students to feel connected to school and their learning.

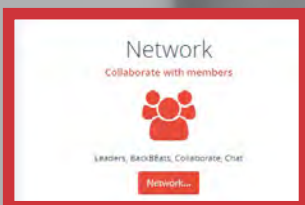
The pandemic has provided for our system a new set of goalposts that the system must address. There are still many questions, problems and challenges that we are working to address as we strive to provide continuity of learning. And while we know that the suspension of in-class instruction is temporary, we go forward with the system-wide understanding that learning for all of our students must continue.



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

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

