

An abstract painting of birch trees. The trunks are white with dark, textured bark. The background is a mix of vibrant colors: pink, orange, blue, and yellow. The style is expressive and modern.

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A model of success

Implementing change in public schools

Reading professionally

BCPVPA President Jameel Aziz considers the significance of what we read and why.

Recent discussions with a variety of educational leaders has helped to arm my belief that our professional reading, as principals and vice-principals, helps to shape our outlook and understanding, our

theory and practice. The nature and complexity of our role means it is challenging for principals and vice-principals to find the time to keep up with the abundance of readily available educational reading. Equally

difficult is finding the balance between doing our jobs well and having time to pursue the individual or family activities we enjoy. However, I believe we have all heard the expression if you are not reading, you are not leading. Our dilemma comes in knowing what to read and how to find the time to do so. The *what* is easy to answer. I am sure you can generate a list of great reading just by asking for suggestions from your colleagues. Many of you have also mastered the how to find the time issue by joining colleague- or district-based reading groups, where you not only take the opportunity to read but to discuss the ideas that spring from the reading. Another question we have to ask ourselves is why are we reading? One reason, certainly, is to stay current and be aware of education trends and practices that work in both BC and other locales. The context of education in BC is site-specific



and ideas that have great success in other places do not necessarily cross over to the BC context. Does that mean that we cannot glean some good ideas from other areas of the world that we can make successful practices in our own schools? I am certain it does not. I need hardly remind anyone, too, that the education environment in British Columbia is in a state of philosophical debate and discussion. Our leaders are following the trends and writings of educational leaders worldwide; they are paying attention to these ideas. Leaders in the BC Ministry of Education have shared with me that they follow the education articles in both the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*. I follow the same sources online. I believe these are great places both to start your reading and to gauge the trends that are occurring in large jurisdictions. Often, they also provide links and references to the work and reading that influence the decision-making. We have an expectation that our partners in the system will stay current with new practices, whether mandated or not. We have to emulate the practices we expect to see from those we work with. We all empha-

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And the days go round

After a year in Rwanda, a former principal from Williams Lake, reflects on his typical and not so typical days as head of a teacher/parent training program in Kigali.

In the past, I have participated in the BCPVPA Picture Day. I have spent the day chronicling each walk through the school hallways, each phone call to frustrated parents, each chat with a teacher, and each clean-up in the boys' change room because the custodian will not be in until noon. At the end of the day, as I reflect, I will wonder if this day really was a typical day.

The truth is, if you are a principal or vice-principal, there is no typical day. Sure, there are many routine activities from one day or week to the next, but there is also going to be something new and, if not extraordinary, at least out-of-the-ordinary.

Life as the Program Director for a teacher and parent training program for a small NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) in Kigali, Rwanda is very different than life as a principal or vice-principal back home in Williams Lake, yet there are many commonalities too. Have you ever sat down at the dinner table at the end of a busy school day, and your spouse asks you what you



did all day? You stammer, and then only one or two things spring to mind. All you know is that you didn't do *any* of the things you had planned to do. Life is like that here too, except instead of student conferences, equipment repairs, and required district documents, my time can be taken up with emails to prospective volunteers, writing assignments for the Wellspring website, and meeting with partners and stakeholders.

Amongst those activities mentioned already, I have also cre-

ated the first Human Resources manual for Wellspring employees here in Rwanda. While I have been a principal and vice-principal for ten years and a staff rep for four years before that, it has been a challenge wading through the labour laws of a developing country and the past practices of a fairly new NGO.

I am also dedicating some of my time to developing leadership training materials for the head teachers and deputy head teachers (the equivalent of principals

and vice-principals) with whom we work. I have been greatly aided in this process through referencing the BCPVPA's *Leadership Standards for Principals and Vice-Principals in British Columbia* and by meeting a new friend, John Morefield. John and I have never met in person, but I "found" him one day when I googled "school leadership developing country." John, a former principal and university professor from Seattle, has led a World Bank funded national project for school director leadership training in Cambodia and spent the past five years developing curriculum, training a corps of 70 trainers and conducting hundreds of leadership workshops for school directors.

His leadership training curriculum is in English and the Khmer language, and the curriculum itself has traveled to Vietnam, Laos, China, Afghanistan, and now to Africa. In February, via snail mail, the curriculum arrived in Rwanda on a CD wrapped in a tea towel and crammed snugly into a brown envelope. As a solid foundation for a leadership training program, John's curriculum has been pure gold. As I adapt relevant parts of the curriculum and handouts, our teacher trainers help me with making information culturally appropriate and in all of the translation into Kinyarwanda.

As I develop the leadership course, I am often reminded that although the head teachers and I seem to have so little in common, many daily routines and challenges are not vastly different. Decentralization has downloaded more responsibilities, administrative tasks often distract from the more important business of instructional leadership, and many parents do little to support the education of their children. Sound vaguely familiar?

A Typical Day



All that said, there are days that seem to flow, more or less, according to a dynamic plan ... Gilbert is already waiting for me as I walk out to the van just after 7 o'clock in the morning. I ask him if David will be meeting us here too since David also lives nearby. He quickly reaches David on his cell phone and determines that he is already waiting at Gishushu with some of the other teacher trainers.

Within a couple of minutes, we are in the busy traffic heading to our initial pick-up point. Before reaching the first major intersection three blocks away, I have already been passed and cut off by a number of impatient drivers. There is technically only one lane with a wide shoulder on each side of this street, but at this time of the morning, the drivers have created three lanes heading the direction I am heading with one narrow lane for the traffic coming toward us. There is a reason we often say that traffic rules are merely suggestions in Rwanda.

As we round the corner at Gishushu – major intersections are given names here – six other trainers are waiting in a group, each one dressed professionally. They smile as we greet each other with a friendly "Mwara-

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Editor

Richard Williams

mutse,” good morning. I welcome them to “Mark’s Matatu,” and they laugh because the matutus or taxivans that they normally ride in are filled with at least 19 commuters. From the passenger seat, Gilbert jokes that today they will be treated as VIPs with so few riders in the 12-passenger van. Theogene, Benigne, David, Mary, Mercy and Desire climb aboard, and with a curious but necessary mix of both aggressive and defensive driving, I pull back out into the morning chaos.

Ten minutes later, we have picked up Ernest at Kinamba, Beatrice at the petrol station near Nyabugogo, and Ladislas at the first taxi stop on the way up the hill to Kabusunzu. Even without the trainers’ help, I am confident after being here for a year that I could have successfully navigated my way from one side of Kigali to the other, picking up each trainer at the predetermined meeting spots.

As we drive the remaining ten minutes to the school, the trainers talk about their weekends in a mix of Kinyarwanda, French and English. I am fairly certain the odd English word is thrown in for my benefit as my level of French is *petite peu*, and my level of Kinyarwanda is lower still. Here, many people are fairly fluent in two or three languages. Fortunately for me, the trainers are all fluent in English after their two years of working at Wellspring, so communicating with them is never an issue. Even so, when it comes to recalling weekend events, most revert to their mother tongue.

As we pull into the Kabusunzu government school, Ernest is calling out the names of trainers two at a time. With each couple, he also calls out the first name of a Kabusunzu teacher. These will be the first classroom observations of the day, and Ernest, who has just rotated back

into the trainer leader position for this school district, has done his homework and is well-organized.

If only, it was that simple.

Once Ernest has greeted the headmistress, the trainers head to their first appointments. As David and Mary enter the first classroom, the teacher reports to them that he is administering exams all day and will not be able to be observed today. Two other trainers are told that a teacher does not have a scheduled class until 10:20 am.

While the headmistress and the teachers have been aware of these observations for a month and were reminded of them last week, there will be many other glitches as the day moves forward. Over the course of the next three days, most of the teachers will have been observed, and follow-up conversations will have been held. Those who are most reluctant will continue to find excuses, and it will only be with the support of the headmistress that we will have any level of success with these resisters. This headmistress is new to her position this year, so we are unable to accurately gauge how much support she will provide.

Because I must leave the van for an hour, I pay one of the maintenance workers to guard it. I show him five 100 franc coins (approximately 85¢ Canadian) and point to my van. While he speaks no English, he and I have danced this dance before, so we are able to communicate through pointing and nodding. He is happy to be able to supplement his income today, and because I am paying him a much higher hourly rate than he is accustomed to, he will likely stay close to the van and ignore some of his other duties until I return. He never seems to be overly busy when we are here, so my guilt is assuaged.

The lesson I observe today is a math lesson in a Primary 4 (Grade 4) class. As a math lesson often can, the objective has more to do with understanding terminology and less to do with arithmetic or computation. Because the terminology is in a foreign language (in this case, English), both teacher and students seem to be sailing into uncharted waters. The lesson is certainly less than awe-inspiring, and I am told by Gilbert and Theogene after the lesson that this teacher did not attend our recent workshop and therefore



Desire (right) discusses a lesson observation with a teacher from Nduba.



did not include any group work in her lesson. Instead of a thorough critique of the teacher's lesson when the three of them sit down this afternoon, Gilbert and Theogene will help her to plan the next lesson, hoping to help the teacher to implement more active participation and the extension of cognitive skills and critical thinking.

After one lesson observation, I must head back to the office. Today, I am completing the final draft of the quarterly report. I will also be phoning each of the district education officers and others in the Ministry of Education to determine when I can visit them to deliver the report and have a chat. These calls or text messages will begin a game of tag which I have learned to dread. If I am lucky, a meeting date will be set, but I will be asked to phone back on the day of the meeting to determine an exact time and to remind the person that the meeting has indeed been scheduled. If I am not so fortunate, the person will ask me to call back on a certain day to ask again about availability. Still others will not respond to phone, text messages, or emails, and I may need to pick a day and go sit outside of their offices until they are able to give me ten minutes of their time.


Today I will also continue to type and edit the letters written by all of

our teacher and parenting trainers last week. Once completed, these letters will be emailed to Canada, read over by one of our Development Officers, beautified by our Communications Manager, and then mailed to all of the donors who are part of the *Support a Trainer* program. As Program Director, I am the main communications conduit between the teacher training program on the ground in Rwanda and the Canadian office that oversees the donor side of the operation.

This afternoon, I will have the pleasure of informing the leaders of many other educational NGOs based in Kigali that the website for the Rwanda Education NGO Coordination Platform (www.rencp.org) is now up and running. This past February, Wellspring joined a

fledgling group that has a mandate of coordinating the work of all organizations involved in the education sector here. It is a huge but necessary undertaking as there has been no functioning body to help reduce overlap, and more importantly, to help us learn from the expertise of others working in similar fields. While Wellspring is not large, we do feel that we have been influential in making this coordination get off the ground.

Before the afternoon is done, Ernest will call me to let me know when the trainers will be ready to be picked up. I will wind my way back through the streets of Kigali to find a much wearier group of educators at the end of their busy day. It is not every day that I drive the trainers to the government schools for their observations. Usually, they take public transport, a combination of matatu vans and motorcycle taxis. Still, it has been awhile since we have done observations, and Kabusunzu has presented some difficulties in the recent past, so I wanted to give moral support while also adding a more formal Wellspring presence at the school at the beginning of our three days here.

And so goes as typical a day as any in Kigali! 

Teacher trainer Ernest flashes his great smile.



Mark Thiessen, his wife Tracey, and family in Rwanda. Mark is on leave from the Cariboo-Chilcotin school district and is writing about his experiences in Rwanda for Adminfo readers. This is his third article and additional articles will be published as he continues his two-year commitment. The family's blog, can be found at <http://thewellspringfoundation.com/blogs/thiessens/>. Mark can also be reached at mark@thewellspringfoundation.com

Integrating technology into the classroom

How effective school administrators can use Universal Design for Learning to integrate technology into the fabric of the learning space.

by Kerri Steel



A student works on his Vancouver Island Marmots PowerPoint. Other photos show: page 8) material that was hi-lighted in Kurzweil; page 9) Colleen Nicholson with the Tasmanian Devils, the grade three and four students who worked with her on the project.

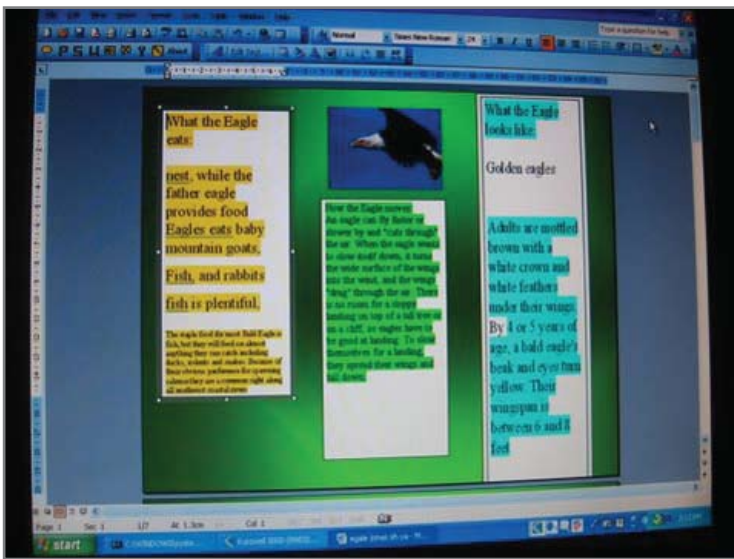
Let me start out by saying that I'm biased. This article is about the reasons that all principals and vice-principals need to become more tech savvy and to work actively to support teachers toward incorporating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into every learning space. Some of us would argue that many teachers are providing quality programs without ever turning on a computer. *Can UDL be implemented?* It has been. *Should it?* I'd argue that we're doing all of our learners a disservice if we don't try.

There is a growing body of research supporting the use of technology in classrooms. "Information technologies impact how people work, play, learn, socialize, and collaborate.

Increasingly, technology skills are also critical to success in almost every arena, and those who are more facile with technology will advance while those without access or skills will not" (*Johnson, Smith, Levine and Haywood, p. 4*). Our learners are living in a world that is changing rapidly, and if we are sincerely and ethically preparing them for their futures, we need to help them to build their skills and understanding using the tools they will be using as adults. Having technology in the building is not enough. As school leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure that our students are provided with universally designed learning opportunities that are supported by the integrated use of technology in

all classrooms. This does not mean we need to be experts in all of these technologies ourselves, but it does mean that we need to be fostering environments where the technology leaders in our buildings are given both a voice and the opportunity to support and encourage other teachers in the school.

UDL is all about access and opportunity. It's about framing each and every learning experience in a way that all learners are able to engage in a meaningful way. It's about creating a flexible framework that invites everyone in the room to participate, regardless of learning or physical challenges. UDL allows both teachers and learners to embrace the diversity of learning styles and challenges in our classrooms; without the need for cumbersome, time-consuming adaptations to curriculum after lessons have taken place. Although technology is an integral part of UDL, it "is not defined by or confined to technology. The technology must be combined with effective pedagogy" (*King-Sears, p. 201*). In a universally-designed classroom, technology is about far



more than word processing “good-copies,” or about making posters or diagrams to go with a project. UDL is an integration of powerful teaching practices with a variety of digital and technological tools. Dave Edyburn explains that “the reason why UDL is possible today as opposed to the 1950s or 1970s is that digital technology provides a high degree of flexibility. Paper-based instructional technologies (e.g., worksheets, textbooks) commit information to fixed formats and cannot match the array and flexibility of supports provided in a digital environment” (*Edyburn, p.38*). UDL isn’t about how often students go to the computer lab to complete projects. It’s about knowing how and where to provide access to tools that deepen engagement and understanding, targeted at specific goals and learning outcomes.

UDL mixes a learner-centered framework that is supported by clear learning objectives and goals with a few structures that have been deliberately chosen to put students in the driver’s seat. Given a chance to explore options, our learners quickly discover how they learn best; but they need to be supported by teachers who understand how to provide access and opportunities to explore a variety of formats and tools. Ef-

fective educators begin with explicit, sincere conversation about goals and objectives. The teacher clearly states, and often displays, a learning intention for the lesson or activity. Once everyone knows their end point, the group has a conversation about the critical criteria that they will need to meet, and the learners then develop their own question to help them to find a way to achieve personalized learning goals. Some call this an inquiry question. This part can be done without technology. It’s the conversation and opportunity for individual exploration that create the engagement.

Once clear goals and expectations are in place, students have a road map. This is the point where choice and flexibility step in, and the teacher steps out of the role of “instructor,” and into the role of “mentor.” As long as the students make reasonable choices that help them to achieve the defined learning intention, these choices are available to them. For example, if the learning intention is to “compare the structures and behaviours of local animals and plants in different habitats and communities,” (*BC Ministry of Education, p. 30*), and students have a rubric which stipulates which information to include, they may choose to write a report, do a detailed poster, create an advertisement with a friend, or to make a labeled diorama. If we really want to include everyone, we’ll also offer the options of presentation, movie and word processing software and pro-

grams such as *Kidspiration* or *Kurzweil*. The project is marked against the content outlined in the criteria, so it doesn’t matter if everyone uses a different format to complete it. Classroom teachers don’t need to be experts in all of these technologies; if we create opportunities for our students to use skills they already have, and to collaborate with others who can help to troubleshoot, some amazing results emerge.

Let me illustrate by describing a project completed by a group of grade three and four students in my school last year. Colleen, their teacher, was exploring local animal habitats and characteristics with her class. She wanted to know if the students knew how to focus on the “big ideas” when pulling facts out of their reading, and wanted them to celebrate their learning by presenting it to parents and grandparents. After creating a rubric together, the students did some print-based reading in information circles, to learn how to “Dig for Potatoes,” (a graphic organizer focused on collecting key facts). They followed this learning with creating some dioramas and doing some writing about their animals.

This was a great start, but Colleen really wanted to see what her students could produce more independently, and with over half the class receiving support services for reading or writing, she needed a flexible, inclusive framework to help them to finish their exploration. She also knew there were some free digital tools and other software in the computer lab that would allow her to foster independence and to increase engagement for her students, and she sought the help of colleagues to get started. By providing her with some time to plan with the Information Communications Technol-



(a free add-on program for Mozilla Firefox). When finished, students worked with both Colleen and the ICT teacher to create PowerPoint projects, synthesizing their learning. To facilitate the use of some other tools that she had not

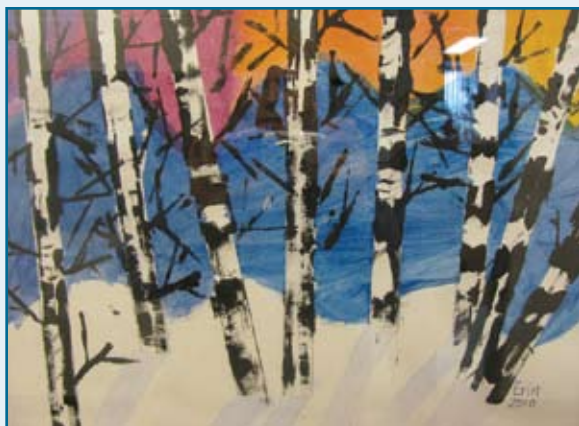
citedly recalled the high level of engagement that this group of learners demonstrated throughout the project, and she was astounded by both the depth of their understanding of the content, and the level of expertise that they demonstrated with the technology.

By the end of the project, Colleen recognized what we all need to; that UDL is all about purposeful pedagogy, combined with the flexibility and choice afforded by the integration of technology into the fabric of the learning space. It is achieved by first establishing a solid foundation and a clear goal that is then explored through a variety of choices that reflect students' preferences and learning needs. This animal project emerged out of a coordinated collaboration between the classroom teacher, support teachers, information technology teacher and administrator. The choices provided for the students were deliberately chosen to support the diverse array of student learning styles and needs in this classroom, arising from both the teacher's understanding of her students, and her willingness to explore new technologies to support their learning. Conversation was not around finding time for adaptations, such as who would scribe or read to the students with learning challenges, nor around finding "easier"

ogy (ICT) teacher, and by spending some of my time in her classroom as she was launching some of these new tools, I was able to support Colleen as she broadened her exploration of these new technology tools with her class.

Colleen knew there were some terrific websites with information on Canadian wild animals, so she collaborated with the ICT teacher to support the students with gathering facts on the Internet. Because she was just beginning to work with digital research tools herself, the students worked on this part of the project during their "computer" blocks. Some students cut and paste, some read and typed their discoveries and others used digital hi-lighters to categorize information that they listened to while using *Click, Speak!*

used previously, Colleen also collaborated with the Support Services teachers as the kids worked through their final projects. On the day they shared with their families, Colleen and I watched from the side as the students used the SMART Board to share their projects. Some students simply showed their presentations and read the captions, others used a dollar-store microphone to record what they had typed and then played the voice threads as they showed their slides, and a couple of students chose PowerTalk (another free program), to have the computer read their writing for them. Students sat with rubrics to complete peer evaluations on the presentations, and spoke articulately about what they had accomplished. In reflecting on her students' work, Colleen ex-




Cover story

Our cover art this month is by Erin Rushton, who was in grade 2 at Central Fort George Traditional School in Prince George when she completed this picture last year. The picture was created using masking tape, watercolours, salt and black paint. Her teacher, Shirley McLay, retired at the end of the 2010 school year. Our thanks to Erin, her teacher and Linda Picton, principal.

reading materials for them. It was around creating access and independence for these learners. Colleen is just beginning her journey toward integrating technology into her everyday teaching. It was through discussions with others in the building, facilitated and encouraged by a principal, that she was able to move forward.

It is possible to provide some choice without technology. However, if we do, then we ignore the growing body of research that tells us that our students learn better when they have access to these tools, and we create barriers simply by limiting opportunity. As instructional leaders, I believe that all principals and vice-principals need to be doing more than making sure our machines are up and running. We need to be having deliberate, focused conversations around the ways that technology supports effective teaching and deep learning. We need to be fostering environ-

ments where our technology leaders are given opportunities to share their expertise, and where teachers are collaborating and experimenting with the array of tools that are open to them. Will teachers explore opportunities for integrating technol-

ogy without us? *Some will.* Should we let them? *Not if we truly want to foster innovative, dynamic, and collaborative learning environments that will prepare both teachers and students for the challenges that lay ahead.* It's time. 

Kerri Steel is the vice-principal of Errington Elementary in the Qualicum School District. She has presented on UDL in several school districts. In addition to being vice-principal, she is also the SET-BC district partner. This is her first article for Adminfo. She can be reached at ksteel@sd69.bc.ca

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Jameel Aziz, continued from page 2

size the importance of reading for life success. Reading is equally important for our leadership success. Students, parents and staff constantly approach us for ideas and discussion. The wider our base of knowledge, the better prepared we are to enter into the fray and to back up our opinions with solid information.

When you make professional reading a part of your daily routine, I am sure you will see the benefits in a variety of ways in both your thinking and conversation. 

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ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development)
Public Policy <http://www.ascd.org/public-policy.aspx>
Community Blog <http://ascd.typepad.com/blog/>

The BCPVPA listserve is an instant network for BCPVPA principals and vice-principals

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To join email rwilliams@bcpvpa.bc.ca

A commitment to getting every student to graduation

A school in Port Alberni takes a “wrap around” approach to improve student success.

by Leslie Dyson



Last October, Kaththea Snoek hit a particularly low point in her life. It was her graduating year, but no one at Alberni District Secondary School (ADSS), least of all herself, expected she would graduate. Other struggles in her personal life had already caused her to fall behind in her schoolwork. Then tragedy struck. Her boyfriend and best friend for six years was killed in a car accident.

“For the first two months, I was pretty much a wreck,” she said. “School wasn’t really on my mind.”

However, her mother called the school and explained what was happening. The principal, teachers and support staff, with a commitment

and told her counsellor that she was prepared to take the extra year that she thought she’d need to complete her Grade 12.

That was all the school needed to know. Everyone in her circle kicked into high gear and came up with a plan that would see her cross the stage in June with her peers. However, Kaththea would have to complete seven courses in five months!

She took four through ADSS and three from an alternative school— Vocational Adult Secondary Training (VAST). “I was determined to get my school work done. I have lots of teachers to thank. They had my back through my whole education. And my counsellor (Rob Ostwald)

to get every student to graduation no matter what it took, stayed in touch with Kaththea and offered comfort and encouragement.

“Finally, I got to the point where I could see life goes on,” she said. She came to the school in the new year

helped me a lot.”

In June, she received her Dogwood Certificate. “I amazed myself and pretty much everybody,” she said. “I’m the first to graduate in my family. Everyone’s so proud of me.”

Her next goal is to move forward again. She’s in Edmonton earning money so that she can continue her education. She wants to get a certificate as a hair and nail technician. “That’s for me so I don’t have to pay so much for it,” she laughed. She also plans to get a degree in early childhood education. “I know I’m good with kids. They always come to me and we just connect.”

Kaththea’s story is one of many in Port Alberni, a small community with big social problems.

“Out of 26 regional districts, we’re at the bottom for every socio-economic indicator,” said Mike Ruttan, principal. “We have more poverty, poorer health, less employment. The school faces significant educational challenges.”

The student population of 1,200 is transient with “400 ins and outs in a year,” he said. “Some students are in



and out three times in a year. Family connections bring them back.”

ADSS has undergone a dramatic transformation. Kaththea said she’s seen a change at the school. “I believe this school is unique and special and VAST is too.”

Based on a school-wide assessment four years ago, the school staff decided the way to overcome the societal difficulties affecting student success was to move away from the obsession with numbers and focus on the relationship between staff and students. “The numbers fall into place when the students feel they’re being supported and treated fairly,” explained Ruttan, who has been at the school for seven years.

The theory seems to be correct—and the numbers prove it. The graduation rate has gone from 70 percent to 90 percent for Aboriginal students. Several students get 100 percent on their provincial exams every year and it’s hard for school staff to choose only 12 top academic students for the awards ceremony.

“It’s a wrap-around approach,” he said. “Everyone’s bought into the goal to get every student to graduation.

“Learning something new is a risk. You’re risking your ego and failure,” Ruttan said, “but students know we’ll help them up and help them get where they need to go.” Support

doesn’t stop at the usual school offerings. It extends to food, clothing, shelter and dealing with outside agencies. “If support isn’t coming from the home, the school will provide it,” said Ruttan.

Setting students on the path of success means convincing them that grad-

uation is not an end. They’re shown “what’s beyond the valley,” he added. Visits are made to North Island College, UVic, UBC, BCIT and other post-secondary institutions.

Following the school-wide assessment, parents got on board and asked themselves what they could do to help improve graduation rates. DPAC president Mary Burton said, “Parents can play such an important role because we’re good at knowing how to meet kids’ needs.”

During final exams, the PAC provided breakfast all day. Students could replenish their energy levels with bagels, raisin toast, Cheerios, fruit and juice donated by local businesses.

In early June, it brought in 15 community volunteers to hand out ice cream bars. “They are kids,” Burton said. “They like the attention.” Members of the community, Toy Run and RCMP enjoyed the interaction with the students and most of the kids were delighted.

There was one exception, Burton said. One student was shocked to see a police officer in the school and feared that she was about to be arrested. Burton took the situation in stride and said, “Let me introduce you.” Fears were allayed and the officer appreciated that all she was required to do was say a few words of

support and hand the student a treat.

Most important, however, is the PAC’s breakfast program which serves 300 students every school day. Burton, also the coordinator of the Breakfast Club, said, parents were spurred on by stories like the one from a new teacher who said that a student told her “I’m too hungry. I can’t listen to you right now.”

Burton said, “There are kids who really depend on this. Kids have passed out from hunger. We’ve had kids coming to school just so they could get a piece of fruit.”

After addressing hunger issues, the parents followed up with personal care kits. They saw that students needed socks and deodorant. The PAC puts together boys’ and girls’ kits that also include encouraging handwritten notes.

Beyond this, the school provides bags of groceries, cooking instructions and menu suggestions for students who are living on their own.

Burton acknowledged that these efforts aren’t ending poverty. “It’s not the perfect solution, but it’s something.” She’s confident the work of the school will help many break out of the poverty cycle and that some will “pay it forward. We tell them, ‘Remember that you were helped and that you can help others.’”

VAST also operates a summer program. It provided food and support to students during the summer break even if they weren’t enrolled.

There’s a strong relationship between the school and VAST. The alternative program provides the smaller school setting that some students require. “As educators you have to lose your own professional ego,” Ruttan said. “It’s about making sure kids get what they need, not where they get it. Just get them to graduation.” There’s also a conviction that financial constraints won’t



stop students' dreams. Ruttan said one of the students was chosen to run in the Olympic torch relay and he desperately wanted to purchase a torch as a memento. But he didn't have the funds to do it. The school purchased it for him and then had him work to pay off the debt.

The school relies on the target funding and staffing offered by the district, Ruttan said. It also takes advantage of every strategy that's available. AVID, now in its sixth year, "is making a huge difference."

The timetable also allows students to use one out of four blocks as tutorial time and it is being used by students who need extra help.

Parent-teacher conferences are held three weeks before report cards are issued so that parents have time to work with their children to get assignments completed and raise grade levels. If necessary, the school will pick-up parents and bring them to the school. Staff will even make house calls, Ruttan said.

Port Alberni is also the administration centre for 13 First Nations bands, although students also come from other groups across the country.

To help Aboriginal students, the school has put together a team of people including a vice-principal and counsellor devoted specifically to this group. First Nations workers,

teachers, administrators and support staff meet monthly to discuss policy issues. A steering committee meets weekly to help individual students when personal issues come up.

Another contributing factor to the improvements in the school was the introduction of the Social Justice 12 course. ADSS was a pilot school for the program five years ago. It's taught by Kama Money, a graduate of the school 10 years ago. "I chose to come back to help make the school more inclusive and the school has changed since I went here. Mike (Ruttan) has made a big difference. There's a lot of support in the school. We're all working together."

Her class attracts all ranges of abilities and socio-economic levels and empowers kids at the margins. By the end of the school year, "we're really like a family," she said.

Students call it the "isms class." They learn about issues related to human and animal rights, Aboriginal rights, the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community, global health concerns and poverty. "It's a challenge to teach and was initially banned by at least one school board," said Money.

The aim is to have students share ideas in a well-formed and respectful manner. "I learn just as much from the kids as they do from me," she said. "I'm surprised every day."

Money creates an atmosphere where the students feel safe and soon they have no problem getting up in front of the class and talking about their personal experiences with poverty and racism. "When

one at-risk student tells his or her truth, it makes it safe for others."

Ruttan said a highlight for him was seeing students from the class writing messages of love in chalk on the sidewalk outside the school.

Debunked stereotypes and expanded awareness spill into the corridors of the school, although Money said the benefits to the school would be much more long lasting if the course could be offered in Grade 9 or 10.

The students also benefit from a project-based learning program offered to Grade 9s. A classroom has been constructed of recycled materials with solar panels and a green roof in a woodlot 25 minutes away. Students learn about the science of natural resources by doing 60 per cent of their work in the field.

Ruttan said he knows the changes are working. Besides better numbers, he said he can see it in the school pride and reduced garbage and graffiti. "They see this as a place that's helping them." He's also encouraged by the increase in the number of conversations among students about what they're going to do next.

"There's never just one thing that turns a school around," he said. "It's driven by people with the attitude that kids can do well. It's about improving things for kids. That's why we went into education. "But we don't take no for an answer," he added. "The teachers have to be pit bulls — but they're nice pit bulls." ^{bcp} _{vpa}

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Change for the better

A recently retired principal reflects on how to implement a successful change process.

by Mary Laudien

Public schools in British Columbia are under incredible stress as they come to terms with the forced reality of re-inventing themselves. It is a time of unprecedented budgetary pinching, declining enrollment in public schools with lack of confidence in the quality of education being delivered, parental aspirations for increased “Schools of Choice” and heightened expectations that schools must successfully meet the needs of the inclusive and diverse classroom organizations in schools. Everyone is challenged with how to do more in our public school system with so much less.

Change is in the air and with it, its attendant concerns, anxiety and stress. As such, schools and school districts need an innovative “change process” with proven success to frame the change required and move schools even closer to their full potential.

In 2005, West Bay Elementary, a public school in West Vancouver was dying a slow death. Demographics projected that the school could expect that families moving into the catchment would continue to bypass their local public school and choose to enroll in the private school options on the North Shore instead. It was a given that the school was moving towards closure if something wasn't done to alter the perception of the school. The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program was investigated, considered and chosen as a way to attract the catchment clientele to its home

school. Today, West Bay is oversubscribed and families are buying and renting in the catchment area to secure placement for their children. The school has an impeccable reputation — it is a school with a unified community that meets the needs of its individual learners. Parents are clamoring to provide their children with the opportunity to attend this “Choice School” and feel confident that their children will receive a “world class” education.

Every child in British Columbia deserves to have this kind of positive response and growth that demonstrates public schools can be schools of excellence where “best practice” for students is at the core of all decisions. “We do what is best for kids,” is a consistent message, but do we really? It loses in the translation when we aren't giving a clear message to the school district managers, the trustees and the Ministry, what

truly is working at the grassroots level in the education of our children. As the instructional leaders, we need to be visionary. We have to know what are the best conditions and learning communities that can provide our “future citizens” with the strongest educational background possible. Leaders with vision know what they want the end result to look like and help their stakeholders to envision this as well. Thus, being an effective communicator and promoter of this vision is key to the work to be done. As leader of the innovative change process you choose to undergo, a leader must be willing to share this leadership amongst key stakeholders, such as district office managers (superintendents and trustees), teachers, parents and the students themselves. You become the gatekeeper and everything that the school is immersed in must be planned through the lens of one's change initiative (e.g., the annual SPC action plan created through the staff and parents, resource allocations, staff development and professional development opportunities, fundraising efforts, fine arts programs, sports program, etc.). There isn't the opportunity to “jump on board” with every ministry initiative, unless it aligns with your change process. And most of all, as leaders, one has to have genuine respect for all stakeholders immersed

in the change process and to support their concerns, confidence levels and abilities. This is where The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) fits. As one embarks in re-framing how one educates students, one must anticipate the process.

As the concept of *change* is approached in a learning community, you can feel the stress level rise with the unknown and everyone's initial negative response due to uncertainty. Your first task as the leader is to educate everyone about the needs and the reasons for the change. You might be leading a school in West Vancouver that is losing students to the private system. You may be leading an inner city school that does not fare well on the FSAs or a school that loses students because your school doesn't have a strong sense of community and belonging. No matter how wonderful one's staff may be, if trust is lacking, the school will not make inroads. Families seek out schools that they believe embrace the development of the whole child, that understand how to manage diversity, that engage the students through the inter-relatedness of curriculum and the skills of inquiry and prepare their children for the role of global citizens.

Karel Holloway wrote in a National Staff Development Council article (February/March, 2003) that researchers have found that helping educators work through concerns related to innovative change is crucial to the success of the process. CBAM is a framework available to understand and address educators' common understandings about change. CBAM originated in the 1970s through Shirley Hord, program manager with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. It is based upon understanding and listening to the stages that each pro-

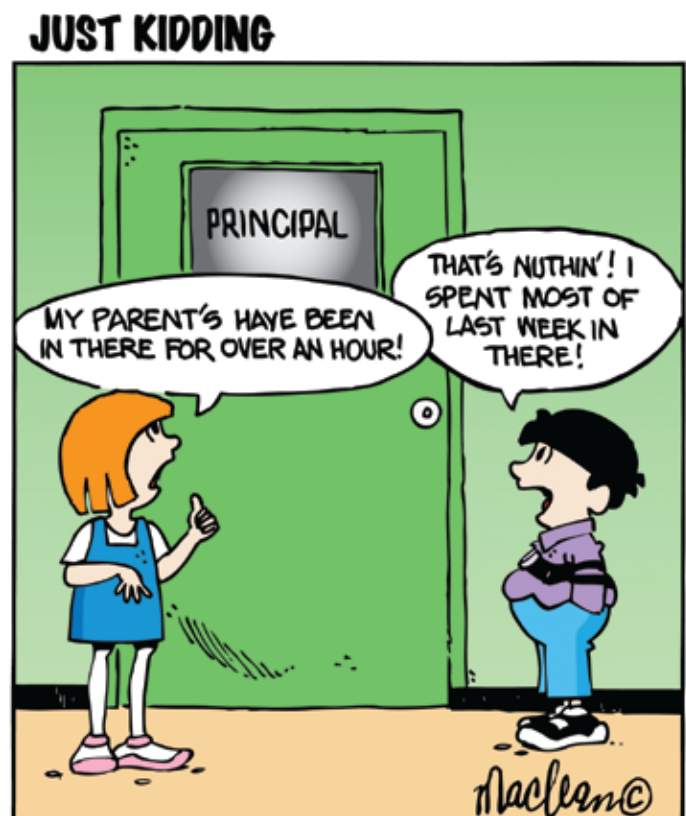
fessional in your building is moving through as they progress through the change process. By framing change in this way, the leadership team can support staff through the process, which will immerse educators in the change and make them feel less "put upon and stressed." Some staff will move through each stage progressively, while others will skip around and have several concerns simultaneously. As a leader, it is important to have a survey prepared where staff can pinpoint the stage that they have reached. It is worthwhile to monitor evaluations of progress every five months or so, so that staff can see their personal growth, change with the initiative and track progress. Resistance to change is natural and during these unsettled times, it will take an effective leader to ensure that what is being proposed has merit and will make a positive difference. It is my experience, that even the most resistant of teachers can be motivated towards making the right choices for their students when they feel heard, supported and acknowledged. Getting the entire learning community behind the change allows the staff the opportunity to feel respected and recognized for "going the extra mile" to assure excellence for their students. Parents who are well-informed throughout the process can't say enough about their admiration for the

teachers and quality of education their children are receiving as a result of staff taking on the innovation to improve.

CBAM's seven stages of concern

Stage 0 Awareness: *Aware that an innovation is being introduced but not really interested or concerned with it.* Stakeholders need to be made aware and in agreement that the change is necessary and what the end will look like. Everyone must come to the realization that they can make a difference by getting involved and moving forward.

Stage 1 Informational: *Interested in some information about the change.* The leadership team must provide training and time for professional conversations where staff can begin to develop an understanding of what the change initiative entails. This may mean bringing in resource people to help with laying the philosophical underpinnings of the pur-



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pose and rewards to be gained for one's students.

Stage 2 Personal: *Wants to know the personal impact of the change.* In the early days of the change process, stakeholders, not just educators, will want to be assured that it is doable for them or that they can develop the skills required to make the change. This is a time when the leader must be receptive to meeting individually with staff members and taking the time to encourage staff and help them understand *your* confidence in *their* professional ability to manage and perfect the change. Teachers are so conscientious that they constantly demonstrate self-doubt. They require the reassurance that you can provide to them.

This is also a time when communication is key with students and parents, so that they develop a strong desire for the changes being recommended and implemented. Students will have doubts and concerns, just as staff.

Parents require extensive communication through meetings, guest speakers, open houses, newsletters, etc. to ensure they are also committed to the proposed changes. Parents need an understanding that what is being proposed is the right fit for the school and the new skills, attitudes and knowledge will better prepare their children for the future.

Stage 3 Management: *Concerned about how the change will be managed in practice.* Time is always the hurdle that creates negativity. Staff members *always* believe that they are overburdened and that by taking on "change," it will cause even more work. They are not wrong about that, but professional teachers also know that their job entails before school, after school, some weekend and vacation time. This is a given in education, it isn't a regular hours job.

However, districts could support the collaboration time required for sustaining the change by ensuring that time is allocated for this purpose. Parents want reassurance that teachers have the time to collaborate and share the implementation in a way that is not burdensome to already fully committed classroom teachers.

Stage 4 Consequence: *Interested in the impact on students or the school.* At this stage, teachers must be assured that the positive effect of the change will outweigh the uncomfortable feelings that one may experience during implementation. This is a time when the leader must continue to reassure stakeholders of the vision behind this change. If you can back-up the vision with research and data, stakeholders will be assured that the innovation is worthwhile. This is a time when people question whether they have the skill, training and confidence to move forward with the change in their pedagogy to make a difference. It is a pivotal stage in the process. As a leader, you have to convince your staff that as professionals they need to get "messy and dirty" with the innovation. You will find that the resourcefulness and inspiration of some will carry the resistant staff towards "jumping in" and becoming engaged.

Stage 5 Collaboration: *Interested in working with colleagues to make the change effective.* It is crucial that the staff members implementing the change are provided with time

to spend with whole school professional development. This may require negotiating with unions and the school district. Everyone knows that this is a key piece to implementing change. It is imperative that the staff create an *Essential Agreement* about how they will frame and make the most of collaborative time. The key to making this work is getting involved with your staff in the planning and the training yourself with a leadership team. Administrators and teacher leaders can help to structure the collaboration and gauge the success of the implementation. Recognizing the efforts of the professionals involved and sharing continuously help to develop the commitment to change. As the leader, it is your role to communicate to your learning community how the staff commitment to the change process makes a difference for the students.

Stage 6 Refocusing: *Begins refining the innovation to improve student learning results.* When staff members reach this stage, they are well on their way. They are the staff members who initially emerge as leaders and take responsibility for the change process. They are actively engaged in working through the innovation with their students and become excited and energized to move forward. This stage allows them to share with other staff, lead the way and begin to adapt the change to one's unique site. Their level of professionalism drives them

Change References

The seven stages of concerns and how to address them are available in *Taking Charge of Change*, by Shirley Hord, William Rutherford, Leslie Huling-Austin, and Gene Hall, ASCD, 1987.


Another worthwhile source is, Shhh, the Dragon Is Asleep and Its Name is Resistance, by Monica Janas, *Journal of Staff Development*, Summer, 1998 (Vol.19, No.3, which is available online at www.nsd.org/library/jsd/janas193.html)

forward and helps to move their peers through to this stage, as well, because of their enthusiasm and personal successes. The professional conversations in the staff room are daily events as teacher innovators begin to experience the exhilaration from successful lessons.

Something to keep in mind during the change process is that the principal is engaged and immersed in their change initiative. This means that he/she is anxious to visit classrooms during lessons that demonstrate the initiative and that he/she will be communicating their successes through newsletters, parent informational meetings and emails to district management. The staff's professionalism will be acknowledged and celebrated. Once teachers are confident enough with the change implemented they will be encouraged to invite the learning community in for celebrations of

learning and parent workshops. You will find at this stage, the parents are so grateful for the opportunity for their children to be a part of such a professional and highly functioning learning community, that they take on the role of demonstrating their appreciation. They can't say enough, become fully engaged in the school and will whole-heartedly support their children's teachers.

Change is hard, but not impossible. Public schools across the province are feeling compelling reasons for making changes. Leaders in schools have the responsibility to make this happen. We take on leadership roles because we believe that we can be change agents for

the betterment of our students. The message one must glean from this is that change is possible and by having a framework for change, one has a better understanding of the factors that cause resistance: integrity, fear, communication, pace, history and stress and how to work towards alleviating these (*Motivational interviewing: preparing people for change*. William R. Miller, Stephen Rollick and Kelly Conforti). You can work with teacher unions, district management, trustees and parents to make the right changes to your programs that will better educate your students and increase confidence in the Public School System. Don't be afraid. Dive in and do it. 

Mary Laudien retired at the beginning of 2010. She spent 10 years as a principal and two years as a vice-principal in the West Vancouver School District. During that time she re-opened Cypress Park Primary (now a Candidate IB PYP School) and brought about West Bay's change to an authorized International Baccalaureate World School, the first public school in Western Canada. This is her first article for *Adminfo*. She can be reached at mlaudien@telus.net or call (home) 604-926-8905 or (cell) 604-764-8220.



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Lives

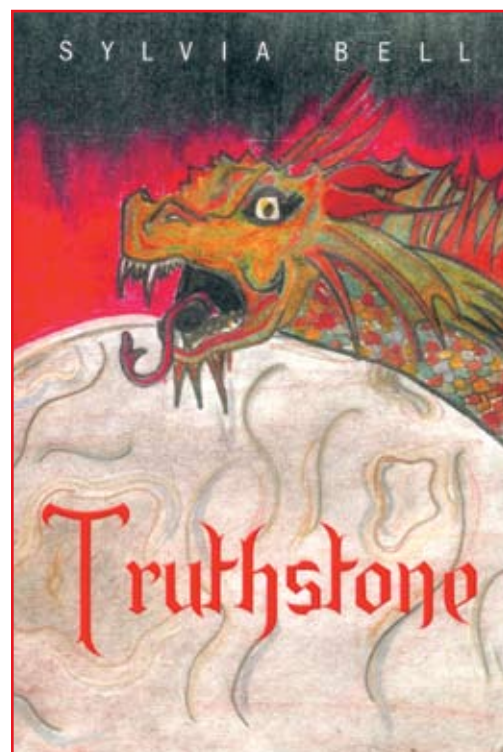
Sylvia Bell is a principal ... and novelist. *Truthstone* was published this month.

Sylvia Bell is your typical — well inasmuch as any school leader can be ‘typical’ — elementary school principal. Her school, Windrem Elementary in Chetwynd, adheres to the three Cs — caring, considerate and cooperative. The school, which enrolls more than 50% of its students from two Bands at Moberly Lake, is strong on student leadership, has peer tutors and mediators, an awards day and an annual talent show. The school is focused on reducing its environmental footprint through reducing, reusing and recycling. As principal, Bell has a hand in every aspect of the school.

In addition to all these tasks, Sylvia recently found the time to publish her first novel, *Truthstone*, which features the artwork of local student Ashlynn Pedersen (Chetwynd Secondary). The novel is a dark, compelling and complex story that features


a number of well-drawn characters. When 13-year-old Darien sets off on a journey, his fate overtakes him and he is sent on a quest to find a Truthstone. As he searches, another force looks for him. Al Zaric dreams of leading the world into a time of evil. He wants to use Darien’s heart-blood to awaken the Dark One. Vhari, the midwife’s daughter, soon discovers that she has magical powers. The two youths have never met but Vhari is steadily pulled into the darkening web of Darien’s destiny.

Sylvia says her interest in writing began with letters sent to her by her grandmother, but that she didn’t truly embark on her creative fiction until she came to Canada. A lab technician in Scotland, Sylvia’s move to Canada to pursue a teaching career brought her to Selkirk College in Castlegar where she started taking creative writing courses. It was some



16 years ago that *Truthstone* began — at first as a short story. “I was looking for some good fantasy fiction to read, and in arrogance, I thought I could write.” It was six years of reflection, creating and writing before the *Truthstone* story was fully drawn — now as a novel. Although the creative aspect of her book was finished, it was another 10 years before it made it off the back burner. “I was busy building my teaching career,” she explains and other than the odd attempt to interest publishers, the novel sat untended.

The book, she explains, did not come to her as a ‘single skeleton’ but rather “developed along the way.” Her process, writing without an outline, she says, “is not how I would teach writing.”

Sylvia’s novel will be included at the Frankfurt International Book Fair this October at is available as a paperback, hardback and eBook from both Amazon and Xlibris. 

www.amazon.ca/Truthstone-Sylvia-Bell/dp/1450097863

Xlibris
www2.xlibris.com/bookstore/bookdisplay.aspx?bookid=79101

An advertisement for 'Make a Future' featuring a smiling woman in a white shirt pointing at a laptop screen. The text on the screen reads: "Our futures are not determined simply by what we do but how and why we do it." Below the image, there is a list of job categories: EDUCATORS (Teachers | Principals | Vice-Principals), MANAGEMENT & PROFESSIONALS (Finance | Human Resources | Info Technology | Speech-Language Pathologists), SUPPORT STAFF (Trades | Clerical | Education Assistants). A logo for 'FIND A JOB' is on the left, and the 'Make a Future' logo is on the right. The text at the bottom says: "Visit www.makeafuture.ca to find the opportunities now available in BC Public Education."

The new kid in town

The BCPVPA's executive director, Ted Whiteland, on an early learning initiative to support students, teachers, vice-principals and principals.

With the introduction for half of the eligible five-year-olds in the province of Full-day Kindergarten (FDK) this school year, the BCPVPA is front and center supporting our students, teachers and principals.

Over the past year, it became apparent that the BCPVPA should have a key role in guiding and supporting early learning initiatives that are being introduced in schools, as our members are expected to provide leadership and support. As our approach has matured, we have made some changes. We have renamed the BCPVPA Early Learning Network (which was established in 2009 and first met in January 2010) to better reflect the intention of its work and are pleased to announce the establishment of the BCPVPA Council for Early Learning Initiatives in Schools (BC CELIS).

While the pre-school community is well-represented by a number of advisory groups, the school community is relatively new to hosting early learning programs in schools. Principals and vice-principals play a pivotal role in ensuring program success at the school level. Our Early Learning Network members have been enthusiastic about supporting Early Learning programs to date and we believe that by formalizing the Network into a Council, we will be able to play an increasingly important role by:

- Advising the BCPVPA Board


- of Directors and membership;
- Providing advice to other provincial organizations and the Ministry;
- Continuing as a network for collection, circulation and dissemination of pertinent information;
- Documenting successes and challenges, and;
- Providing credible research on the implementation of new EL programs in schools through the BCPVPA Research Cadre.

Both the Council and Cadre will be guided by a Steering Committee. The BCPVPA Research Cadre, established last year, will continue to be a sub-group of the Council; it begins its first research initiative this fall on the evolving FDK implementation. Dr. Janet Mort, will oversee the research process,



maintain communication with the Cadre, the Steering Committee and prepare the resulting analysis and report in consultation with the BCPVPA Board of Directors and staff.

The first BC CELIS and BCPVPA Research Cadre meeting will take place on October 21st in Richmond.

We hope you will join us in celebrating the formation of the BCPVPA Council for Early Learning Initiatives in Schools and welcome it as but one more opportunity to help to shape the Early Learning agenda. 

bcpvpa

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Keynote speakers

Tony Wagner has served as Co-Director of the Change Leadership Group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education since its inception in 2000. He is on the faculty of the Executive Leadership Program for Educators, a joint initiative of Harvard's Graduate School of Education, Business School, and Kennedy School of Government. Tony has been Senior Advisor to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and is author of four books, the most recent of which is *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need And What We Can Do About It*.

Carla Rieger specializes in helping people form creativity habits that allow them to stay in high performance states, especially during change, challenge and conflict. She began her career with one of the largest teambuilding organizations in the US in the mid-1980s and has since presented to more than 1500 groups of up to 4000 people. She is currently the director of The Artistry of Change, a Vancouver-based consulting firm that specializes in using creative thinking to manage change.

Breakout sessions

Skilled BC practitioners will lead the breakout sessions.

Among those presenting are: **Lynne Tomlinson & Scott Slater**; Jennifer Auld; Les Dukowski; **Sean Cameron**; Dean Irvine, Alannah MacPhail & Lisa Upton; Carl Repp; **Vivian Collyer**; Kevin White & Karen Fello; Shelley Green; **Bev Forster**; Marilyn Merler; Patti Holm; **Ian Landy**; Terry Taylor & Natasha Miles; **Cale Birk**; **Lisa Upton**; Denis Harrigan; Kathy Rothwell; and **Lisa McCullough & Rhonda Ovelson**

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