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CONNECTING LEADERS

BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

Connecting Leaders: Beyond Innovation and Change

October 25-26, 2013

Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel • Richmond
7551 Westminster Highway

Keynote Simon Breakspear is an internationally recognized thinker on the future of learning and educational innovation. He is the founder of Nextgen Learning, a consultancy that delivers strategies to enable 21st Century learning. Simon has worked in Australia, New Zealand, the USA, the UK, Europe, Israel, Hong Kong and India. A passionate educator and innovation strategist, Simon works on systemic challenges in education reform and redesign. He has contributed to the OECD's *PISA and Innovative Learning Environments* projects. In 2012, he co-founded *LearnShift India*, a cross-sector network of leaders working to design innovative solutions for educational transformation in India. He is the co-author of *Talent Magnets* a white paper on attracting, retaining and developing quality teachers.



Keynote George Couros is the Division Principal of Innovative Teaching and Learning for Parkland School Division. He has worked with all levels of school from K-12 as a teacher, technology facilitator, and school based administrator. He co-facilitates Great Leaders, Great Teams, Great Results leadership training, is a leader on the effective use of social media to improve student learning. George is also the creator of the Connected Principals blog site as well as the founder of Connected Canada. His focus is to help organizations create optimal learning environments for innovation within schools. Although George is a leader in the area of innovation, his focus is always the development of leadership and people and what is best for kids.

Breakout sessions by leading BC educational practitioners.

Program guide available soon on the BCPVPA website.

Registration opens soon. Information on the BCPVPA website, eNews and Twitter.

Whether to run or to vote, participating is important

BCPVPA President **Shelley Green** writes about the BCPVPA's governance. Whether you cast your ballot or stand for election, your participation makes the Association stronger.



Have you ever thought about running for the Board of Directors of the BCPVPA? When I ask the question, many of our

members reply with a smile and a slightly confused look in their eyes. Five years ago Marilyn Merler asked me that question. I had at-

tended Chapter Council for several years and truly enjoyed the rewarding experience of connecting with members from all over the province and sharing deep and meaningful dialogue about a host of issues important to public education in British Columbia. Still, my first thought when Marilyn posed that question, was that I couldn't run for the Board because my only experience was with Chapter Council. Marilyn set me straight about the importance of wide representation, rotational involvement and a variety of leadership experience as critical factors in a fully functioning representational board.

So what does it mean to stand for election as a member of the BCPVPA Board of Directors? In August we have the Board retreat. It is the first time that everyone on the new Board is able to get together so we spend some time getting to know each other and building our team. The staff have the op-

portunity to fully describe the work that they do and how it fits within the strategic plan. We also spend considerable time on board governance. It is a relaxed way to "get your feet wet" and speak candidly about the roles and responsibilities of a Board member.

As the year unfolds there are wonderful opportunities to be a part of committees and/or sub-committees. These include the Economic Security Advisory Committee, or Leadership Development for the Professional Standards working group, perhaps being a part of Student Voice or the planning group for Short Course. The Board meetings are always busy and full. We have the opportunity to discuss current trends in British Columbia, what is occurring with our members across the province, how we meet the professional needs of our membership and a host of other ideas, issues, thoughts or concerns. Attending Chapter Council takes on an entirely new dimension. Listening with a "leadership ear" at your Chapter tables enables you, as a director, to take the thoughts and concerns of our members back to the Board table to ensure that member's needs

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**2012 — 2013
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bleonard@sd43.bc.ca

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gordon.li@sd41.bc.ca

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Leading from where they stand

School leaders in the Comox Valley turn to distributed leadership and create a Curriculum Support Teacher (CST) role as part of a structure to support teachers and build capacity. **Doug David**, a CST, explains the rationale behind the structure and how a deeper learning culture for the district is emerging.

The introductory slogan on the British Columbia Ministry of Education's *BC Education Plan* website reads "The world has changed ... The way we educate our children should too." The *BC Education Plan* (2011) stems from one guiding principle, that "every learner will realize their full potential and contribute to the well-being of our province." Ultimately, the goal is for children to develop into self-directed lifelong learners. The complex predicament is such that as educators, "we are currently preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist, to use technologies that have not been invented and to solve problems that we don't even know are problems yet" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2008).

Educators, therefore, are faced with the burdensome yet critical task of determining "how to cultivate and sustain learning under conditions of complex, rapid change" (Fullan, 2001). Confronting this need for change, the *BC Education*

Five years ago a distributed leadership structure was initiated in the Comox Valley to support the shift to a deeper learning culture. A Curriculum Support Teacher (CST) was created in response to the need to help elementary school teachers deal with the diversity of learners in their classrooms. The intent was "to support whole-school initiatives and to direct resources to the implementation of programs that would support current best practice"

Plan identifies five essential components for "modernizing education so it can adapt and respond to students' needs." The key elements of the plan are outlined as personalized learning for every student, quality teaching and learning, flexibility and choice, high standards and learning empowered by technology. How should BC's school leaders respond to these lofty ideals? Fullan (2001) recommended:

Leading in a culture of change means creating a culture (not just a structure) of change. It does not mean adopting

innovations one after another; it does mean producing the capacity to seek, critically assess and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices — all the time inside the organization as well as outside of it.

Bearing in mind the need for change and the countless demands of school leadership, how are school leaders in the Comox Valley School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) producing this capacity that Fullan (2001) speaks of? It is through distributed leadership. Spillane and Diamond *et al.* (2007) explained,

“[a] distributed perspective acknowledges that the work of leading and managing schools involves multiple individuals. Moreover, leadership and management work involves more than what individuals in formal leadership positions do.”

Five years ago a distributed leadership structure was initiated in the Comox Valley to support the shift to a deeper learning culture. A position designated Curriculum Support Teacher (CST) was created in response to the need to help elementary school teachers deal with the diversity of learners in their classrooms. Each of the 15 elementary schools in the district had a part-time CST assigned to its building to directly support classroom teachers. The intent was “to support whole-school initiatives and to direct resources to the implementation of programs that would support current best practice” (Declaration of Interest: CST Letter, June 2009). As

a teaching colleague, not a formal leader, the focus of the role was to build teacher capacity in the areas of numeracy and literacy and to cultivate a sense of shared responsibility regarding student achievement. Another essential component of the CST role was to model and support formative assessment practices, to help classroom teachers create class assessment profiles and use their findings to inform instruction. Each CST was provided a budget that allowed for purchasing resources and arranging for teacher release time to discuss assessment findings and plan collaboratively to support student learning.

Fullan (2011) proposed one of the secrets of change is to “invest in capacity building.” What is capacity building? “Capacity building entails leaders investing in the development of individual and collaborative efficacy of a whole group or system to accomplish significant improve-

ments. In particular, capacity consists of new competencies, new resources (time, ideas, expertise) and new motivation” (Fullan, 2011). Comox Valley is investing in capacity building by supporting teachers in their development of knowledge and skills, in their access to and use of resources and in their motivation to continue to grow professionally and seek best practice to support student learning.

CSTs continue to be a part of the instructional support model in the Comox Valley. They meet regularly, with the Director of Elementary Instruction, as a district curriculum and assessment team, to establish priorities and participate in professional development and in-service. The CSTs then return to their schools to support best practice in assessment, curriculum and instruction through direct collaboration with classroom teachers. “Deep change alters the system in funda-

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Examining the specific actions of school leaders and how they relate to students' academic achievement, Marzano, Waters & McNulty identified 21 responsibilities of school leaders, among them being knowledgeable about curriculum, instruction and assessment practices, motivating others to seek innovation, stimulating curiosity for learning and best practice and challenging the status quo.

mental ways, offering a dramatic shift in direction and requiring new ways of thinking and acting” (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). In their extensive meta-analysis, examining the specific actions of school leaders and how they relate to students' academic achievement, Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) identified 21 responsibilities of school leaders. Among the 21 responsibilities, being knowledgeable about curriculum, instruction and assessment practices, motivating others to seek innovation, stimulating curiosity for learning and best practice and challenging the status quo were recognized as priorities for initiating change. Although the CST position is not a formal leadership role, the five responsibilities mentioned above accurately describe the job of curriculum support teachers, leading from where they stand.

While participating in a meeting where CSTs were asked to reflect on ‘what we are doing well’ and also ‘what we need to work on,’ the following themes were revealed. In terms of ‘what is working,’ the CSTs talked about an increased willingness for collaboration and risk-taking among teachers to incorporate new ideas, the prevalence of common language around formative assessment practices, the growth of well-selected resources

and opportunities for in-service, and the quality of resources being made available through the district website and print shop to support assessment practices, numeracy and literacy instruction. With regard to ‘what is next,’ the CSTs identified a need for further progress in the use of assessment findings to inform instruction, a need for developing common practice among teachers regarding the storage and retrieval of assessment findings to be better able to identify trends, and a need for gradual release of responsibility; empowering teachers to pursue these practices independently (School District No. 71 Comox Valley, Curriculum Support Teachers meeting, September 2012).

How have CSTs been able to effectively establish themselves as in-

formal leaders in their schools? Examining leadership from the point of view of the follower, Kouzes and Posner (2007) asked, “What do people look for and admire in a leader? What do people want from someone whose direction they’d be willing to follow?” The authors identified five core leadership practices that aim to answer these pivotal questions: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act and encourage the heart. Kouzes and Posner (2007) declared fundamentally, “Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow. It’s the quality of this relationship that matters most when we’re engaged in getting extraordinary things done.” Kouzes and Posner (1992) proposed “People are more willing to follow those who are passionate about their convictions, positive about the future, and enthusiastic about life and work.”

To model the way, CSTs set the example by following through on promises and commitments, expressing personal values and affirming shared ideals. CSTs inspire a shared vision by envisioning a future that reflects the interests of all those involved and empowering others to work for the common good (Kouzes

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Editor

Richard Williams

& Posner, 2007). Kouzes and Posner (1992) stated “When leaders listen with sensitivity to the aspirations of others, they discover the common values that link people together.” CSTs must challenge the process by venturing out, seeking opportunities for innovation, accepting challenges and taking risks. Further, the role of a CST is to enable others to act and encourage the heart. Enabling others to act is described as working effectively with others through collaboration and building trust; treating others with respect and dignity and allowing them to make choices while supporting their decisions (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Kouzes and Posner (1992) explained “Empowerment creates the self-confidence and competency necessary for others to become independent of their leaders.” Encouraging the heart is identified as showing appreciation for individual excellence and creating a spirit of community by celebrating accomplishments (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

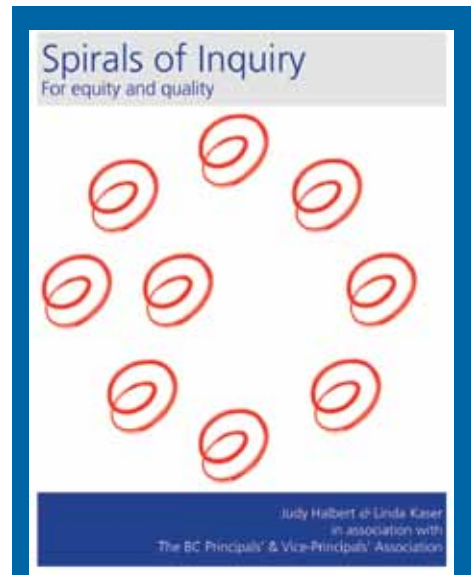
“Catalyzing people’s aspirations doesn’t happen by accident; it requires time, care and strategy” (Senge et. al., 2000). Kaser and Halbert (2009) recommended “school leaders who are leading in a complex period of technological, environmental, social, economic and political change, need to focus their leadership learning and thinking in six critical areas.” The authors described these critical areas as mindsets and put them forward as a framework for leadership thinking: intense moral purpose, trust – relationships first, inquiry – questions before directions, learning for deeper understanding, evidence-seeking in action, and learning-oriented design.

CSTs must go about their responsibilities with a clear sense of moral purpose. What is moral purpose? Fullan (2001) defined it as “acting

with the intention of making a positive difference.” Kaser and Halbert (2009) described moral purpose as sharing deeply held values and developing a strong sense of purpose, having the determination to contribute to a school culture that fosters quality and equity for all learners. Creating an environment of success for all learners requires perseverance and courage. Believing that all children can learn and being committed to supporting the diverse needs of all learners is central to creating a prolific learning culture. Moral purpose can be further described as having a clear sense of direction, building capacity among teachers, and being concerned with sustainability. Kaser and Halbert (2009) determined “Leading the shift away from a sorting system where there is success for some towards a learning system where there is deep learning for all is at the heart of moral purpose.”

Fullan (2011) cautioned negative monitoring and judgmentalism do not build capacity, and discussed the significance of holding “a strong moral position without succumbing to moral superiority.” Criticism does not work as a strategy for change. If teachers feel defamed or undervalued for their efforts they will be less likely to take risks and accept challenges. Fullan (2012) emphasized the importance of seeing potential in others and nurturing a culture of purposeful collaboration. “When peers interact purposefully, their expectations of one another create positive pressure to accomplish goals important to the group” (Fullan, 2012).

To be effective, CSTs must build trust and rapport with their colleagues. Bryk and Schneider (2003) identified that developing relational trust involves four specific consid-



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erations: respect, personal regard, competence in core responsibilities and personal integrity. “When school professionals trust one another and sense support from parents, they feel safe to experiment with new practices” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Respectful interactions are marked by practicing such skills as genuinely listening without interrupting or giving advice, being sensitive to the interests of others and showing consideration for individual needs. Personal regard is described as a willingness to extend oneself, to reach out and go “beyond the formal requirements of a job definition” for the good of the school community (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). The authors connected role competence to the interdependence of school community members. Parents commit their child’s welfare and learning to school staff, trusting in their professional ethics and skills. Teachers depend on the capacity of the school administrator to lead effectively and fairly and to be able to deal with conflict and address problematic issues. “School administrators value good community relations, but achieving this objective requires concerted effort from all school staff” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). What is integrity? “Integrity is reflected when there is a match between words and actions” (Kaser & Halbert, 2009). Developing and maintaining relational trust is influenced by perceptions of personal integrity (Bryk and Schneider, 2003).

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) explained in contrast to traditional approaches to change, where change begins with identifying problems, appreciative inquiry is about deliberately building from the positive core. The authors outlined four key components of the appreciative inquiry process: discovering

the best of what is, dreaming the best of what might be, designing and articulating possibilities and enabling possibilities to be built and sustained. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) stated “This shift from problem analysis to positive core analysis is at the heart of positive change.” “A leader with an inquiry mindset approaches school transformation through curiosity and a desire for greater knowledge” (Kaser & Halbert, 2009). As a CST, an inquiry mindset might initially stem from listening to the stories that make up the culture of the school or it could develop from a standpoint of appreciation; identifying existing strengths, resources and capabilities in a school culture and “developing a shared image of potential” (Kaser & Halbert, 2009). Positive change begins with an inquiry into positive core strengths (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Kaser and Halbert (2009) also recognized “Learning-oriented leaders probe into and confront the issues that are keeping the school from moving forward. They want to know what is getting in the way of maximizing learning for every learner.” To shift to “a passionate commitment to learning” Kaser and Halbert (2009) emphasized school leaders not only “need to be knowledgeable about contemporary approaches to learning” they also “need to know the current research on assessment for and as learning and understand the connections among assessment practices, motivation and engagement.” CSTs must be prepared to act as intellectual companions to teachers, working together to identify common values around student learning (Kaser & Halbert, 2009). Darling-Hammond et al. (2008) concluded:

Schools that redesign their work around student learning spend a great deal of time thinking through what they value, how they will know if they’ve achieved it and what they must do to create connected learning experiences that enable students to achieve these goals.


Teachers respect and appreciate school leaders who are current in their understanding of student learning, motivation and assessment practices and who are committed to supporting professional growth (Kaser & Halbert, 2009).

Concerning evidence of learning, Kaser and Halbert (2009) emphasized “leaders need to know what kind of evidence to look for to indicate that learning is actually taking place.” CSTs must know what evidence to look for and how to help teachers use that evidence to inform instruction. “An evidence informed mindset requires understanding the role of formative assessment practices, engagement and metacognition in learning” (Kaser & Halbert, 2009). Wiliam (2011) identified the essential job of educators is to establish effective learning environments:

The key features of effective learning environments are that they create student engagement that allow teachers, learners and their peers to ensure that the learning is proceeding in the intended direction. The only way we can do this is through assessment.

What is formative assessment? Popham (2008) defined formative assessment as “a series of carefully considered, distinguishable acts on the part of teachers or students or both” and pointed out “the assessments play a role in the process – they are not the process itself.” Formative assessment is not merely a one-time event but an ongoing pro-

cess. Assessment evidence informs instruction. “Creating a school culture where thoughtful evidence sources are used regularly and seamlessly on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis is the goal of the evidence-minded leader” (Kaser & Halbert, 2009). Considering the evidence, teachers adjust their ongoing lessons and activities to ultimately improve student learning. Within the formative assessment process students also examine the evidence and learn how to use it to adjust or change what they are doing to move their learning forward.

Quality teaching and learning is identified as one of the five key elements in the *BC Education Plan* (2011) necessary for moving forward as a “more innovative education system.” The plan states “Teachers will receive support as they continue to adjust their roles to match what students need” (*BC Education Plan*, 2011). Further, the plan endorses mentoring as “key to supporting teachers’ professional learning, both in their formative years and throughout their careers. Teachers will have increased access to learning opportunities by working with teacher mentors and each other” (*BC Education Plan*, 2011). Through distributed leadership and creative strategies, Comox Valley is actively building capacity and a deeper learning culture. 

Doug David (Doug.David@sd71.bc.ca) is a teacher at École Puntledge Park Elementary School. He wrote this paper as part of his Masters program in Educational Leadership at Vancouver Island University (with Dr. John Phipps). The references for this article can be found on the BCPVPA website (<http://www.bcpvpa.bc.ca/node57>)

A familiar ring (from 42 years ago)



And then there is the hardy perennial — individualization. We’ve been talking about this for so long that most of us take it for granted; but let’s face it — we have very little individualized instruction taking place in our schools. And yet research has made new approaches available to us.

During the past ten years substantial quantities of new instructional materials have been developed that have two characteristics not common to materials developed prior to the 1960s. First, thanks to the research in programmed learning, the materials are self-instructional and the student can work with them without the constant supervision of a teacher. Second, these materials are self-correctional and provide the student with continuous feedback.

Dr. John Wormsbecker
in an address to the Vancouver Secondary School Principals’ Conference
published in *Principals’ Journal*, November 1970

In June’s Adminfo

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Turning 50, reflecting on life in a technological world

A principal reflects on how technology is eating away at the limited family time available and offers some tips to correct the imbalance.

By Chuck Bloch

I am a school principal, and I turned 50 recently. I know, it's just a number, but on watershed moments like these I find myself a bit more reflective than normal. Among many things, I have been thinking about how things have changed in my working life. I taught in the classroom for 11 years and have been in administration for 15 years now. I can honestly say that it has been a great career so far.

There have been so many great people to work with and for, so many great kids and families, so many successes ... and an ever-increasing supply of technology to help me do my job. Technology has allowed me to enjoy instant access to support, instant and improved communication systems, increased access to information and professional development, motivating teaching strategies, etc, etc.

However, as I have paused to reflect, I am becoming aware of the way technology has allowed my job to encroach on every moment of my life. Think about it. You're just like me; you work a full, long day. You do not take a regular coffee break, and you spend your lunch time on the move interacting with kids, parents, volunteers and staff members. You work hard to make your school the best, warmest, highest-achieving school in the district. You coach, lead a club, have district responsibilities, etc. You go home in the evening feeling a little guilty because you are conscious of the

many things you could still be doing at school. And so you catch yourself sending a quick email at the dinner table, making one more call in the middle of your son's hockey game, updating your web page at all hours, Tweeting as you walk to your car, or catching up on Facebook during the church service!

There was a time not terribly long ago when technology was a telephone and a hand-cranked copier (raise your hand if you remember the blue ink of the Gestetner). Principals worked hard all week, and when they went home in the evening or on the weekend, they were away from work. They were able to relax, or pursue family activities and hobbies. Today, this no longer seems to be the case. In this culture of connectivity, you may leave your office, but you are never away from work. I am guessing that, as you read this, you have a smartphone in your pocket, a tablet at your side, and a laptop or desktop computer at the ready. You are always tempted

In this culture of connectivity, you may leave your office, but you are never away from work.

to check your email, do a little more research, contact one more person. That work ethic is admirable, to be sure. And yet, I wonder: Is it healthy? If I never disconnect from the heavy responsibilities of my job, I will never recharge my batteries, and I will soon become less reliable.

Having recognized that technology threatens to control my life, and that this has the potential to negatively impact my life and my effectiveness as a Principal, I have instituted some self-regulating limitations. I suggest them here to colleagues who may be interested:


1. Family first. My family needs to know that I will be there for them when they need me. Yes, I will be gone for most of the day every day, and some evenings and the odd Saturday may be spent at school, but my family knows that they can call on me at any time if they need me (I have left this as a standing request with my secretary). They also know that I have set aside priority time for them throughout the week. This includes being at every game or performance, and home for dinner. I figure that when I retire, not too many people will remember that extra hour at the office, but my family will remember the time I chose to spend with them.

2. Turn it off! I realize that my mind never stops being at work. Have you ever woken up at 3 am because you were planning a meeting or reviewing an issue in your head? But I can reduce that load a bit by turning off my devices at a prescribed time. For me, I choose to stop checking emails at 8 pm. If

someone needs me that badly in the evening, they know my phone number and can reach me. Otherwise, it can wait until morning. And I can sleep. I also choose not to check my emails on Sundays. I still believe in having a “day of rest.”

3. Enjoy your vacation. We get holidays for a reason. I need to rest, relax, recharge, and catch-up on my hobbies and responsibilities. My family needs to know that our home life matters. And I try leaving my devices turned off for at least a while during the holidays. It is liberating!

4. A reflective moment. I don't know what your personal beliefs are, but for me it is essential to keep some quiet time set apart each day. This includes reflection, contemplation, prayer ... and it may be the only time in my day that is actually peaceful. It takes a conscious effort to take this quiet time, and the temptation to check my messages is constant. But the renewal I get from it is irreplaceable.

This is not an exhaustive list, nor is it a prescription for you. It's just a list of a few things I am doing most days to keep my life in balance. You may want to try at least one of these ideas and see if it makes any difference in your life. I am willing to bet that it will actually make you better at your job, as you make sure to keep your batteries well-charged. 


Chuck Bloch is Principal of Sardis Elementary in Chilliwack. He can be reached — Monday to Saturday until 8 pm — at chuck_bloch@sd33.bc.ca

Green, continues from page 2

are being met. You are able to be an intricate part of Friday Forum, the President's meeting and the professional development sessions.

What you realize from this experience is that the BCPVPA is an amazing organization and there are more things happening than you ever realized. It is a fantastic opportunity to become provincially involved with both the Association and the members. I am sure that if you asked any Board member they would tell you that it has been one of the most rewarding experiences they have ever had.

So the next time someone asks I hope you will think ... yes it is definitely on my “bucket list!”

And remember, this year BCPVPA members will elect a President-elect and four members to the Board. A special issue of *eNews* will be published on May 17 and voting for President-elect takes place May 28 to 30 and voting for Directors takes place June 4 to 6. 

BCPVPA election dates

A link to a secure, individual ballot will be emailed on the day prior to the first day of voting.

**President-elect
Vote May 28 to 30**

**Directors
Vote June 4 to 6**

Book Review

Mary Nall, a retired principal, reviews Paul Shaw's *Taking Charge* and finds many attributes that make the book both practical and thought-provoking.

Shaw, Paul L. (2011)

Taking Charge:

Leading with passion and purpose in the principalship

New York. Teachers College Press

228 pp

This is a powerful book and one that I wish I had had access to in my years as a principal (and in the years leading up to this position).

Drawing on the author's experience, which includes being a principal of four schools, a projects co-ordinator, an international consultant in educational leadership and a university professor, Paul Shaw has produced an insightful, passionate, yet easy-to-read guide to strategic actions for principals. The guide is based on four pillars of improvement and the two important foundations on which they rest. The foundations are having a morally compelling purpose and the enactment of a participatory workplace culture. The pillars are:

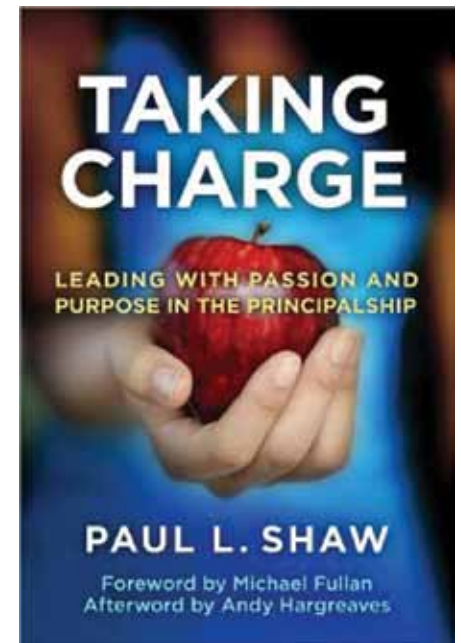
- Knowing your students well;
- Strong inclusive professional relationships;
- Continuous development of intellectual capital; and,
- Powerful and cohesive pedagogical responsiveness in teaching across all classrooms.

Shaw acknowledges the obstacles that are ever-present in a principal's life – contracts, policies, timetables,

roles and responsibilities, traditions, workplace culture, public acceptance, resources etc. He describes practical ways of responding to current points of tension in schools, while being grounded in practice and supported by research. He argues for strong, purposeful and participatory leadership that transcends restraints and seizes opportunities to improve life opportunities for students.

While underlining the role of the principal as a curriculum leader Shaw allows that the principal may not be “the resident expert” on all aspects of curriculum but can “take charge” by being a “curious collaborator and participant” in a rigorous and robust dialogue with teacher colleagues on how pupils learn and are learning. With B.C. facing another review of Provincial curriculum the strategies that Shaw provides in Chapter 2 are timely.

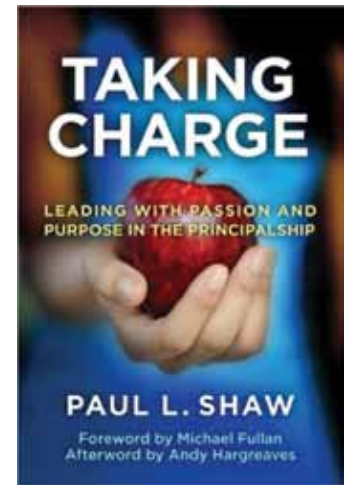
There are many attributes that make *Taking Charge* a practical and useful book for new and experienced principals alike. The case studies of schools provide elaborate accounts and practical ideas of what can be done, and what has been achieved in schools in building a morally compelling purpose and a participa-



tory workplace culture. The lay-out of the text with reflective questions and suggestions for further reading after each chapter make this a valuable book for discussion and study groups.

With a foreword by Michael Fullan who encourages the reader “to delve into this book and be rewarded. It will help you to think more deeply and act more confidently as a principal,” and an afterword by Andy Hargreaves who testifies that Paul Shaw “epitomizes the four pillars of leadership consistently in his own practice” and “has an unswerving moral commitment to all students and to the idea and ideal of teaching as a profession requiring long training and hard reflection ...” Shaw's work is indeed strongly endorsed. bcp vpa

Book Excerpt



In Chapter 5, *Capacity Building: The Promise of Professional Learning Communities*, Paul Shaw shares his work with teachers and students to address issues that arise when a school has a high incidence of students who are new to the English language, live in poverty and are single parented.

This chapter seeks to make more explicit the complexity of how teachers work together in order to learn together — building capacity for all to incessantly improve. In Chapter 5 you will learn about:

- The experiences of teachers as they engage in sustained ongoing dialogue about the documented learning experiences of their students
- Fundamental principles that underpin the work of a robust learning community
- Specific strategies to enable teachers to inquire and learn together
- Six core capacities that need to be developed in the successful school
- Detailed plans of action and roles that leaders can deploy in building school-wide capacity

When I then was appointed principal at Southern Cross Public School, I was determined to create a structure embedded in the day to day

work of the school that would permit the development of an informed continuous discourse among teachers about student learning. My purpose in attempting to do this was to build into teachers and my own day to day work a means of constantly gathering information about student learning so we could improve our appreciation of student experience and our classroom teaching. It was to be about collective knowledge building. I envisioned deep, ongoing conversations involving all my new colleagues about teaching and learning, leading to a coherent, consistent and rich experience for the youngsters at Southern Cross, a low socioeconomic, high immigrant, multi-cultural, multi-lingual community.

Case Study

Southern Cross Public School

The learning community my teacher colleagues and I created at Southern Cross Public School illustrates many of the key principles described at the end of this chapter. We jointly gathered information and developed through consensus a morally compelling purpose around

which all could commit. Collectively, we designed an infrastructure for inquiry and knowledge building. We learned to participate vigorously through dialogue, inquiry and shared classroom practice as we sought to build personal, collective, and organizational capacity in order to improve the life chances of our pupils. At the time, we called the more formal process and structure *Professional Growth*, but more recently I have come to call it *Continuous After Learning Review (CALR)*. Southern Cross was a needy school of approximately 530 pupils in Grades K-6. Substantial numbers of new non-English speaking immigrant students, a sizable portion of the population living below the poverty level, high crime rate in the neighborhood, and a significant portion of families receiving government assistance and parented by a single parent meant that many youngsters came to school ill-prepared to learn.

In the months prior to my actual appointment, I visited classrooms, met several times with the entire teaching staff and facilitated a process of identifying student needs.

From this data rich process I was able to forge a consensus with my colleagues around “literacy learning for all” as the core purpose of our future work together. This gave me the summer to plan how to move strategically to enact this compelling purpose.

Strategic Actions Taken During the First 15 Months


On returning from summer vacation, I provided an individualized reading for teachers with a personal note asking them to respond and to share the article with colleagues. I saw this as the first step towards creating a “reading” culture within the school. Professional learning cultures are also reading cultures!

Having established the professional growth design team of six teachers plus myself the previous June, we initiated the first *Continuous After Learning Review* session during the first week of school. Each session involved every teacher for a two-hour dialogue about student writing. As I describe in detail later in this chapter, during this first session each teacher was asked to read a short professional article about student writing development and bring a sample of student writing to speak about with colleagues. As anticipated more questions were raised than answered. However the first blush of an ongoing dialogue and inquiry was created. The example of Andreas used to open this chapter provides the reader with a feeling for how these sessions unfolded as time progressed.

During this first year together teaching colleagues and I were able to utilize 30 to 40 hours of instructional time for each teacher, i.e. approximately one third of the 100 hours we planned to provide for these professional growth provoking sessions. The remaining time came from meeting times, professional activity days and

from teacher’s personal time.

During the first 15 months many strategic directions were moved to action. These directions were driven by the overarching purpose of improving literacy for all and were inter-related. Together they changed our structure, culture, and

use of time in ways that increased our organization’s capacity to respond collectively, effectively, and in an informed way to the varied needs of our diverse population. 

For more about Paul Shaw’s work visit his website: www.paulshaw.ca

(Among) the actions (many more are included in the book) my staff and I took at Southern Cross were strategic in that they actively furthered the agreed upon purposes of the school, complemented one another by adding value that was greater than the single action and transformed the learning culture of the school. All classroom teaching moved towards enabling pupils to explore, inquire, demonstrate and apply their knowledge about topics of substance and depth.

- All pupils engaged in personal reading and writing on a daily basis. They maintained personal reading logs and writing folders. In-classroom libraries were established.
- Team teaching was actively encouraged and supported. The timetable was structured to enable cross-grade teams of teachers to meet and plan together.
- Teachers actively engaged with and were responsive to the linguistic, cultural and socially diverse needs of the pupils. In fact diversity became an extraordinary resource.
- There was an active process to engage and inform parents of program developments as they emerged. Often, we repeated for parents (with some modification because of time) sessions and our findings emerging out of the continuous after learning review.
- Decision-making was shared, and for significant tasks (e.g. developing school purposes, designing the professional growth process (CALR), allocating budget and other resources) all stakeholders were involved in finding consensus.
- Teachers were supported to take on leadership roles.
- University of Toronto and York University placed pre-service teacher candidates in the classrooms for extended periods. These teachers were known as “teaching partners,” who helped release the case study teachers to participate in professional growth and class reviews.
- Performing artists (art, music, drama, puppetry, theatre, poetry, story telling) including a resident artist performed regularly in the school. These experiences were commonly linked to classroom programs. The arts became a major medium for instruction throughout the school, across subjects, ages and classrooms.
- I organized 50% of my time to be engaged in activities such as observing, facilitating, gathering evidence, researching and planning towards the goal of providing pedagogical leadership.

Covering the bases

Project-based learning in Langley engages students, and peer mentors, to approach a single subject from a variety of perspectives. And parents are involved and committed, too!

by Leslie Dyson



The culmination of what grade 8 students in English, social studies, math and science had learned was on display at a Roman Games tournament that pitted the students' gladiator models against frozen and then thawed raspberries hurled by student-built catapults.

A cohort of 52 students is engaged in project-based learning for all four subject areas simultaneously, said George Kozlovic, Principal of Walnut Grove Secondary in Langley. The program is called Gator POD, in recognition of the school's teams, the Gators. "They work on the same project, but from different perspectives."

This particular unit used the Roman Empire to have students research and write legends and de-

sign and create models of fictional characters from that period for their English class taught by Kim Robinson and social studies teacher Logan Kitteringham. Math teacher Eric Balzarini set the specifications for their models while helping them understand ratios and how to draft objects to scale. None of the characters survived the raspberry assault. That meant students could apply their knowledge of human body systems and learn forensic techniques to determine the cause of death in Fraser Blackwell's science class.

The room divider in the double classroom is open which allows teachers to work together. The school's double-block system and careful scheduling provides the flexibility that's needed for team-teaching and substantial blocks of time for exploring subjects in greater depth and going on field trips, Kozlovic said.

The previous unit, using *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman as a base, was chosen because of its historical subject matter. A field trip to the Fort Langley cemetery provided an opportunity to learn about historical figures and significant events in the community. Students also recorded the dates of births and deaths to do statistical analyses and apply inquiry-based strategies to look for trends and explanations.

"Traditionally, you go to a science class to do science and a math class to do math," said Kozlovic. "Rather than bits that don't connect, the focus is on working together. It's collaboration all day, every day."

"Gator POD is an attempt to combine 21st Century learning with an interdisciplinary approach," he added. In addition to the emphasis on collaboration, the program also emphasizes critical thinking, oral and written communication, infor-



mation analysis and effective use of technology. “It’s part of the *BC Education Plan* but done in a unique and fun way.”

The POD program also receives support from four or five senior students in each of the four classes who act as academic and social mentors. Several of these students, like Nathan, led the lessons in how to build the catapults using Popsicle sticks, elastic bands, paper clips and plastic spoons.

“You need patience and a lot of prep,” he said. “They thought it would be a lot easier to do. Even I thought that.” Not surprisingly, the boys were eager to get to work, “but the girls liked it too,” he said.

Nathan, in grade 12, was keen to sign up as a mentor. He took a leadership program in grade 11 and could see the value of the POD program. “I knew the grade 8s would love it. It’s fun and you’re learning too.”

Sureet, in grade 8, said the student leaders were helpful and he liked the fact that they’re just a few years older. But the class work is more demanding, he added. In an exercise like the Roman Games, “you could be tested for every subject in one day.”

On the day of the tournament, students were assessed on their oral

us, Ortho Dontist, Flabianis, Little Caesar and Joe Smith.

Melissa and Andrea, who created and constructed Marcella Antonius, told students about her life as a “housewife” who longed to be a war hero. “I’m pretty sure there would have been women gladiators,” Andrea said.

Melissa said she likes this approach to learning. “It’s more fun and more creative, and quite hard.”

David said, “We’re learning everything at once [and] there are fewer assignments but they’re worth way more.”

Carter said he appreciates the teaching videos posted by math teacher Eric Balzarini. “He doesn’t talk a lot in class so that we can discuss things. But he has really good explanations in the videos. You get more work done and learn better this way.”

David said he likes the many ways that technology is integrated. Students use laptops and can use their smartphones if they have them. The teachers use SMART Boards and Prezi for presentations. There is a link on the school website to Edmodo where everyone stays up-to-date on assignments. Some students are more comfortable with computer conversations than class discussions. So Kitteringham uses Tumblr as a

presentation skills as they introduced their characters who were about to enter the arena, among them, Octavius Primus, Lucias Hilari-

blog to post documents and graphics and then has students respond to the various items.

Sureet said access to the school’s Wifi is not always dependable, a problem in many schools in the province.

Robinson was teaching a session on powerful writing that was dependent on materials she had loaded onto her computer. “But the wireless went down. There was no way to access the information, so I said, ‘OK, we’re going in another direction.’ The kids have to be flexible too.”

Program participants have learned that the best reception is in the sewing room so that’s where you’ll find some of them when they have work to do. It’s an issue that the school is hoping will be resolved over the summer.

The idea of the POD sprung from the school’s book club. Several staff members read Tony Wagner’s *The Global Achievement Gap*.

Robinson and Kozlovic discussed the notion of team-teaching the core subjects. The goal was to offer it to as large a group as possible. “Logistically, kids take all four subjects,” Robinson said. However, there were obstacles to overcome.

“The challenge is finding the time for collaboration. We do it on our own time,” she said. “We’re texting each other at all times of the day and evening. But it’s our first year, so it’s a bit more intense.”

The success of the program hinges on the compatibility of the teachers. “We complement each other very well,” she said. “And you have to have an administration that’s supportive.” She said Kozlovic is the kind of principal who “gets excited when he sees raspberries flying around” because he understands the learning that’s going on as well.



Using this teaching method with grade 8s quickly acclimatizes them to the school culture. “They get to see what it means to be a Gator in terms of spirit,” she said. Students in the program belong to four houses and they earn points for their house. Robinson said most of the students left shortly after the bell rang on the day of the Roman Games. However, two stayed behind to clean up the crushed berries

and put the rooms back in order. They received a point for their respective houses.

Opening the program to grade 8s also means the staff has little knowledge of the students beforehand. Initially, it was mostly boys who signed up, so a few girls were placed in the program to provide better balance. Even so, it is clear that this is a high-energy group. The teachers have also seen a jump in the number of emails from home. Robinson said, “That’s because the parents are involved and committed.”

Robinson has been teaching for 21 years but this approach is “much more powerful.” Using the students’ presentations of their legends as an example, she said, if she had issued a speech-writing assignment, as she might have done in the past, “the students would have been bored after the second speech. This is just a better way.

“I remember when criterion-referenced assessment came in. It was foreign to every teacher, but after four or five years, it was expected.”


Robinson said she believes multi-

discipline teaching could become standard practice.

Next year will bring new challenges. “We will have to refuse some kids,” she predicted. “At the grade 7 parent night, I had a lineup of parents wanting to sign up their child.”

Students will have to fill out application forms and the teachers will be conducting interviews, looking for students with a range of interests, abilities and personalities and who are interested in learning, take initiative with their education and who are strong collaborators.

The final unit of the year will have the four teachers tie together socially conscious poetry, the study of world religions and misunderstandings, a unit on how statistics can be manipulated and a comparison of science and religious theories for explaining the world around us. The culmination activity has yet to be decided.

Although this is the first year the school is offering PODs, Robinson said “most things we would do again, but we’d fine tune them. That’s the nicest thing about teaching, doing it again and refining it.” 

Leslie Dyson is a regular contributor to Adminfo. She can be reached at Leslie@F2Fcommunications.ca

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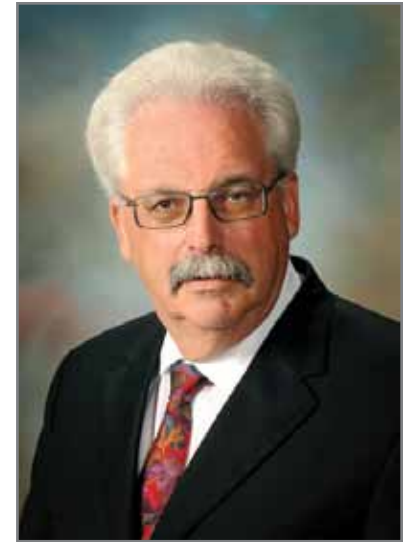


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*Watch for information and registration details
through all the BCPVPA communication channels*

On being responsive: Asking questions, meeting needs

The BCPVPA's Executive Director, **Kit Krieger**, shares details about an upcoming survey, a successful book launch, some staffing news and an upcoming Association presentation to the Teacher Regulation Branch.



The BCPVPA is an organization devoted to serving the professional and economic interests of its members. But, what precisely, are these interests? First and foremost, the policies and programs of the Association are in the capable hands of 12 principals and vice-principals who work in schools in the Metro Vancouver area, Vancouver Island, the Kootenays, the North and the Interior. They are school leaders in elementary, middle and secondary schools and as a group they are representative of the membership. The views of Board members are not only informed by their own experiences, but by their outreach to Chapters, the advice of the Association's staff, and the input of members at Chapter Council.

Your Association plans to supplement to this deep knowledge base by undertaking a survey, which will help us better meet your needs. To this end we have commissioned Directions Education Policy Research Group to design a member survey. The survey, which will be conducted in May, is designed to guide the Board and staff in the development of the BCPVPA's strategic plan and the Association's programs for

members.

The survey is an adaptation of a survey designed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It will provide a demographic profile of the membership (age, experience, education) and elicit views on members' view of their roles and responsibilities. You will be asked to indicate the factors that support and impede your work as a school-based administrator and to assign value to the work you do. It will also ask about your degree of satisfaction with various BCPVPA services and programs.

Some sections of the survey will solicit responses about the demands of your job and will assist the Association in developing effective communications to the Ministry and the public related to the importance and breadth of the role of school administrators.

We plan to administer the online survey in May and have the analysis from Directions in our hands in September. The value of the survey will depend upon member engagement with the survey and I hope

To view
Directions Education Policy Research Group's
current projects visit
<http://directions-eprg.ca/current-projects>

that you will take the 30 minutes or so that is required to complete the survey. Information about this initiative will be shared regularly with members in *eNews*.

Spirals of Inquiry: In February, the BCPVPA launched its first publishing venture with the release of *Spirals of Inquiry* by Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser. The book profiles inspiring examples of inquiry-based learning in BC schools and abroad. Halbert and Kaser's work acknowledges the complexity of teaching, the value of evidence informed teaching practices, the importance of questions (inquiry) over answers or solutions in student learning, and the value of teachers' networking with like-minded and purposeful educators. *Spirals of Inquiry* makes a compelling case of incorporating Aboriginal ways of knowing into programs for all students.

The first two printings of *Spirals of Inquiry* sold out in days and the third run will certainly be exhausted in the near future. Copies are \$20 each and can be ordered from the BCPVPA website.


Staffing at the Association: BCPVPA members are well-served by a talented and dedicated staff of

11 individuals. Over the past few months, we have welcomed three new members to the staff. **Linsea O'Shea** is the new Executive Assistant to the President and Executive Director and comes to the Association from the Ministry of Education's Teacher Regulation Branch. Linsea's many duties include arranging Shelley's chapter visits. **Diane Kokotilo** is the new receptionist and will be the friendly voice members and the public hear when they call the Association. Diane describes herself as the *Director of First Impressions*, and comes to us from a major law firm in Vancouver. **Warren Hicks**, a one-time member of the Association and former school and senior staff member from West Vancouver, offered to work in the contract and legal department until the Association hires a replacement for the recently retired Sharon Cutcliffe. Warren, a long-time associate, is ensuring that there is no diminution of services to members as we work to find the right person to replace the redoubtable Sharon.

Teacher Education: The Ministry of Education's Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB), the successor of the BC College of Teachers, is charged with the approval of the province's nine teacher education programs. In January, the TRB Council received presentations from four partner groups, the BCTF, BCSTA (Trustees), BCSSA (Superintendents) and ABCDE (faculty Deans). The presentations, followed by a facilitated discussion, focused on the strengths and weaknesses of current teacher education programs and the relationship between the programs and the regulatory function of government. The Council hosts a second set of presentations with discussion at its April meeting and the BCPV-

PA will be among the presenters.

In the ongoing discussion about what contributes to successful schools and student achievement, little attention is paid to the quality of professional education programs. Finland, always held up as the ex-

emplar of school success, considers teacher preparation a cornerstone of its 40-year school improvement initiative. In my next *Adminfo* article, I will share some views on teacher education, including preparation for school administrators. 

BCPVPA *election dates*

A link to a secure, individual ballot will be emailed on the day prior to the first day of voting.

President-elect • Vote May 28 to 30
Directors • Vote June 4 to 6



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Cover Story



This month's cover art is by Tessa Martin, a grade 12 student at Howe Sound Secondary. Tessa writes that she, "created this piece as a warm-up exercise before embarking on a larger piece. This piece was inspired by the work of author/illustrator Barbara Reid." Tessa also says, "This was my 1st attempt at working with Plasticine, as I usually work with watercolours or pencils." We thank Tessa, art teacher Nathalie Boisvert, and Principal Christine Perkins, for submitting this work.

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