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The regulatory bodies of BC’s teaching profession work within a legislative mandate to ensure that educators in the K-12 school systems in BC meet and maintain the standards of competence and conduct required to provide quality education to students in a safe and nurturing environment and foster public trust and confidence in the teaching profession.

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Teacher Melissa McCormack (centre) with education assistants
Cherryl MacLeod (left) and Stephanie Harmston (right), Robson Community School
INDIGENIZATION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: SIX EDUCATORS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS

In the summer of 2018, the Learn editorial committee proposed an article on the indigenization of the BC school system. This is an extensive, ambitious, far-reaching and evolving initiative. To better understand its impact – now and in the future – on students, teachers and communities, we asked six educators from across the province to share their thoughts on what “indigenization of the school system” means to them and where they see hopeful shifts in practice that point to a new way forward.
Below, we share with you the wide-ranging perspectives of these educators in their own voices. These individuals thoughtfully ask us to consider questions large and small and offer both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on what it means to walk this path together into a more responsive, inclusive future. Many thanks to the following individuals whose words we have included below:

- Denise Augustine, Director of Aboriginal Education and Learner Engagement, School District No. 79 (Cowichan Valley)
- Jo-Anne Chrona, Curriculum Coordinator, First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC)
- Kevin Kaardal, Superintendent of Schools, School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan)
- Amanda Lewis, Language and Culture Teacher at Witset Elementary Secondary School
- Raquel Steen, Principal of Mount Boucherie Secondary School
- Carey Stewart, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, School District No. 92 (Nisga’a)

**Indigenization of the school system?**

“I wonder about this idea of ‘indigenizing the school system.’ We can work for change, but structurally, we are working within a non-Indigenous system inherited from an old post-industrial British colonial model. Having said that, I am pleased to see how it is changing, how Indigenous content is being integrated across the curriculum from K to 12 so that all learners have a deeper understanding of Indigenous peoples, cultures and histories and recognize Indigenous peoples within historical and contemporary foundations.

Let’s critique and challenge this system to make it more inclusive and more equitable so that it supports all learners and responds to the students it serves. That means looking for changes in what is taught, how it’s taught and whose voice is valued.

And let’s ask questions. How do we make systemic change? The education systems we went through as educators did not have us learn what we need to do the work now. What is the professional learning that educators need to get to that place? What is the role of family and community? Do we understand how the historical application of the education system has created barriers between families and the public system?”

Jo-Anne Chrona, Curriculum Coordinator, FNESC

**More than curriculum**

“Reconciliation is a big word and I’m not sure we have a shared understanding of what it means. Indigenization of the school system? That’s another complex topic. It is more than just modifying the curriculum. As organizations, we need to create space in our policies, budgets and board meetings for the worldview, pedagogy and knowledge of our Indigenous people to be present. Including knowledge in our classrooms is just a tiny part of the process of reconciliation.”

Denise Augustine, Director of Aboriginal Education and Learner Engagement, School District No. 79 (Cowichan Valley)
Oil and water
“I paused at the phrase ‘indigenization of the school system’—it seems a bit like trying to mix oil and water. I work in a First Nations-based community school made up mainly of Indigenous students. You would think an indigenized school system would be a given within this context. But it’s not. We are still using curriculum and programs to teach math and reading and other topics that were not created with an Indigenous mindset as a framework or with a perspective on an Indigenous way of teaching.”
Amanda Lewis, Language and Culture Teacher at Witset Elementary Secondary School

The only place on earth
“This is the only place on earth where these languages come from, where this knowledge grows from, where these cultures have developed in an authentic way. This is the place we are right now. Students and educators need to come to understand the knowledge and cultural representations of this place.”
Jo-Anne Chrona, Curriculum Coordinator, FNESC

It’s time for action
“Many of the calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report are directly linked to education. Education is a powerful tool for promoting change and transforming our future. Recently, I visited some classes where teachers and students were reading and writing poetry about residential schools. When the teachers asked the students what they knew about this topic, every single student had something meaningful to say. The truth is known: now it is time for action.”
Raquel Steen, Principal of Mount Boucherie Secondary School

Walking the path together
“Our district and the Nisga’a government work together. We talk with our Council of Elders and seek ways to build engagement with the education managers in the villages. The schools support the community, the community supports the schools. It is all about transparency, about communication, about inviting people in and going out to share. We are looking at this through one lens and we are walking the path together.”
Carey Stewart, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, School District No. 92 (Nisga’a)

Exploring the needs of the community
“Our Local Education Agreement (developed in consultation with the Westbank First Nation) and Enhancement Agreement (developed with the Aboriginal Education Council and the Indigenous community) grew out of conversations and meetings to find out the priorities of the community and include Indigenous cultural presence within the everyday life of the schools that is respectful of the unceded traditional territories on which we operate. Developing relationships with local First Nations enables us to integrate Indigenous-centred courses and knowledge throughout the system. It is our goal to ensure that our local Aboriginal community sees itself reflected in the schools and as a partner in the schools.”
Kevin Kaardal, Superintendent of Schools, School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan)
A March to School, a symbol of trust

“At the beginning of each school year, each community and village in the Nisga’a Nation has a March to School. All the children from the school meet at a designated area to have breakfast together and be welcomed. The children, their families and Elders then march to school behind the village chiefs and matriarchs.

We then have a ceremony where the chiefs hold the talking stick and the principals and staff place their hands on the stick. It’s a symbol of the Nation trusting the school with their children’s care and safety throughout the school year; they are granted authority to move the students forward with their educational journey.

The ceremony is followed by introductions to new staff, an introduction to this year’s student board representation from the four communities, words of encouragement, and an overview of goals and objectives for the year. This traditional ceremony was passed down from generation to generation by the Nisga’a Nation Elders and first began with the Nisga’a Tribal Council during the beginning of the Nisga’a Land Question.”

Carey Stewart, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, School District No. 92 (Nisga’a)

Learning takes patience and time

“One of the First Peoples Principles of Learning is that learning takes patience and time. As educators, we are often gung-ho. We learn about the true history of our country and community and we want to get going and right the wrongs that have been done. It can be hard to have patience. But we need to do our homework and start by learning about the territory we are on and its long-term inhabitants. And then reach out to others who are able to share their knowledge.”

Denise Augustine, Director of Aboriginal Education and Learner Engagement, School District No. 79 (Cowichan Valley)

Authentic learning

“We bring our class out into the community so that our Elders, Knowledge Keepers and language holders can share their knowledge in a comfortable environment. If we go berry picking together, the words that the language holder hasn’t used in a long time emerge and are there to be shared.”

Amanda Lewis, Language and Culture Teacher at Witset Elementary Secondary School
"Culture is our voice"

“Each year, the students in our Academy of Indigenous Studies create shirt designs for their leadership class. Together, they choose a phrase for the back of their shirts. Last year, the chosen phrase was ‘culture is our voice.’ The importance of culture is evident in this building. This has been made possible by working in partnership with Westbank First Nation and our district Aboriginal Education team. We have also focussed on weaving the First Peoples Principles of Learning throughout all classes, encouraging teachers and students to incorporate learning that happens on the land, and connecting with local Elders who lead us in ceremony and share traditional knowledge, stories and songs. Students can drum whenever they wish. Smudging is common and students are able to smudge when they need strength and healing.

The culture of our school did not happen by accident – it is the result of the hard work and commitment of many staff and community members as well as our students. Changing culture in your school means having the courage to make decisions that support this change, and it is both simple and complex. For example, when we were offering English First Peoples’ courses for the first time, we had only a handful of students enrolled. When making decisions about the timetable some might say ‘sorry, this just isn’t feasible within budget constraints.’ But we chose to offer the courses – and the number of students enrolled in them has more than doubled in two years.

As leaders, we need to take positive risks that support our vision and goals. I believe that my job as a leader is to water the seeds planted by those who believe in this work by putting support, money and resources where they need to go so that we can continue on this journey.”

Raquel Steen, Principal of Mount Boucherie Secondary School

Reflecting on what’s worked

“In 2008/09, our district’s six-year completion rate for Aboriginal students was 55%. In 2017/18, we reached 80%. That’s a significant change. And while there is still much work to do, that improvement speaks to the commitment of the community, staff, families and students. My advice for others?

1. It’s all about relationships and listening to the needs of your local Indigenous communities. Our vision for education was co-created through an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement developed through a joint effort of the leadership of the chief and council and the Aboriginal Education Council. We see this very much as a living document that will and should continue to evolve.

2. Culture and tradition must be reflected in the daily life of our school community. Our schools need to be welcoming places for parents, families and Elders. Our gathering rooms allow for these connections.”
3. Our Aboriginal Student Advocates support students through home-school-community connections. That’s contributed to student engagement and success.

4. Data is important. We track students through our Aboriginal Information Management System, which references 18 of the goals of our Enhancement Agreement to record the service we provide Aboriginal students and make sure we are meeting their holistic needs.

5. Public celebrations. Last year, over 200 Aboriginal students graduated and we held a celebration in the community with traditional practices. This was co-delivered by the Indigenous community and staff and was an outstanding public celebration of success.

6. Connections with local communities are powerful. This year, our teacher leaders and the Westbank First Nation put on a three-day Indigenous education summit that brought together 250 of our teachers and senior leaders to participate and learn more about traditional culture. Knowledge Keepers generously shared their traditions and approach to education and educators were invited to participate in traditional practices, including a water ceremony.”

Kevin Kaardal, Superintendent of Schools, School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan)

Resilience and strength

“The world needs an Indigenous worldview now more than ever. We need the stories of resilience and strength and the gifts of the Indigenous people who have lived on this land for thousands of years. Every single person – Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal – can trace their family history back to a village experience. For Aboriginal people, that village experience is not as far back in history as it might be for others. And that village experience offers important gifts about how we connect and care for each other — gifts that our planet needs now more than ever.”

Denise Augustine, Director of Aboriginal Education and Learner Engagement, School District No. 79 (Cowichan Valley)

An ideal school system

“My ideal school system?

• There would be no need for alternate schools because every school would have a diversity of environments to honour the strengths of its students.

• Learning would happen as much outside the walls as inside. It would acknowledge that learning is powerful when it happens in community with students connecting with people and the land around them.

• Community flows through the building.

• Students would see school as not just a series of hoops to jump through to get somewhere else they would rather be. They would be inspired to continue learning throughout their lives.

I see this emerging in small pockets. Every system is designed to perpetuate itself, and it’s certainly challenging to shift a large complex education system. But we are seeing pockets of activity and I hope that momentum will continue until a better and more equitable system is normalized.

There are amazing initiatives underway with wonderful results for learners. We as educators are learners too, and I believe we are most effective as educators when we see ourselves as learners first. That’s when we are more open to possibilities to make shifts, to make the system work better for our kids and to have more joy in the work we do.”

Jo-Anne Chrona, Curriculum Coordinator, FNESC
LIVING TOGETHER RESPECTFULLY: THE RESPECTFUL FUTURES PROGRAM

By Laura Bickerton with E.J. Samson
Supported by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Whatever happened to the amazing promise of the Internet age? While the Internet and social media have provided some positive contribution to schools and communities when used responsibly, the promise of improved communication and global community has been overwhelmed by a barrage of anger, retribution and tribalism. Is civility a thing of the past? This often feels to be the case when we land on social media, popular TV or radio. Our interactions with others appear to be deteriorating and our ability to be happy in our relationships seems strained to the breaking point. What are schools to do? How are teachers to overcome the onslaught?

Respectful Futures: Learning to be together in harmony

Much of our success and happiness is determined by how we interact with others, in particular our friends and colleagues, our family, and our teachers or mentors. When these relationships are healthy, we sense that we are accepted and feel secure and happy. When our relationships are unhealthy, we may feel unfairly judged, insecure, anxious or sad. These feelings may drive us to gain acceptance in inappropriate ways, leading to anger and resentment rather than learning to enjoy life.

What may appear to be a rather disparate group of players came together a few years ago to flesh out a vision: to transform a very successful program used in prisons and in the community with convicted domestic abusers into a program for youth that would develop both understanding and skill in building healthy, respectful relationships. The core team included Stroh Health Care Corp., the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and the Ministry of Education. Later, the Surrey School District came on board as a fourth core team member. An advisory committee composed of representatives from the BC Teachers’ Federation, BC Principals’ and Vice Principals’ Association, BC School Superintendents Association, Federation of Independent School Associations, First Nations Education Steering Committee, BC Corrections, Youth Justice, Abbotsford Community Services, Ending Violence Association of BC, and RCMP Community Safety and Crime Prevention was struck to provide the core team with advice and direction.

A development team of Magi Cooper, Larry Fletcher and Laura Bickerton, with input from the advisory committee, produced six modules that were piloted in BC schools in 2017. The modules include:

1. Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship – exploring the importance of connectedness, friendship, respect, responsibility and safety
2. Links between Thinking, Feeling and Behaviour – focusing on the notion that we all have power and choice in our relationships
4. Understanding and Managing Anger – learning how to manage anger in respectful ways
5. Understanding the Impacts of Unhealthy Relationships – analyzing and improving how we behave with others
6. How to Develop and Sustain Healthy Relationships – learning how to take responsibility within healthy boundaries →
"Much of our success and happiness is determined by how we interact with others, in particular our friends and colleagues, our family, and our teachers or mentors. When these relationships are healthy, we sense that we are accepted and feel secure and happy. When our relationships are unhealthy, we may feel unfairly judged, insecure, anxious or sad. These feelings may drive us to gain acceptance in inappropriate ways, leading to anger and resentment rather than learning to enjoy life."

The 2017 pilot program proved to be very successful and provided important feedback to the developers. E.J. Samson, who was head teacher at TREES Alternate Program in School District No. 36 (Surrey), piloted the Respectful Futures materials and had this to say about his and his students’ experience:

Transferable skills are some of the most crucial skills students need to learn in school in order to be more successful when they are out of school. The Respectful Futures initiative that produced resources that include six modules for helping shape healthy relationships is one such example of essential, transferable skills. Common feedback from my students was that they wished they could have learned about effective communication and building relationship skills sooner as this would have helped them handle conflicts better!

The students were really quite engaged with learning about the links between thinking, feeling and behaving, as well as the notion that we all have power and choice in our relationships. I could tell that they did feel empowered and they knew that such transferable, practical skills would help them in their relationships inside and outside of the school community. For many of them, just having and practising some common language to use to express and explain themselves proved helpful.

Really, the aforementioned modules are necessary not only for the students that I teach but also for my own kids and my own life! As such, any facilitator, teacher or learner of these materials will most certainly benefit! The Facilitation Guide and how the modules are outlined are easy to adopt, modify and/or accommodate to whichever situation may be involved… allowing for more flexibility in how the topics and modules are implemented or taught.

LEARN MORE
The Respectful Futures teaching materials, which are updated regularly, are available on the Surrey School District website at surreyschools.ca/respectfulfutures/pages/default.aspx.
It’s a late summer’s day – the kind that starts with a brisk morning signifying that fall, and the start of a new school year, is just around the corner. Sophia Abundo and her mother have arrived in Victoria from Vancouver. Today, Sophia, a 15-year-old student, will sit down with the Minister of Education, Rob Fleming, to ask him about the Ministry of Education’s new Policy for Student Success.

The policy is the ministry’s new vision for learning. It is founded in a series of action-driven principles intended to enable learners to develop their individual potential and acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.

Arriving at the parliament buildings, Sophia launches into her interview with Minister Fleming. Her intention is to find out about the new policy, and more specifically, how it will impact both her and her peers’ education.

**S.A. What is the new Policy for Student Success?**

**M.R.F.** The new policy is around making sure that all students are successful in school. We have an amazing school system in British Columbia and we often don’t tell that story. However, there are still some who are struggling for lots of historical reasons. We have always endeavoured to ensure that no matter where you live in British Columbia you can receive the same high-quality education in one part of the province as you would in another. Student success is really about a vision that says we can’t give up on any kid in British Columbia. Every kid is valuable and has a lifetime of contributions to make, and school is a strong start for being able to do that.
What does this mean for students?

Hopefully, it means that school is more interesting and more fun. We’ve got lots of very talented teachers in British Columbia who know how to develop lesson plans that are interesting. We also have made a big shift that school isn’t about memorizing a whole assortment of facts, but that it’s actually about understanding the bigger ideas behind something and talking about some of the pivotal moments in the history of ideas that have changed how we live as a society and civilization. The school system is teaching students how to be engaged in the communities where they live and of their responsibilities to their families and friends. It’s about treating each other with respect and being a part of what a healthy democracy is in Canada and in British Columbia.

What does this mean for teachers?

It means teachers are continually challenging themselves to be better at what they do. We have a very strong and robust system of professional development to keep teachers current and relevant. Teachers learn best from other teachers, so teachers need to spend time with other teachers. Teachers had a very strong role in redesigning the curriculum, and they have a high degree of input on how the education system is continually evolving and changing. I think that brings satisfaction for teachers to be able to influence their profession, and to be able to look beyond our borders at what’s innovative internationally. Our teachers are why British Columbia is a leader in education in the world today.

How are personal learning opportunities developed for a mainstream student versus a vulnerable learner or a student seeking additional academic challenges?

I think the most important thing is to have all students enjoy school at the earliest time possible. One of the things we are doing as a government that promises to strengthen the K-12 system is early childhood education – so having more kids involved with high-quality childcare. That way they come to Kindergarten ready to learn from day one. If kids are thriving and enjoying school by Grades 3 or 4 we know they are more likely to be graduating with great marks and looking forward to opportunities beyond school. We are also trying to provide more choices for students as they get into high school, and the new curriculum offers more areas of specialization, choice and an emphasis on career education. I think social studies is tackling some of the bigger challenges that our younger generation face in the world today such as how to sustainably manage the environment, or spreading social justice in the world. Those are the kinds of things I find students are really interested in and are naturally engaged in globally. The school curriculum should reflect areas of interest.

How can physical activity, especially among older students who are not required to participate in physical education, be better incorporated into students’ daily lives at school?

We have reformatted some of the curriculum to have physical literacy as part of the healthy living curriculum that kids learn at an early age. We know it’s important for as many kids as possible to be involved in physical activity and organized sports. It is related to better academic performance, but it’s also about learning other skills that you may not learn in a typical classroom. Too many kids have too much screen time and are not spending time outdoors, so we have a lot of schools now that are pursuing outdoor education, getting kids involved with nature and learning outside of the school setting. I think we also need to think →
about how we might do better on physical literacy. I think we know what the problem is and we have some ideas about how to help kids live healthier lives but there’s a lot more we can do. We have a parliamentary secretary for sport in our government who is consulting with parent groups and sport and physical activity experts and bringing some ideas to me as the Minister and our government.

S.A. Why is technology fundamental to a student’s success?

M.R.F. I studied typing nine in high school – and that was cutting-edge technology – and then they brought in the Commodore 64 and I thought: ‘These computer things are just a fad.’ Thirty years later technology is all around us and more powerful than ever. It brings with it both challenges and tremendous benefits for humanity. But for all of that, the increased use of digital learning tools and some of the skills around computer literacy are becoming more and more important. We have adjusted the curriculum to explore how learning with new technology can help engage more students. I have been in a number of classes and seen students really involved in team-based learning as they explore technology. These are the types of things that are important for the school system to provide because not every family can afford these things in their own homes. School is where you get to explore technology and be instructed on how technology impacts our lives and what it can do. That helps kids understand that there may be careers that are of interest to them that are based on technology and innovation.

S.A. Given the choice of how, when and where their learning takes place, how do you ensure all students complete the grade curriculum under a student-centred learning model? How do students benefit from this model?

M.R.F. I think the way students benefit from this model is by having more input into their school day and what they’re learning. They are able to take areas that they’re interested in and develop their strengths; they can also maybe identify what some of their weaknesses are and where they would like to get better in their learning. There are many different learning styles and skilled teachers know how to address them, keep students interested and direct them in terms of classroom activities. Teachers are working with students and developing lesson plans and projects. There is a really exciting future in helping students enjoy school.

S.A. How will the new province-wide assessments mentioned under the High and Measurable Standards category of the Student Success Policy be a more suitable replacement for the provincial exams that are currently being eliminated for secondary students?

M.R.F. I think by moving from exams towards assessments we are measuring what matters, which is a student’s actual competencies as opposed to what they can memorize and cram for in an exam. Again, not to hearken back to the ancient times of my school career, but we had lots of exams and if you went on to college or university, you realized they didn’t really help you when you entered a learning environment where you had a lot more autonomy and responsibility for your own pace of learning. We’re trying to make sure that kids have strong literacy and numeracy skills and that those are measured because the education system has to know how well it’s doing overall so that we can continually improve it. It’s really about aligning old examination policies with the new 21st-century learning styles and curriculum that we have introduced in British Columbia. It’s also assessing students on what they really know and how they can actually think, problem solve and communicate. If students have those skills – including collaboration around working with each other – they are going to be successful in the world of work and in higher education.

LEARN MORE

Visit the Ministry of Education’s website for more information about the Policy for Student Success.

Sophia Abundo is a Grade 11 student in an International Baccalaureate program in British Columbia. Outside of school, she volunteers at the public library, encouraging children to read and code. She is part of the Best Buddies Club, which gives students with developmental challenges a safe environment to engage in positive social interaction, and is currently working with a fellow student to create an Eating Disorder Awareness Club at her high school. This past year Sophia won a competition to be included in the Poetry Institute of Canada’s annual anthology The Night’s Voice and she has also been published in the Passages of the Heart and New Shoots anthologies.
GET TO KNOW BC’S EDUCATION PARTNERS

BC’s education system is strengthened by the significant contributions of our many education partner groups. In this feature, we profile BC’s education partners to learn about the work they do to enhance education throughout the province.

In this issue, we spoke to Patti Dundas, president of the British Columbia Association of School Business Officials.

Tell us about the work of BCASBO. What do you do?

Our association supports our members in the important work they do as business officials in school districts throughout BC. We do this through ongoing communications, a mentorship program, annual professional development conferences and a series of leadership development forums.

As a professional association, we play an essential role in promoting new initiatives that will benefit our members, providing a valuable forum for our members to share ideas and engage in ongoing learning, and assisting members with any employment-related matters.

We have also developed strong relationships with the Ministry of Education and other educational partner groups in the province, and are continually working to enhance public education in BC by bringing a business perspective to educational issues. BCASBO is a member of the Ministry of Education’s Sector Advisory Council and Leadership Working Group, and our members serve on a variety of ministry committees, including the Technical Review Committee, Accounting Advisory Committee and Capital Advisory Committee.

British Columbia Association of School Business Officials

Founded

The British Columbia Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO) was founded in 1958 to represent the business officials – secretary treasurers, assistant secretary treasurers, directors of finance and other professionals in the areas of finance, payroll, purchasing, human resources and information technology – who support learning in all of British Columbia’s school districts.

Structure

BCASBO is a non-profit association governed by a nine-member Executive Committee (elected by members) consisting of four officers and five regional directors.

Membership

There are currently 175 members representing all 60 school districts in British Columbia.

Vision

To engage and support members in their professional learning and welfare, and to contribute to public education in BC with a strong non-political voice.

Phone 604-687-0595
Email president@bcasbo.ca or executivedirector@bcasbo.ca
Website bcasbo.ca
What are some important milestones in the history of BCASBO?
We were originally incorporated as the British Columbia School District Secretary Treasurers’ Association. In 2008, we changed our name to the British Columbia Association of School Business Officials to better reflect the roles and breadth of responsibilities of our membership. The change of name also reflected our association’s affiliation with ASBO International, a collaborative association that promotes best practices in school business management.

What are some of your successes as an organization?
Our membership has grown in recent years - reflecting increased participation by staff working in finance, payroll, procurement and other operational areas of the public education system that support student learning. Some of our recent contributions to education have included participating on the Deputy Minister’s Sector Advisory Council, preparing written submissions and presentations for the independent panel that is currently conducting the K-12 public education funding model review, commissioning the Review of the Administration Costs and Operating Reserves for BC Public Schools and having our association or members make presentations at professional learning conferences hosted by the British Columbia School Trustees Association and British Columbia School Superintendents Association.

How does BCASBO work with other education partner groups?
We work closely with other education partner groups through our role on the Ministry of Education’s Sector Advisory Council and Leadership Working Group. In addition, we often collaborate with education partners in hosting major professional conferences. And, when appropriate, we will work with other education partners in submitting letters and making presentations to government when advocating positions in support of public education.

What do you see as the most significant challenges facing students in BC? How are the efforts of your organization contributing to positive solutions?
BCASBO members work every day to support student learning and achievement across the province. Although our members generally work away from the classroom, all of the work they do is conducted in support of students and their teachers, principals, vice-principals and other school-based staff.

What do you wish people knew about BCASBO?
The members of our association play critical roles in public education in British Columbia, and they are proud to support one of the best education systems in the world. 😊

“As a professional association, we play an essential role in promoting new initiatives that will benefit our members, providing a valuable forum for our members to share ideas and engage in ongoing learning, and assisting members with any employment-related matters.”
IN PROFILE: TEACHING TOGETHER

For Melissa McCormack, having the support of two educational assistants in her 2017/18 Kindergarten class at Robson Community School in the Kootenay-Columbia School District made all the difference. “We are a team when we are together,” she says. “We are on the same playing field and our goal is the same: supporting the success of the kids in our class.” →
McCormack worked alongside two educational assistants – Stephanie Harmston and Cherryl MacLeod – who shared the job, with MacLeod working in the morning and Harmston working in the afternoon.

“Stephanie and Cherryl are a wealth of knowledge – they’ve been at the school far longer than I have, know all the families in the area and have incredible experience with kids. My job is to teach the curriculum and I need to spearhead that, but we work collaboratively, share ideas, ask each other questions and keep the door of communication wide open.”

Everyone’s perspective is valued. “I understand and respect that this is Melissa’s space,” says MacLeod. “But I am also part of the conversation and can contribute valuable input. That’s how we work together to figure things out and make a difference in kids’ lives.”

In their EA role, Harmston and MacLeod were assigned to provide extra support to children with diverse needs.

“Although I might be there primarily to support one child,” says Harmston, “I think it is ultimately important for the goal of inclusion that the child have the opportunity to learn how to work with others and doesn’t have an EA shadowing them in the background all the time.”

MacLeod agrees. “Although it appears that we support individual students, in reality, you are there for everybody. And there are often several kids with behaviour issues or who need learning assistance. The days when you were presented with a single student with very specific learning needs and asked to work with them one-on-one are long gone. There’s real strength for the students that comes when they are supported by many different adults, and as an EA, we can work with students in the class on emotional regulation, authentic communication, academic support and more.”

Kindergarten is an interesting grade to teach, with students entering school with very diverse abilities and readiness for what lies ahead. The social-emotional aspects of learning are paramount, with students learning how to make healthy connections with both the adults in the class and their peers.

Harmston, MacLeod and McCormack exemplify the traits of healthy communication and collaboration, which they are explicitly and implicitly teaching their students. “Open communication and teamwork are the most important things,” says McCormack. “It’s a matter of being comfortable asking questions and learning from the expertise of your colleagues. And we have fun! We laugh and joke around.”

The three agree that in their ideal world, they would have designated collaborative time to update each other, share ideas and plan activities. Harmston and MacLeod do touch base during the trade-off between morning and afternoon sessions, and they try to connect with McCormack in the small pockets of time that emerge in the day, either before or after class or between activities. “Everyone would love to have scheduled time,” says Harmston. “But it’s not a perfect world, so we do what we can to grab a minute here and there.”

“We walk in as the bell rings and there is no collaboration time,” adds MacLeod. “That means we have discussions on the fly.”

Although constrained by these challenges, the three colleagues clearly relished working together to support their students.

“Collaborative teaching is so essential,” says McCormack. “Collaborating with other teachers and working alongside EAs is a way of overcoming the isolation felt by many educators, particularly new teachers. It’s important for all of us to know that we are not alone, that we can improve our practice by watching how others approach a situation, asking for advice, helping others and have them helping us.”
REQUIREMENT FOR A CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

The Criminal Records Review Act requires all individuals working with children and vulnerable adults, including certificate holders, to undergo a criminal record check every five years. The Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB) facilitates this requirement by collecting your authorization and submitting it to the Criminal Records Review Program of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, which conducts the check.

If you are a certificate holder and have not authorized a criminal record check in the last five years through the TRB, you are required to give your authorization for a check by completing a form and submitting it to the TRB. Once you have authorized your check, you may still need to provide your fingerprints. If this is the case, the Criminal Records Review Program will contact you with instructions on how to proceed. Note that there may be wait times for processing authorizations and/or fingerprint submissions. It is therefore important to authorize your check immediately and complete any fingerprinting requirement well in advance of the deadline. Under section 33 of the Teachers Act, failure to do so could result in the suspension and eventual cancellation of your certificate.

To authorize your check, please visit the TRB website, click on the Certificate Services tab, choose Criminal Record Check in the menu and follow the instructions for submitting your authorization. If you don’t know when your next authorization is due, you can confirm the date by logging into Your Account on the TRB website.

BRITISH COLUMBIA TEACHERS’ COUNCIL MEETING DATES

The meetings of the British Columbia Teachers’ Council (BCTC) are open to the public and are held at the TRB offices at 400-2025 West Broadway in Vancouver. The BCTC receives its mandate from the Teachers Act. It is responsible for setting standards for teachers in the areas of teacher education, certification, conduct and competence. The next BCTC meeting is scheduled for February 14 and 15, 2019. Visit the TRB website to learn more about the Standards for Educators in BC and the mandate, composition and future meetings of the BCTC.

COMMISSIONER FOR TEACHER REGULATION ANNUAL REPORT

The Commissioner for Teacher Regulation is an independent statutory decision maker appointed under the Teachers Act. The Commissioner ensures concerns about teacher competence and conduct are addressed fairly and in the public interest. Visit the TRB website to learn more about the Commissioner’s role and to read the 2017-2018 annual report.

You can find more services for certificate holders at bcteacherregulation.ca.

SECURITY OF PROVINCIAL EXAMINATIONS AND GRADUATION ASSESSMENTS

Detailed instructions for conducting and invigilating exams and assessments are available on the School Secure Web at bced.gov.bc.ca/exams/tsw/princ_terms.jsp. Following these instructions will help ensure that exam and assessment sessions in schools are set up for success and decrease the risk of breach situations. Please keep in mind that copies of exams and assessments from actual exam and assessment sessions are not to be used for practice purposes as they are active forms that have not been released and may be used by the Ministry in a future formal exam session. For those interested in providing practice provincial exams and graduation assessments to students in preparation for the formally scheduled exam sessions, samples are available at bced.gov.bc.ca/exams/search.
FROM THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR TEACHER REGULATION: DISCIPLINE OUTCOMES AND CASE SUMMARIES

The Commissioner for Teacher Regulation oversees the process by which reports or complaints about the conduct or competence of certificate holders in both the public and independent school systems are addressed. As the operational arm of the regulatory structure, the Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB) provides administrative support to the Commissioner.

Together, we are committed to ensuring that all educators are fit and competent for the important role that they play and that students have a safe and nurturing learning environment. By publishing the outcomes of discipline cases, we enhance the transparency of the processes and decisions made with respect to complaints and reports about educators. Publication is also a means of ensuring accountability for the educators involved, as well as articulating the standards expected of all certificate holders.

Discipline outcomes are summarized below and appear in full on the TRB website. These summaries do not contain all the details of the published outcomes, which may include discipline imposed by the employer. The Standards for educators in British Columbia can be found on the TRB website and on the last page of this issue of Learn.

Ensuring that concerns about the competence and conduct of certificate holders are addressed independently, fairly, expeditiously and in the public interest.

Consent Resolution Agreements (CRA)

CERTIFICATE HOLDER A Teacher (T-AB-2018)
AGREEMENT Professional Misconduct/Standard 1
DISPOSITION Former certificate holder will not apply for a teaching certificate or letter of permission

The summary is published under section 54(3) of the Teachers Act to protect the identity of a student who was harmed, abused or exploited by the teacher. In June 2012, the Commissioner received a report about a high school teacher from a district superintendent under section 16 of the School Act. In July 2012, the teacher signed an undertaking not to teach in any position requiring a certificate of qualification, independent school teaching certificate or letter of permission. The teacher’s certificate of qualification was cancelled in 2013 for non-payment of fees. However, the discipline process continued. In July 2006, the teacher began a sexual relationship with a student who had graduated from the school in June 2006. The teacher sent the student numerous inappropriate emails, and served her alcohol and bought her cigarettes even though she was underage. In July 2007, the teacher sent another student a number of emails that were overly familiar and at times inappropriate. The teacher entered into a consent resolution agreement with the Commissioner in which the teacher agreed that he would not apply for, and the Director of Certification would not be required to issue to him, a certificate of qualification, an independent school teaching certificate or a letter of permission.

CERTIFICATE HOLDER A Teacher (T-AL-2017)
AGREEMENT Professional Misconduct/Standard 1
DISPOSITION Certificate suspended for two months/Certificate holder to complete a course

The summary is published under section 54(3) of the Teachers Act to protect the identity of a student who was harmed, abused or exploited by the teacher. In November 2016, a district made a report about a high school teacher under section 16 of the School Act. Between August
and September 2016, the teacher engaged in highly inappropriate communications with a Grade 11 student using Facebook messenger and text messaging. The conversations occurred late at night and were frequently intimate in nature. The teacher’s comments included a sexual reference, comments about the student’s personal appearance and heart emojis. The teacher entered into a consent resolution agreement with the Commissioner in which the teacher agreed to a two-month suspension of his certificate and to complete a course on boundaries.

CERTIFICATE HOLDER Maple Fun Sun Low
AGREEMENT Professional Misconduct/Standard 1
DISPOSITION Certificate suspended for two weeks

In January 2018, a district made a report under section 16 of the School Act about Maple Fun Sun Low. On November 21, 2017, when Low was teaching a Grade 11 English class, a student asked if they would be seeing a movie of the Shakespeare play they were studying. Low lost his temper and began screaming at the student and the rest of the class. Low then looked at another student and said “I’m not being funny.” The student said “I am not laughing.” Low told the student to “shut your teeth.” Low’s tirade lasted approximately 20 minutes, and students reported feeling shocked, uncomfortable and scared. After the class was over, the first student approached Low to say that she did not appreciate him yelling at her. Low responded with “I don’t appreciate you” and “I’m not having this conversation with you.” On February 22, 2018, the Commissioner executed a consent resolution agreement in which Low agreed to a two-week suspension of his certificate of qualification.

CERTIFICATE HOLDER Tami Lynne Chechotko
AGREEMENT Professional Misconduct/Standard 1
DISPOSITION Reprimand

In June 2017, a district made a report under section 16 of the School Act about Tami Lynne Chechotko. A group of Grade 11 and Grade 12 students decided to cross-dress on December 16, 2016, in support of a fellow student and the LGBTQA community. Chechotko asked them why they were cross-dressing, told them she was disappointed in them and questioned whether the activity had the right motives. She told them their actions were disrespectful and offensive. Chechotko spoke to the school’s vice-principal, who told her the school administration was comfortable with letting the day unfold. Chechotko then addressed the students in her math class, telling them their cross-dressing was not a planned activity and that the rest of the school was unaware of it. She said it could make students question someone’s sexuality, which could potentially result in suicide. This comment was upsetting for at least one of the students. For the next block, four of the students were supposed to be in Chechotko’s class but went instead to the library. When Chechotko went to the library, she found one of the students crying and pacing. Chechotko became loud and agitated, interrupting and talking over the assembled students about why the cross-dressing was inappropriate. Students who heard this comment reported feeling very upset. On March 1, 2018, the Commissioner executed a consent resolution agreement in which Chechotko agreed to a reprimand.

Hearing Decision

CERTIFICATE HOLDER Mykola Misiak
FINDING Professional Misconduct/Standards 1, 2 and 6
DISPOSITION Certificate suspended for two weeks/Certificate holder to complete a course

A hearing panel considered allegations set out in a citation issued on January 26, 2017, and amended on August 16, 2017. An oral hearing was held on September 26, 2017. On November 9, 2017, the hearing panel issued its findings and found that Mykola Misiak had breached Standards 1, 2 and 6 and that his conduct constituted professional misconduct. The panel found that Misiak failed to treat students with respect and dignity when he spoke to students saying “don’t be a dumb ass” or “don’t be a dumb idiot” and he did not act in the best interests of the students when he displayed violent emotion in response to a personal telephone call by throwing a VCR to the ground and kicking a desk door. Misiak also used an offensive word in a derogatory phrase in response to a student’s request, and he failed to treat communication from a student’s mother as confidential. On February 28, 2018, the panel ordered that Misiak’s teaching certificate be suspended for two weeks to be served continuously during the school year and at a time when school is in session and Misiak would otherwise be teaching, and that Misiak complete a course on creating a positive learning environment.
STANDARDS for the Education, Competence and Professional Conduct of Educators in British Columbia

1. Educators value and care for all students and act in their best interests. Educators are responsible for fostering the emotional, esthetic, intellectual, physical, social and vocational development of students. They are responsible for the emotional and physical safety of students. Educators treat students with respect and dignity. Educators respect the diversity in their classrooms, schools and communities. Educators have a privileged position of power and trust. They respect confidentiality unless disclosure is required by law. Educators do not abuse or exploit students or minors for personal, sexual, ideological, material or other advantage.

2. Educators are role models who act ethically and honestly. Educators act with integrity, maintaining the dignity and credibility of the profession. They understand that their individual conduct contributes to the perception of the profession as a whole. Educators are accountable for their conduct while on duty, as well as off duty, where that conduct has an effect on the education system. Educators have an understanding of the education system in BC and the law as it relates to their duties.

3. Educators understand and apply knowledge of student growth and development. Educators are knowledgeable about how children develop as learners and as social beings, and demonstrate an understanding of individual learning differences and special needs. This knowledge is used to assist educators in making decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment and classroom management.

4. Educators value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families and communities in schools. Educators understand, respect and support the role of parents and the community in the education of students. Educators communicate effectively and in a timely manner with parents and consider their advice on matters pertaining to their children.

5. Educators implement effective practices in areas of classroom management, planning, instruction, assessment, evaluation and reporting. Educators have the knowledge and skills to facilitate learning for all students and know when to seek additional support for their practice. Educators thoughtfully consider all aspects of teaching, from planning through reporting, and understand the relationships among them. Educators employ a variety of instructional and assessment strategies.

6. Educators have a broad knowledge base and understand the subject areas they teach. Educators understand the curricular, conceptual and methodological foundations of education and of the subject areas they teach. Educators must be able to communicate effectively in English or French. Educators teach students to understand relevant curricula in a Canadian, Aboriginal, and global context. Educators convey the values, beliefs and knowledge of our democratic society.

7. Educators engage in career-long learning. Educators engage in professional development and reflective practice, understanding that a hallmark of professionalism is the concept of professional growth over time. Educators develop and refine personal philosophies of education, teaching and learning that are informed by theory and practice. Educators identify their professional needs and work to meet those needs individually and collaboratively.

8. Educators contribute to the profession. Educators support, mentor or encourage other educators and those preparing to enter the profession. Educators contribute their expertise to activities offered by their schools, districts, professional organizations, post-secondary institutions or contribute in other ways.

The Standards for Educators communicate to certificate holders, letter of permission holders and the public a description of the work of educators – what they know, what they are able to do and how they conduct themselves as they serve the public. The Standards provide the foundation and stability on which educators can grow, articulating both the values and characteristics that distinguish their work. Read about the BC Teachers’ Council and the Independent School Teaching Certificate Standards Committee that establish these standards on the TRB website.