



OUR VOICE

BC CONFEDERATION OF PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

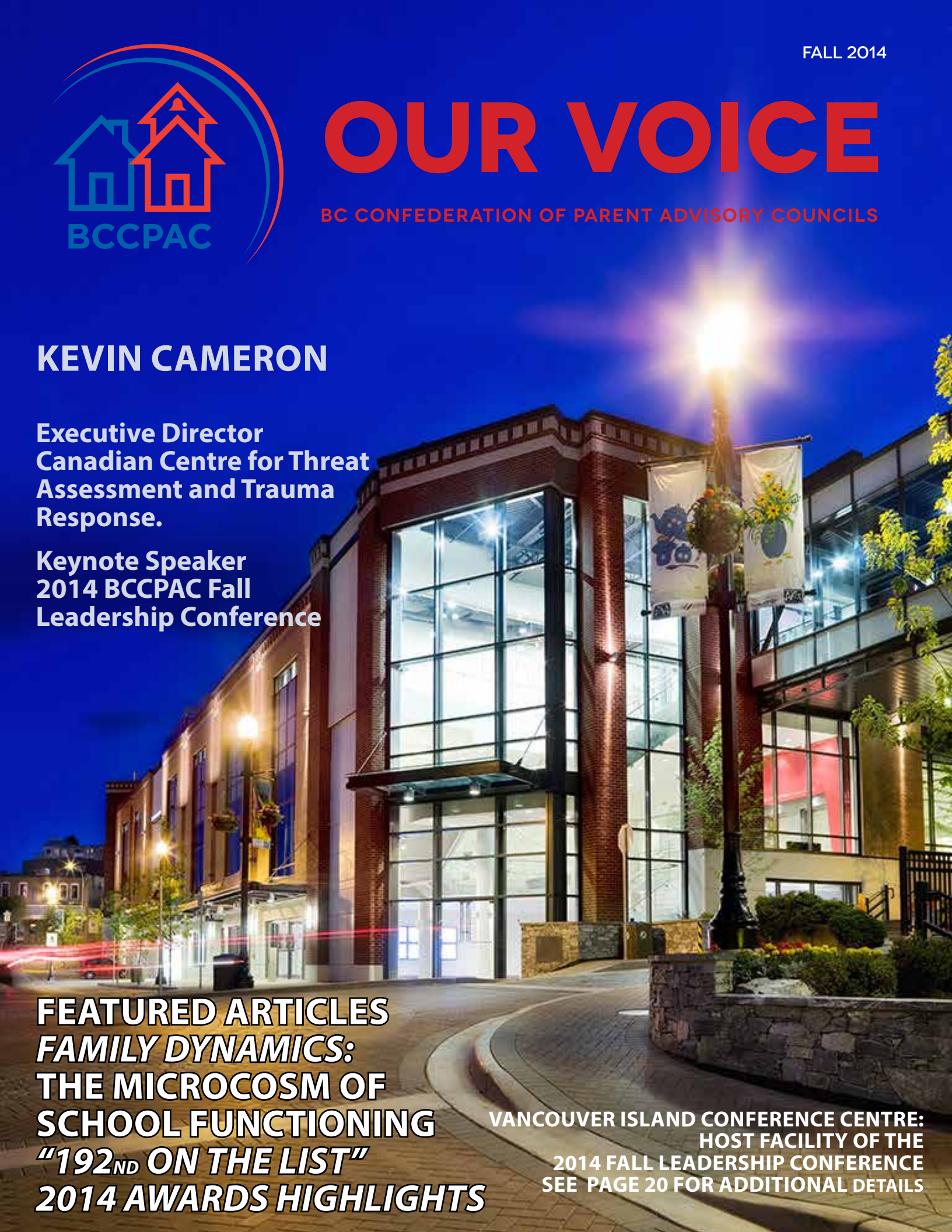
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Executive Director
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Assessment and Trauma
Response.

Keynote Speaker
2014 BCCPAC Fall
Leadership Conference

FEATURED ARTICLES
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THE MICROCOSM OF
SCHOOL FUNCTIONING
"192ND ON THE LIST"
2014 AWARDS HIGHLIGHTS

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Thank you to the BCCPAC Publications Committee for their hard work putting this edition of Our Voice together.

Thanks to staff for their continued support of BCCPAC committees. Current committee members are Bonita Zarrillo, Cathy Jewett, Jocelyn Schonekess, Heidi Darroch, Shar McCrory, Vivienne Megas and Susan Wilson.

Who We Are

The B.C. Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) is recognized as the collective voice of parents regarding public school education in B.C. Every public school Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) in the province is eligible for membership. BCCPAC is a charitable non-profit organization registered under the B.C. Society Act.

BCCPAC purposes are: To promote, support and advance meaningful parent participation throughout the public education system in order to advocate for the success of all students; and through our membership, to promote leadership, communication, cooperation, and representation in British Columbia, at the school, school district and provincial levels.

Our Voice

Subscriptions to Our Voice are included with PAC and DPAC membership. If you are not a BCCPAC member but would like to subscribe to Our Voice please contact our office. To submit article ideas please email ourvoice@bccpac.bc.ca

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PRESIDENT'S GREETING

The Balancing Act

Step with care and great tact, and remember that Life's a Great Balancing Act.

Dr. Seuss

Welcome Back!

During the summer, the BCCPAC board worked hard to find solutions to strengthen the parent voice and advance resolutions from our annual general meeting. We heard the frustration and fear from parents around the province who were wondering if school would ever return to normal, and I am proud of everyone who spoke up. We tried to represent you with strength and dignity and can only hope that by the time you read this, school will be back in session.

These past six months have been difficult for everyone. Parents have had to balance time and resources while trying to ensure their views were heard. We should be pleased with our success in creating a voice in education that is inspiring for students and the community. BCCPAC thanks you for your patience and understanding while we worked to create strong positions with broad support. One example of that was our DPAC Summit in August, where we held passionate discussions about how to enhance classroom resources.

Despite concerns with the B.C. public school system, we must remember that B.C. has one of the best education systems in the world. That is worth celebrating, as is the upcoming BCCPAC's 25th anniversary in 2015!

We believe Our Voice magazine has been a great resource for parents. In our fall edition, we have articles that we expect will encourage you and help you move forward during these trying times. Kevin Cameron's article on family dynamics is enlightening and refreshing.

Parents have always had a vital role in their children's education, but perhaps never more so than right now. BCCPAC is a recognized partner in the B.C. education system and depends on the thoughtful input from member PACs. We also offer resources and educational opportunities to help families work more effectively with their schools. Our goal is to improve public education for all students by including and supporting parents.

As the provincial government proceeds with its plan for educational transformation, BCCPAC is well positioned to keep you informed about progress and communicate to decision-makers any concerns you might have. We will continue offering you support and education and ask that you work with us to strengthen our voice by renewing your

membership or becoming a member.

Finally, we are excited to say we have created two new positions that will help our organization build membership and offer even more support for parents in future. We are moving forward!

BCCPAC's Accomplishments in 2014:

- Creating a Classroom Resource Fund proposal for partner groups to consider. Parents are leading the discussion on change in education.
- Encouraging changes to Section 177 of the B.C. School Act by bringing partner groups together.
- Organizing a successful DPAC Summit in the midst of a strike.
- Updating our Speaking Up guide, now in seven languages.
- Developing a planner to help PACs and DPACs run their meetings.
- Reducing the price of conferences while raising the calibre of speakers.

Always remember to "Keep Smiling!" because it keeps people wondering what makes you so happy! We are always listening.



Nicole Makohoniuk - BCCPAC President

BCCPAC Board of Directors

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2014 BCCPAC EDUCATIONAL AWARD WINNER NICHOLAS STORKAN



**NICHOLAS STORKAN WINNER
OF THE 2014 EDUCATIONAL
AWARD**

Nicholas Storkan is this year's recipient of the 2014 Education Award. Nicholas graduated from Lillooet Secondary School and has commenced courses at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George in the field of study of Medical Lab Technology. He enjoys traveling and has had the privilege of attending a school trip to Costa Rica this past year.

Student leadership has always been very important to Nicholas, during his grade 11 year he was able to become Student Council President. Prior to then the school did not have a student council for many years, and it was a very interesting project to work at bringing back the opportunity to students. As President, Nicholas was able to help organize several school events such as a Multi-Cultural Awareness Luncheon and School Spirit Week where many of the included activities were wildly successful and hilarious.

Nicholas also volunteers regularly at Mountain View Lodge and finds it incredibly rewarding. Volunteer work has taught him about community and connections.

The BCCPAC educational award honours Ona Mae Roy, President of the B.C. Home and School and Parent Federation (now BCCPAC) from 1978-1980.

2014 GEORGE MATTHEWS AWARD WINNER SCOTT YOUNG

The George Matthews Award for Excellence in Parent Leadership was created to honour George Edwin Matthews (1941-2001) who provided unwavering support of parents in education throughout his years as Ministry of Education liaison with BCCPAC.

Here are excerpts from Scott's nomination: Scott is an amazingly involved father of 5 children who attend 3 different schools in our community. He is a full-time firefighter in Coquitlam yet he is one of most dedicated,

enthusiastic, personable and modest parent leaders in our growing community. Scott has generated resources by assisting PACs to apply for funds that they were not able to attain on their own (\$43,000 across 3 schools). He was able to help reinstate a gaming grant at a secondary school, reimburse a playground grant at an elementary school and start up a PAC at another school and claim their first gaming grant.

Scott has been instrumental in problem solving in our District of Mission. For example when the number of sport teams was dwindling because of lack of coaches, and parents were questioning the degrading of supports for children Scott actively pursued other options including legitimization, regulation and encouragement of parent coaches. This three year process shows his dedication, commitment and concern for the health and well-being of both the student and the parent community.

2014 BEV HOSKER AWARD WINNER CINDY STRINHOLM

Here are excerpts from Cindy's nomination: Cindy is a tireless parent leader with passion for supporting families and children in our community and school. Cindy helped us meet

The Bev Hosker Motivational Award for a new or newly involved parent taking on a leadership role was created to honour Bev Hosker (1955-2003), a past BCCPAC Director and tireless advocate for parents and students in the BC public education system.

healthy living targets for hot lunch days. She collaborated with parents and created plans to provide healthy, litterless lunches. Cindy co-presented the model at district healthy living product sessions. Cindy also developed the school Good Food Box Program and is in partnership with 2 local farms that provide organic produce and chicken. Cindy applied for and the Breakfast Before Learning Grant which helps support the cost of our school breakfast program.

Cindy is a great listener, always offering support where and when needed. She also did a great job advocating for our school regarding safety of our children a few months ago when the proposed community walking trail was to cross our school field. Cindy stood tall and voiced her opinion asking for some of these public safety issues to be addressed and revisited.

Cindy has been a valuable member of the MV Beattie PAC and is an integral part of the team.

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Too Many Being Turned Away From French Immersion in BC

“You’re 192nd on the wait list.”

That’s not what parents expect to hear when they try to register their children in kindergarten or Grade 1 at a public school in their local community. Unfortunately for Erin McCall, a Surrey parent with a four-year-old daughter, that’s what the school district receptionist told her this past spring when she tried to register for her local French Immersion program.

Erin made more than 100 phone calls to a school district registration call-in line trying, in vain, to get through. The competition was fierce. There were stories that some other parents organized call parties with friends and families so as to be one of the lucky few who secured a coveted kindergarten French Immersion spot in Surrey.

Erin’s story is troubling, but by no means unique.

According to the latest reports, families in at least 23 B.C. communities are currently being turned away from the popular French Immersion program due to a lack of classroom space or because a program doesn’t exist. This is denying thousands of students the opportunity to learn, use and benefit from Canada’s two official languages. It’s also a troubling sign for our public education system.

Despite an overall student enrolment decline over the past 10 years, French Immersion student participation has been red hot. As of the 2013-14 school year there were over 49,000 students in B.C. in French Immersion programs; that’s about 8.8 per cent of the entire student body or a 66-per-cent



Generously submitted by the Canadian Parents for French, a parent-led, non-profit dedicated to creating quality and equitable French second-language learning opportunities for all youth.

increase since 2000.

Parents are looking to challenge their children and want them to have all the benefits of learning a second language. According to the latest Federal census, official-language bilinguals make, on average, 10 per cent more and have an unemployment rate three-per-cent lower than their monolingual counterparts. There’s also the countless studies that point to the cognitive, social and cultural developments one gains by learning and using multiple languages. It’s easy to understand why families are going to incredible lengths to give their children the opportunity to be part of this program.

When a well-established program within our public education system leaves families out because of luck or chance we fail our youth and create systemic unfairness. It doesn’t have to be this way.

If you, or someone you know, is a parent trying to register in a popular French Immersion program we encourage you to reach out, to get organized and to make your voices heard. A committed group of parents who communicate their concerns to school district staff and school trustees can have a great impact and force change.

There are also steps the Education Ministry can take to help alleviate the capacity pressures. Every year, the provincial government receives just over \$10 million from the federal government for the provision and support of French second-language education. These funds are largely distributed to the school boards based on the number of students enrolled in French Immersion and Core French. There are strategic decisions the ministry can make with these funds to help aid growth, setting aside a modest “French Immersion Growth Grant” is one example.

Being 192nd on a wait list for a newly released gadget, concert passes or playoff hockey tickets is something we accept. It is deeply troubling when it’s for a child to be able to participate in a second-language educational program within our public-education system.

Patti Holm is B.C. and Yukon president of Canadian Parents for French, a parent-led, non-profit dedicated to creating quality and equitable French second-language learning opportunities for all youth.

INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING SUPPORT. COULD YOUR CHILD BENEFIT?

LearnNowBC

Could your child benefit from some free, individualized learning support? Perhaps some help with upper level Math or Science courses? Or maybe English is their second language and they could use some practice speaking English. Are exams coming up and is your child looking for some help preparing? Do you have a young child that would enjoy practicing basic, fundamental skills through games and activities? Or possibly your child wants to know what they need for graduation or are exploring other courses available to them in the province. These are just some of the educational opportunities available to BC students through the LearnNowBC website.

LearnNowBC is a unique learner-focused online portal that provides a vast amount of free educational opportunities to students in British Columbia. Parents are provided with comprehensive information about the many services available to help support their children's learning. Educators are given access to a wonderful selection of useful resources that they are able to use with their students.

Some of the educational programs and services that LearnNowBC provides include:

- Free One-on-One Tutoring Sessions – Live Tutors are available online five nights per week from 6-10 pm to help BC high school students with challenging concepts and specific questions. Students can drop in for 20 minute sessions to work through difficult concepts with an experienced tutor.
- Charged-up – Many self-directed streaming video lessons and tutorials on challenging concepts along with sample provincial exam questions and explanations.
- Success Checker – Self Assessment tests that allow Grade 11 and 12 students the opportunity to take some practice tests and then review their results to help prepare for upcoming exams. Students can review the results and access customized study guides to help them use their study time more effectively.
- Blackboard Collaborate (online meeting room/classroom) – Educators can use their own online classroom to engage their students virtually via video, audio, text and a virtual whiteboard. Parents can use their own meeting room to hold a PAC meeting.

By Jenny Morrison

Mentor Teacher for LearnNowBC Live Tutors

LearnNow BC will be hosting various sessions at the 2014 Fall Leadership Conference in Nanaimo.

- Advising Centre – The Advising Centre is available to provide advice, course guidance and help understanding graduation requirements. This free service provides students and parents advising support through email or a toll free phone call.
- Course Finder – An online tool that allows students and parents the ability to search and select from over 2800 DL courses offered in the province.
- Trades Program Finder - Students can find over 50 ACE IT programs offered in high schools throughout the province. These ACE IT programs are delivered by certified instructors in a high-school, at a partner post-secondary institution, or at an ITA-certified training facility.
- Young Learning Centre – Interactive, fun games and activities that help young learners develop fundamental skills in Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies with programs such as Bailey's Book House and Millie's Math House
- Daily Physical Activity (DPA) – Students can track their Daily Physical Activity using an easy online tool with their computer, tablet or smart phone to help meet the physical activity graduation requirement.
- Life Online – Several brief instructional videos are available to students, parents and educators that provide information on many productivity tools. Life Online also addresses many online safety and privacy concerns.

LearnNowBC

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BUILDING A PLAYGROUND: BEYOND CHOCOLATE SALES AND SILENT AUCTIONS

Parents have moved beyond chocolate sales and silent auctions in their drive to raise money for school playground equipment. Their new tactics include seeking corporate donations, begging for school-district dollars, entering online contests, courting the media and experimenting with crowd funding. “It’s a tremendous amount of work,” sighed Serena Trachta, chair of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) at John Robson elementary in New Westminster. Her group has been fundraising for more than a year in preparation for the school community’s relocation to the newly built Ecole QayQayt.

Her PAC has collected about \$80,000 for the first phase of the new playground, but parents still hope to find similar funding to buy additional equipment for older students. The John Robson community was lucky in that Trachta is an architect and some other PAC members are in the construction business so there was a solid understanding of what had to be done. They worked with four manufacturers and had a well-developed plan before they sought district help.

The district chipped in \$50,000.

In Kitimat, meanwhile, another group of parents faces an even greater challenge. They also need \$80,000 for playground equipment at Kildala elementary but have only \$18,000 so far and haven’t received a cent from their school district. PAC president Kimberly Wasyleski said it will likely take two more years to reach their goal. During that time, intermediate students will have no play structures and primary students will have to make do with a couple of swing sets and a small wooden structure with slides, she said. “We wish the school board would recognize that playground play is critical to the development of children,” said PAC vice president Sharmin Calkins.

Some parents insist money should come directly from the province. BCCPAC has a resolution on the books urging the government to fully fund the purchase and installation of playground equipment, either through expanded gaming grants or a larger facilities grant. But that hasn’t sparked change.

PACs are allowed to spend provincial gaming grants on playground equipment, but at \$20 per student

By Janet Steffenhagen

Janet is a guest blogger on the BCCPAC website.

per year, that doesn’t go far. As Trachta noted, even a simple slide costs several thousand dollars. “It’s a sad thing,” she said, noting that research is clear about the importance of physical activity during recess and lunch breaks. “The outdoor learning and the socialization that occurs during that time period is too important to miss.”

The government’s expectation that parents will find the money for school playgrounds results in huge inequities among schools, said Iraj Khabazian, treasurer for the Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC). While some PACs are able to conduct fairly sophisticated campaigns, including video appeals on YouTube and crowdfunding through GoFundMe, others have difficulty finding parent volunteers at all, let alone some with fundraising skills. Furthermore, not all schools have PACs that can lead the effort.

Another complication is that PACs often compete with one another for corporate donations, grants or in contests. In Vancouver, dozens of schools have wooden structures that are considered safety risks and must be replaced. Next year, 30 must be removed, with an additional 28 in following years. Some schools apply for money from Aviva Insurance, which offers \$1 million in prizes for cross-country projects that win public support through on-line voting. Although the John Robson PAC won \$5,000 last year, Trachta said it required an exceptional amount of work.



FAMILY DYNAMICS: THE MICROCOSM OF SCHOOL FUNCTIONING

As a young therapist I had the opportunity, early in my career, to work in a number of different programs with children and youth. From the regular school setting to specialized programs as well as inner city street projects I quickly learned that no two cases or no two stories were exactly alike; there were always unique elements to each child's journey. At the time of the 1999 school shooting in Taber, Alberta, where I led the crisis response team, I was completing my Master of Science in Marital and Family Therapy. While working full-time with the school district I was also doing court ordered parenting assessments for the Ministry of Children's Services and beginning my work as a marital and family therapist. Some of the couples I worked with I had known peripherally but was not personally friends with and often I had preconceived notions before they ever made it to my office what the issue(s) was likely to be: I was rarely even close to being right. I quickly learned in marital and family therapy you cannot judge a book by its cover. But when the school shooting happened in Taber and the anxiety of the entire school and school district was high, I learned that two schools subjected to the same traumatic incident (suicide, car crash, serious violence) could respond in very different ways. How could that be? As time has gone on in my now international work with schools and communities impacted by trauma of all forms, including high profile violence and suicide, the lessons are clear. No two children, no two families and no two schools or communities are exactly the same yet the elements for assessing, supporting, and intervening are!

As a marital therapist, I learned some very interesting things about marriage and family. First, emotional maturity was the best predictor of marital success. The more similar the levels of emotional maturity between the couple the more compatible they could be and the higher the level of emotional maturity the more they could manage the peaks and valleys of marital and family relations. But I also learned that the marital dyad (two person relationship) and the parental dyad were not the same thing. For instance, is it possible that two people could have a functional marriage yet are dysfunctional parents? Or could you have a couple that just cannot function in the intensity of the adult marital relationship yet the two of them have a functional parental dyad? Then imagine if the marriage was harmonious during the early years because of similar levels of emotional maturity but is now deteriorating because one member of the dyad has continued to emotionally mature while the other is stuck in their immaturity! If we introduce a family, school or

By Kevin Cameron

Kevin is the Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response. Kevin will be joining us in Nanaimo for the 2014 Fall Leadership Conference as our Keynote Speaker.

community to a trauma that affects them personally could that influence a marriage or families functioning? And the answer is always yes! How it influences them will depend on both their current functioning and the history of coping they bring with them.

In human systems theory we have a concept called parallel process. In essence it means that patterns of human interaction can be duplicated in other levels or aspects of a human system even if we didn't intend it to be so. For instance, if there is significant unresolved conflict in the marital dyad sometimes one or both parents will focus their energies on their children instead. If this becomes too intense than each parent may form a strong bond with the one child they are naturally closest to and an inadvertent alliance may begin. The child may begin to dislike the other parent and an immature parent may need them to dislike the other parent so they feel both supported and that their side of the conflict is the right side. Adding to the problem is when the other parent does the same with the child they are naturally the closest to. There are children raised in families where from the outside they appear intact yet internally they are completely divided. The parallel process in this family, as described, is that the unresolved conflict between two parents who may now despise each other is transferred to the two children who are allied to the parents. I have worked with families where the parents have told me the "presenting problem" was violent conflict between their children when in the end the real issue is that the children were acting out (parallel process) the unresolved conflict of their parents against each other without any understanding of why they disliked their sibling so much.

If we transfer what we understand about marriage and family dynamics to the school setting then we can more clearly see why two schools could be subjected to the same crises or trauma and yet respond very differently from each other. After the 911 terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania I was asked to write an academic paper on "Trauma in Human Systems" and present it a month to the day after the attacks occurred at the Los Angeles Times Building in California. In my address to hundreds of professionals,

including many responders who had just returned from New York, I, for the first time, publicly introduced my work on school dynamics. In the VTRA model and the Traumatic Event Systems (TES) model we now distinguish schools along a continuum that includes a) naturally open school systems b) naturally closed school systems c) traumatically open school systems and d) traumatically closed school systems. While it would be impossible to define them in a short article a simple consideration of the words “naturally open” versus “naturally closed” should conjure up some idea of which type of school is preferred. The most functional human system possible (families and schools) is a naturally open system.

Now imagine the complexities of just the adult system in a school and the dynamics at work during low stress times. Most schools have two or more administration team members not including administration support staff who each bring their own professional and personal issues and leadership styles to the table. Then add the teaching staff with varying degrees of seniority and maybe one member who was a former administrator but demoted by the school district they used to work for and is now quietly critiquing every decision made by the leadership team to the young and less experienced educators. Then add the education assistants and consider the one who is married to the chief of police or a school board trustee who believes that students are ‘disrespectful in this school’ and should be more frequently suspended for their behaviours. Then place a new principal in the school who is replacing the former leader who just retired after 12 years as administrator of the school and still lives in the community and has a grandchild entering their former school this year! Their grandchild, however, has significant special needs and has been aggressive with peers in the past and the first student they assault in their new school is the child of a member of the Parent’s Advisory Council.

This vignette is minor in comparison to some of the complex dynamics I have worked with in schools and communities that have become paralyzed by a significant trauma that has been overlaid on an already stressed system. Yet the dynamics presented above can on their own paralyze a school if there is not strong leadership between school and parents/caregivers. The principle is a simple one: if the adults in the system are not a) emotionally mature b) actively involved and c) functional in their ability to resolve conflict than how can the students? The unresolved issues of the adults are generally the greatest impairment to overall school functioning. If we the adults (professionals and parents/caregivers) cannot model healthy human relations then why should we expect our children (students) to! The same parallel process that occurs in families can occur at school where students are forced to dislike a teacher

because their parent does or where bullying is getting out of control because a school staff is so consumed by their own unresolved conflicts with each other (infighting) that they do not have enough emotional energy to be connected to the students in a healthy and mature manner.

I have said for years that a school is as safe as the adults want it to be and by adults I mean the parent and school community. When I speak with school administrators I am more pointed with them than I am with parents/caregivers because they are the leaders of the entire school system. So this article is not about them it is about us the families of these students. Imagine a school community where an experienced parent mentors a young parent embroiled in a conflict with “the school”. While giving an ear to their frustrations they avoid taking sides and instead strategically guide them to address the issues face to face. Imagine the PAC that takes serious parent engagement and creatively works to get parents within the walls of the school more frequently because they feel at home there and want other parents to as well. In schools and school districts where bullying is increasing, violence is escalating or suicide attempts or completions are on the rise – in every case – the only way we have been able to slow down and then eliminate the more dramatic behaviours is by bringing both parent leaders (PAC’s and DPAC’s) and school leaders together. If our children see us as connected and collaborative with the school community, for our own children first and then with an eye to the broader success of the community of children themselves, we will see the school become the biggest extended family any parent or child could ever need for a very special seven hours a day!

J. Kevin Cameron, M.Sc., R.S.W., B.C.E.T.S, B.C.S.C.R.



*Board Certified Expert in Traumatic Stress
Diplomate, American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress
Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment
and Trauma Response*

GATHERING PARENT CONSENSUS

One of the greatest challenges being involved in PAC leadership for more than a decade has been engaging enough parents to find consensus on issues. Being the voice for parents at the school, district, or provincial level requires knowing what parents really want. Meetings at all levels are rarely well attended and infrequent and our culture has demanded communication and information exchange at a much faster pace. While nothing can replace face to face discussion, we can certainly engage more parents quickly and directly in other ways. A decade ago it was all about email addresses. If I connected with a parent, I would ask for their email to stay connected. Today our DPAC in Mission realizes the need to connect to many parent groups in various ways. We currently use a website, connection to several Facebook pages, email, and a series of surveys. We just completed our second annual district wide “Parent Feedback Survey” and have found it to be a good measuring tool of parent perception on education in our district. Surveys are great to get an idea of consensus on specific issues such as one week vs two week spring break.

While attending the 2014 BCCPAC spring conference I happened on a workshop entitled “It’s All In The Data” presented by Pat McCrea, a research officer with the Ministry of Education. One source of information that Pat discussed was a bit unique in that it straddles between engaging parents, and collecting other information on the learning environment. The ministry has been working to make the survey more easily customizable by districts and schools, so that survey users can develop questions to collect opinions on topics of local interest. In addition, there is a set of questions that are asked province-wide that provide measures on other aspects of the learning environment. As well as survey information, Pat pointed out to us the wealth of other data that PACs and DPACs can access by exploring their website or by making specific requests from his branch of the Ministry. Sometimes parent consensus requires basic facts to move the discussion forward. The Ministry, for example, would like to work with parent groups to provide trends and patterns that might inform discussion (for example, the growth in the number of students with specific special needs, the attrition of French Immersion students in different districts, the comparison of school grade 7 Foundation Skills Assessment results controlling for the students’ Grade 4 results, or an infinite number of other questions of interest to parents). Pat said that the Ministry’s greatest problem is determining how to get the information into the hands of the parents who require it.

I found this quite intriguing and I vowed to make a request to test out how it works. I made a specific request to track enrolment between specific schools in my district. Julie

*By Scott Young, Mission DPAC(75) co-chair
July, 2014*

Labelle at the Ministry responded to my request in two ways. She sent me a link to their public site where I could access specific information about any school in my district. <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/school.php> Second, after a couple of weeks she sent me a full report of all the student transfers between the schools I requested. Her report was very helpful for me to understand the impact of a board decision to create schools of choice (specialized schools with district wide catchments.) Now I can see how many students have transferred and from where. On the down side, when I accessed the school specific information about my children’s Secondary school there was virtually no data in the parent section. Mission parents have either been uninformed or uninterested in participating in the provincial Surveys. This brings me full circle to the problem of working to engage parents and hear their honest input.

What is working: Our initial district wide survey got about 10% feedback. I consider that a success as that outnumbers parents who attend PAC meetings regularly. The survey was approved through our district admin and partner groups before distribution and we had cooperation in distributing it through PACs and school newsletters. You can see our surveys on our web page dpac.mpsd.ca (on the surveys tab): We offered a chance to win an iPad mini for each completed survey as an incentive- that was an effective tool. This year we only had half the responses without the incentive. We used Survey Monkey and it was pretty simple to do. While surveys have their limitations, they are a great tool to connect to parent opinion. If you don’t want to create your own survey you can get questions added to the Ministry survey in cooperation with your district. You can see a list of the current parent questions here: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sat_survey/surveyquestions/Parent_survey.pdf Whether you create your own survey or utilize the ministry survey, promoting participation aggressively and offering an incentive will bring in more usable data.

Capturing parent consensus on issues is not an easy task for PACs, but when you do get measurable data from parents and can present it to administrators or board members it carries far more weight than 8 or 10 parents at a meeting. Survey Monkey, Ministry Surveys, or accessing existing Ministry statistical data are all tools at your disposal that can help you bring attention to the wider parent voice at your school, in your district, or at the provincial level. To connect to more information on Ministry data contact:

Julie.Labelle@gov.bc.ca or Pat.McCrea@gov.bc.ca

SECTION 177

Few parents have felt the sting of Section 177 of the B.C. School Act, but those who have often carry a scar.

The section allows principals and vice-principals to ban members of the public, even parents, from school property – or restrict their movement – for an undetermined time without oversight by police or the right to appeal. It's a handy tool against drug dealers and troublemakers. But when it's used to restrain parents who are in conflict with school officials, some suggest the goal is not keeping schools safe but silencing critics.

Giles Slade never understood why Richmond school district served him with an order two years ago limiting his access to his son's school and threatening him with arrest if he set foot in a classroom. He believes it was intended to punish him for insisting that the school protect his young son from a bully.

The district claimed Slade had threatened someone but offered no evidence. Slade, an author, denied making threats but admitted he sent many emails demanding action. "I'm a writer – that's what I do," he said at the time.

After receiving the order, the Slades withdrew their son from the school and began homeschooling. "I'm so disgusted with the system now. We'll never put (our son) back in it," he said in a recent email.

BCCPAC has pressed government for legislative amendments requiring schools to consult with police before issuing a Section 177 order to ensure it's appropriate, and to provide an expiry date so that parents aren't left hanging.

The Confederation has also urged government to create an appeal process for parents who believe their ban from school property is unwarranted.

Jane Thornthwaite, parliamentary secretary for student support and parent engagement to Education Minister Peter Fassbender, acknowledges there has been misuse of the law and said the ministry intends to address that.

"One thing that's loud and clear is that in certain school districts, this part of the School Act is used inappropriately to ban parents . . . from schools," she said in an interview. "Maybe Section 177 is jumped on as a way to protect staff but in actual fact there are other ways to make things better."

Rather than amending the School Act, the ministry has been working with partner groups to develop a best-practices guide that would help everyone in the public school system resolve conflicts without invoking Section 177.

By Janet Steffenhagen

Janet is a guest blogger on the BCCPAC website.

In developing the guide, the ministry has been consulting organizations that represent teachers, principals, superintendents and parents. The work was interrupted by the contract feud between government and the B.C. Teachers' Federation (BCTF), but Thornthwaite said the ministry hopes to release the guidebook soon.

The ministry's view of the issue has evolved since 2012 when then education minister Don McRae told BCCPAC there was no evidence that Section 177 was being systematically misused or that parent appeal processes already in place were ineffective.

Since then, ministry staff have examined the data and found "pockets" of misuse, Thornthwaite said. "There is no consistency," she said, noting that some districts are more or less unaware of Section 177, while others are dealing with it regularly.

HOW TO RAISE FUNDS THROUGH LOCAL GRANTS

By Andrea Simpson, she is the Founder and Principal at Prospect Research Canada, www.prospectresearchcanada.com

Community Foundations - Approach your local community foundation. Find it here www.cfc-fcc.ca/about-cfs/find-a-community.cfm. Community Foundations have small grants, community grants and some have specific funding for education, schools and young people. Research them and apply.

Community Groups - It is often possible to get smaller grants from Lions Groups, Rotary Clubs and Kiwanis. Find out if anyone is a member of these organizations and ask for an introduction.

Private and Public Foundations - research your local foundations that might be interested in your project or community.

Set up for success

Get your timing right - Keep an eye on the grant deadlines and get your application in on time.

Make it compelling - what difference will this make to the children at the school? Why do they need it? Make sure that you focus on the outcome of the project.

Continues on page 18

WHO IS WILMA CLARKE? MEET THE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BC TEACHER REGULATION BRANCH

It's been more than two years since B.C. launched a new teacher regulation system, but its workings are mostly a mystery to the people it was designed to serve.

Wilma Clarke, the new executive director for the B.C. Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB), wants to change that, saying members of the public need to know that help is at hand when they have serious concerns about the conduct or competence of an educator.

"A big part of my role is to (determine) how we make sure that parents and students – because I'm a strong proponent for the voice of the student – know what's available to them," she said, adding that she's discussing an outreach plan with the B.C. Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC).

Clarke, who was with the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth before assuming her new position this spring, acknowledged she too was unaware of the TRB until recently.

Part of her message to the public will be about the importance of addressing problems at the school level first and foremost. "We all need to develop the skills to resolve (issues) at the local level as much as possible because that is the child's community and you want them to feel fully welcome, fully integrated and fully supported in their community, even after the incident is resolved."

But should that fail, families often don't know where to turn next. They need to be aware that B.C. has a commissioner of teacher regulation with authority to act on complaints – from both the public and independent schools systems – and order investigations when warranted.

The current commissioner, Bruce Preston, is responsible for ensuring that complaints against anyone with a B.C.

Dates To Note:

- November 7- Early bird deadline for BCCPAC Fall Leadership Conference

- 2014 Fall Leadership Conference in Nanaimo November 21-23 - 2014

- December 15 - Deadline for membership dues to be eligible to vote in the upcoming 2015 BCCPAC AGM

By Janet Steffenhagen

Janet is a guest blogger on the BCCPAC website.

teaching certificate - including principals, vice-principals, superintendents and directors of instruction – are handled fairly and consider the public interest.

Preston, a former Supreme Court judge, was appointed in 2012 for a five-year term and operates independently, with administrative support from the Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB).

While the TRB is part of the Education Ministry, the commissioner is not, Clarke said, noting Preston's position is quasi-judicial and at arms' length from government, like the provincial ombudsman. His decisions about whether a complaint requires further investigation are made in the public interest without political interference, she added.

His appointment was part of a new regulatory system that was created to replace the B.C. College of Teachers (BCCT), which was dissolved as the professional self-regulatory body after an independent review determined it was too cozy with the B.C. Teachers' Federation.

The demise of the BCCT left Ontario as the only Canadian province where the teaching profession self-regulates. In Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, teacher conduct is regulated jointly by the respective provincial governments and the teacher unions, although Saskatchewan is now considering other options to improve transparency and accountability.

Although B.C. no longer permits teacher self-regulation, its system is still quite similar to Ontario's, Clarke said.

In addition to the commissioner, the new system includes the BC Teachers' Council, responsible for setting standards for education, certification, conduct and competence, and a Director of Certification, who maintains an online directory of all certificate holders (www.bcteacherregulation.ca). There is also a Disciplinary and Professional Conduct Board, whose members are selected by the commissioner to consider evidence of misconduct or incompetence and decide if a penalty should be imposed.

Possible penalties include reprimands, suspensions and certificate revocation.

During his first 17 months on the job, Preston received 172 reports about misconduct and/or incompetence from public school boards and 17 from independent school authorities. He also received 89 complaints from the public and initiated 41 investigations on his own after becoming aware of possible contraventions of professional standards.

There are about 68,000 certificate holders in total, although not all are employed.

The vast majority of complaints were about inappropriate conduct, such as failure to respect professional boundaries between teachers and students and failure to maintain an emotionally, intellectually and physically safe learning environment, the commissioner said in his first annual report.

In more than half the cases, the penalty was a reprimand.

The regulatory system is guided by two principles: public interest and transparency. What that means for members of the public is that they may attend discipline hearings and are entitled to know the outcome of any complaints they initiate.

They also have access to the online registry of all certificate holders, which includes information about any discipline that may have been imposed.

The commissioner shares Clarke's concern about the lack of public understanding about teacher regulation. One of his four priorities for 2013-14 was to take steps to ensure the public and the education stakeholders understand the new disciplinary processes.

He also has some specific issues that he intends to highlight. One concerns the conduct of educators who also coach student athletes.

In the latest issue of the TRB magazine called Learn, Preston says he has received a number of complaints from parents about comments from some coaches that may be intended to motivate students but sound more like bullying.

"This type of behaviour may take place in professional sports when a coach deals with mature, seasoned and professional athletes," Preston writes. "However, it has no place when the recipient of the demeaning or belittling comments is a student ..."

"Students, whatever their age, are vulnerable to emotional injury when such behaviour is directed at them from persons in positions of authority, such as coaches."

Professional standards for educators apply on playing fields as well as in classrooms, he says, adding: "In a time when schools and other agencies are making a concerted effort to stamp out bullying, it is imperative that all teachers act as role models to set an example that counters the bullying message."

To do otherwise, could result in discipline, he adds.

The effort to improve outreach will extend beyond discipline matters. Clark also wants to work with educators in the public and independent systems, most of whom she said are excellent, so they can be proud of their professional identity under the new regulatory model.

"We want to be seen as supportive," she said, helping them understand how regulation works and what is expected of them while also giving them an opportunity to recommend improvements.

Two resolutions from BCCPAC's 2014 annual general meeting are also pending. They call for a review of professional standards and a requirement for all educators to update their skills regularly so they are adequately prepared for current classroom conditions.

That includes training in special education and the use of technology.

Clarke said the standards might be tweaked but she doubts they will be changed significantly. That would require a decision of the Teachers' Council, and she said it has not indicated that it intends to make substantive changes at this time.

The council might decide, however, to strengthen policies and bylaws that flow from the existing standards and bring those standards to fruition, she added.


BCCPAC's recommendation that educators be required to update their skills to meet standards for newly graduated teachers is not on the council's agenda at present. But Clarke suggested it might become a point of discussion in light of the debate in Alberta, where a government task force has called for re-evaluation and recertification of teachers every five years. Such a review would ensure teachers engage in career-long professional growth, the task force said.

The Alberta Teachers' Association slammed the report, calling it a direct assault on their profession but agreed in May to participate in discussions with government about teacher quality.

One issue that is already on the council's agenda is action to address the shortage of skilled trades teachers in B.C. schools. The council is considering how it might ease the path to full teacher certification for individuals who already have earned red-seal qualifications. That meshes with the Education Ministry's drive to encourage more young people to enter skilled trades and technology fields, where government says there are critical labour shortages.

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SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEES

VOTE NOVEMBER 15

While most people agree that public education is essential, few care about school board elections.

During the local government election in 2011, barely 30 per cent of registered voters in B.C. bothered to cast ballots. The City of Langford on Vancouver Island had the worst record, with only 14 per cent voter participation.

There were also too few candidates. Almost one in four school trustees were elected by acclamation because they faced no competition for a position that offers little pay and less prestige.

This year, however, might be different. The bitter contract dispute between the B.C. Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and government has boosted the profile of public education, which could lead to greater involvement by people who recognize the importance of the job or desire change.

Teresa Rezansoff, president of the B.C. School Trustees' Association, said she hopes the intense focus on education in recent months will translate into more participation, especially because electoral reform this year means trustees will be elected for four-year terms rather than three.

"I think that will provide some extra incentive to ensure that you get out there and get your voice heard - either by choosing to run for trustee or by voting," she said.

West Vancouver trustee Reema Faris also suggested that more parents are likely to cast ballots this year, particularly in communities where there have been significant controversies. For example, she mentioned Coquitlam, where the board has experienced budget problems.

Five newcomers have already announced their intentions to seek election to the Coquitlam board. In 2011, there were only two non-incumbents and both lost. Three of nine trustees were acclaimed.

Carol Cahoon, one of the five hopefuls, said the budget woes definitely played a part in her decision to seek office. She said she was especially irritated by the board's decision not to release a full report from a KPMG forensic audit into the unexpected 2012-13 deficit, offering only a summary instead.

"I didn't find that satisfactory," she said. "Communications should be No. 1."

Faris, who stressed she was speaking as an individual and not

By Janet Steffenhagen

Janet is a guest blogger on the BCCPAC website.

a representative of her board, said she also expects higher voter turnout in districts where teachers are candidates, and where teachers decide to punish trustees for insufficient support during their strike.

BCTF president Jim Iker recently urged his members to take an active role in the November elections and support candidates who will advocate for more education funding. The province needs trustees who are willing to take a firm stand against government, he said, while praising those in the Cowichan Valley who were fired in 2012 for refusing to balance their budget.

Incumbents might not have the usual advantage this year, Faris suggested. "We may be seen to be as much part of the problem as part of the solution, and there will likely be the call for 'new blood and fresh faces.'"

Candidates with union backing often do well in school board elections, as do candidates who are teachers in other districts. In New Westminster, for example, three of seven trustees are teachers in other districts.

BCCPAC has recommended B.C. follow the lead of Alberta, Ontario and Prince Edward Island with a law disallowing school board employees from becoming trustee candidates. In this province, they're only prohibited from seeking election in the districts where they're employed.

The Education Ministry has acknowledged that conflicts of interest have hampered effective decision-making in some cases but it hasn't endorsed BCCPAC's recommendation. Rather, it said it would "work with boards and BCSTA to ensure that trustees are aware of and trained in good governance practices."

Election day is Nov. 15.



Continued from page 13...

Be specific on how the money will be spent – you are

more likely to get a grant for a specific project than general funding – for example; setting up an organic school garden, establishing a music program or setting up a breakfast club. Funders want to know exactly where the money is going.

Be specific on how much you need – too many grant applications are submitted without a proper budget. Get your numbers right.

Ask for a realistic amount - make sure that you check the

grant guidelines to ensure you are asking for the right amount. If 90% of their grants are between \$5,000 and \$10,000, you are more likely to get a grant within this range. Finally, don't be afraid to ask – the organizations that you will be approaching as designed to allocate money in your community. You deserve it as much as anyone else so don't be afraid to ask.



INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING CONT'D

Continued from page 10...

- **Adult Graduation** - The adult graduation section on LearnNowBC provides accurate and up-to-date information for those who want to earn their high school diploma or prepare for post-secondary education. Adults can find the courses they need to graduate, look at improving their grades or pick up a course or two they may have missed.

Learning Resources - Thousands of learning objects, indexed by subject, course and learning outcome are available for free to use by anyone in the province.

Backing up all of these great services is the LearnNowBC Support Desk. This knowledgeable and dedicated team is available to ensure that you have a great experience.

The Support Desk is available by phone or email, and is always happy to help LearnNowBC users with any assistance or technical problems that may arise. Explore the rich and ever-expanding repertoire of programs and services offered by going to www.LearnNowBC.ca.

Join LearnNowBC at the upcoming Fall Conference to learn about some of the educational programs and services this portal has to offer. The session will showcase demonstrations of the Live Tutoring and Collaborate services. Participants will discover how PAC meetings can be held online to allow more parents to become involved. They will also watch a Live Tutoring session to see how a high school student can get personalized help with academic questions from a subject-specialized tutor for free. Find out some of the many ways that LearnNowBC helps students, parents and educators every day!

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See Live demos with LearnNowBC at the BCCPAC Fall Conference!

THE NEW SCIENCE OF THE TEENAGE BRAIN

Did you ever wonder why your teenagers do the weird and wacky things they do? Do you buy the myth that it is all about raging hormones? Neuroscientists are opening the window on the mysterious teenage brain giving parents inside tips that account for their emotional outbursts, reckless rule breaking, defiant attitudes and sometimes dangerous behavior.

The teenage brain is wired differently than any other generation in history. It is a work in progress. Huge changes are occurring in the brain. Your teens are experiencing biological turmoil. Their brain is a construction zone with blossoming, pruning, myelinating, reconnecting and reconfiguring going on constantly. Your teens can love you in the morning and hate you in the afternoon. The smallest little incident can trigger an emotional outburst that can last for hours, even days. A new brain is being built. All of these changes begin around age 11.

The brain develops in stages from back to front. The last part of the brain to come on line is the front called the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex is your executive center that is responsible for thinking, decision making, analysis, judgment etc. These executive functions are the last part of the brain to be seasoned to full adult dimensions.

Teenagers do not have a mature prefrontal cortex. They do not have an adult brain. Therefore, they cannot think like adults. That means that there will be challenges in many areas of their lives.

However, it is a great time in life for teens to literally build a great brain or waste its potential. Parents, can you support your teenagers to build a brain for lifetime optimal performance?

DEFINITELY YES!

For parents and caregivers it is vital to provide structure and guidance and apply the wise virtues of patience and love. The critical choice for parents is to either control, or provide positive role modeling.

Here are some helpful tips. The teenage brain is constantly looking for role models. Provide positive ones. Stay connected with your teenagers. Spend quality time with them. Don't abandon them. Talk and listen to them. Discuss potential critical issues before they happen.

Is parenting exhausting? Are you experiencing brain fatigue? Memory loss? Are you living and working in a multitasking environment? If so, your precious brain is under stress and that means you are experiencing accelerated brain aging.

Your most treasured possession is your health. At the center of that reality is your body's single most important organ--your brain. Your brain sustains your quality of life. It is the organ of learning, working and relating to everyone and everything in your life. It provides your memories, your hopes and your dreams. How can you connect with

BRAIN WELLNESS FOR PARENTS

the future if you don't have a brain to do it with? The key question is "What is your brain worth to you?"

A wave of dementia is sweeping the country. The Alzheimer League states that over nearly 800,000 Canadians suffer with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. There are no medications to prevent this. The only therapy is prevention. What are your prevention strategies? Do you have a brain maintenance program?

Brain research is providing hopeful optimistic news. There are many things you can do to maintain and improve your brain performance. Cognitive decline does not have to be your future. Through education you can learn how to tune up your brain, grow your brain, overcome brain stress, and slow down brain aging.

At the BCCPAC Convention in November, you can discover easy and awesome prevention strategies: what nutrition a healthy brain needs on a daily basis, what brain killers to avoid, how to make plasticity and neurogenesis work for you in your life, while gaining the secrets of health and vitality. As a parent, wouldn't you want to be more than just alive and surviving the parenting years?



Gary Anaka is a Special Education Teacher, Author, Brain-Based Learning Facilitator, Advocate for Health and Wellness, and an inspirational Public Speaker. He is married and lives on Vancouver Island, British Columbia



BCCPAC FALL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE VANCOUVER ISLAND CONFERENCE CENTRE, NANAIMO

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MOVING FORWARD: AN ACTION PLAN FOR EDUCATION

BCCPAC is holding this full day, World Café Style workshop as a culmination of the information from the August DPAC meeting and the October Education Partners' meetings on BCCPAC's classroom resource fund. This will include dialogue with PAC and DPAC parents from all around the province and the BCCPAC board. We will create a direction for BCCPAC to pursue for the future.

This free gathering for parents will be an excellent opportunity to network with neighbouring districts and make contact and connections with parents from near and far. Participants will share and hear ideas and concerns in an open and safe environment.

Carol Ann Fried will be our facilitator for this event. Her professional, playful, practical style and expertise will ensure that our deliberations are engaging and productive.

Registered participants will receive data on district information about students, summaries from both the August and October meetings and various BCCPAC resources that will help further inform parents about the classroom resource fund.



TO REGISTER FOR THIS FREE EVENT OR FOR
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT OUR
WEBSITE @ CONFERENCE.BCCPAC.BC.CA