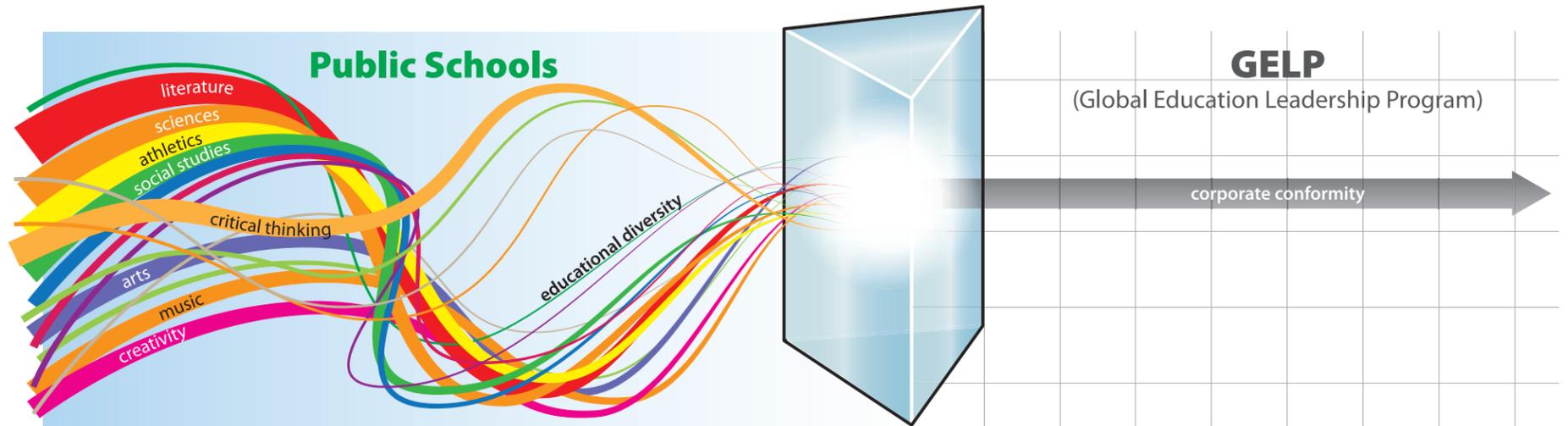


## The corporate education prism



## Gates, Pearson, GELP, and the state of public education

By David Komljenovic

The Gates Foundation and Pearson Foundation have been advocating programs that control who teaches and what is taught through standardized testing in a large number of jurisdictions in the US, and have been leading proponents for a common curriculum across that country. There have been debates around the world about the value or problem with standardized testing to judge school or teacher effectiveness, but it is a fact that test manufacturing companies like Pearson have been influencing decisions of government and these decisions have helped increase the profits of those corporations.

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Diane Ravitch, who once advocated for *No Child Left Behind* in the USA and worked closely with George W. Bush, has come out exposing all of the links between corporate influence on education policy. Consider that the lobbyist for Pearson was the crafter of *No Child Left Behind*—a program that led to disastrous results for public schools in the US. Gates' supposed philanthropy in education and supposed concern for educating children in poverty has actually caused more harm to children in poverty.

That's because the focus isn't on tackling poverty but on judging schools based on those students' scores on standardized tests. Gates has promoted for-profit charter schools to replace what he refers to as "failing public schools" based on standardized tests. However, it is in the poorest neighbourhoods where students do the poorest on these tests (because their basic needs aren't met). Profit-driven reforms in the US are actually decreasing access for the most impoverished students to education.

*It is the mere thought that a small group of individuals could determine the course of public education through their financial power that is of concern.*

Having stated all of this, it is perhaps irrelevant how good an individual or corporation is when it comes to influencing how a state governs its education system. It is the mere thought that a small group of individuals could determine the course of public education through their financial power that is of concern. If we believe that public education is a public right, then everyone should have just as much say over the way children are educated. After all, corporations are beholden to their investors, not to an electorate. An article in *The Guardian* noted the increasing influence of Pearson in government decisions including the establishment of for-profit schools in the poorest regions of Africa. Even though Pearson started out as a corporation intended to assist teachers with resources, its goals have been altered to now include influencing and shaping the public education system.

The concern about the influence of corporations and wealthy individuals over the affairs of the state is not new. Regulations on lobbying activities and influence during election periods are two examples of this. In the US, despite efforts of

some to ensure certain individuals or corporations do not have a greater influence over a government's actions, regulations are either being eliminated or ignored. While there are many factors influencing a society's education system, there is data placing the US education system below the average and Finland near the top. The latter is an example of a system that thrives on co-operation and democratic principles and the former on competition and corporate principles. There is strong evidence too that the more equal a society is, the better off the society is on a range of measures from education to healthcare to crime.

It took time for public education to evolve from a system, which provided children with a certain skill set useful for industry, to one that provided children with critical thinking skills—a system that sought to truly educate children to reach their potential and become participants in a democratic society. Various reforms sought to remove class from the equation and provide all children with the same access to education. The trend is now moving back to the original concept for education, where greater pressures are being placed on children from impoverished backgrounds and industry is looking for a skill set necessary for its purposes and Bill Gates is one of those behind that push.

The Gates Foundation is not only influencing education in the US but also controlling it. As Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Daniel Golden puts it: "Today, the Gates Foundation and Education Secretary

*It took time for the public education to evolve from a system, which provided children with a certain skill set useful for industry, to one that provided children with critical-thinking skills.*

Duncan move in apparent lockstep. Two of Duncan's top aides, Chief of Staff Margot Rogers and Assistant Deputy Secretary James H. Shelton III, came from the foundation and were granted waivers by the Administration from its revolving-door policy limiting involvement with former employers. Vicki Phillips, who heads the foundation's education program, and Duncan participated from 2004 to 2007 in the Urban Superintendents' Network, a group of a dozen school leaders who met twice a year at weekend retreats co-funded by Gates."

See CORPORATE page 3

### On the inside

Recent events and news show plans for implementing the BC Ed Plan moving ahead at a brisk pace. Articles in this edition attempt to unravel the interconnections between large corporations, wealthy business interests, and the BC Ministry of Education.

October is the month for the annual PSA day and this edition includes a selection of highlights from our PSA conferences illustrating the diversity of events and topics,

and the involvement and commitment of so many members.

The future of BCeSIS, the latest manoeuvrings of the provincial government, and the Chicago teachers' strike are part of the ever-changing political backdrop that inspires comment from writers in this edition.

As is customary at this time of year we honour those members who retired over the past year and wish them well.

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## President's message



Susan Lambert

The BCTF is a social justice union. Maybe it's because we see how social inequality plays out in classrooms and schools every day. Maybe it's because we want the best for each and every child we teach no matter what challenges or barriers they face. We are strongly committed to the ideals of equity and universal access. Our commitment to public education flows from this basic tenet of our organizational philosophy.

That's why we have two planks in our "Better Schools for BC" education platform that speak to equity issues. In our Year of Provincial Action (YPA) November was child poverty month. Teachers and locals participated in a series of events and activities, calling on the provincial

government to develop a plan to eradicate child poverty with timelines, targets, and goals.

Our YPA theme for December is Diversity. Our education platform calls for:

- access to broad educational opportunities for all.
- employment-equity programs for Aboriginal teachers.
- strong codes of conduct in all school districts and schools that address racism, sexism, and homophobic harassment and bullying.
- development of learning resources and curriculum that reflects the diversity of students and their families.

In December we are asking, as our YPA action for the month, that teachers light candles to call attention to our goal of creating a world that celebrates diversity. Candles are a universal symbol of hope and optimism. Our candles are intended to shine a light on the unique strengths and attributes of the children we teach.

Just imagine the effect in the mid-winter darkness of myriad flickering candles, each bearing the message that kids, in all their wonderful variety, truly do matter and teachers truly do care. In December, put a candle in the window.

## Registration open for Student Vote BC 2013



This spring, British Columbia's elementary and secondary school students will have the opportunity to cast ballots for the official candidates running in the provincial election.

Student Vote is a parallel election for youth under the voting age, coinciding with official election periods. Participating students learn about the democratic process and party platforms through in-class activities, campaign events, family dialogue, and media consumption. The program culminates with an authentic voting experience where students take on the roles of election officials and conduct a vote on the official election candidates. The results are collected from schools and shared with media for broadcast and publication after the polls close on election night.

Nineteen student vote elections have been co-ordinated since 2003. In the last federal election, 4,300 schools registered to participate and 563,000 student vote ballots were cast across the country.

Following the federal election, Elections Canada commissioned an independent evaluation to assess program outcomes among teachers, students and their families.

Main findings include:

- The student vote program is having a positive impact on political knowledge, discussion with parents, interest in politics and civic duty, which are all important predictors of voting.
- The student vote program is well received by teachers who praise the materials and support they receive from student vote. Overall, teacher satisfaction was very high, with 95% of participating teachers saying they would very likely participate in the program in the future.
- Teachers also felt that their own knowledge and confidence regarding civic education had increased as a result of the program.
- Over 60% of parents reported an increase in their own political interest and knowledge as a result of the child's participation. The program provides families with more opportunities to learn about and discuss political issues. Among parents who voted, 20% reported that their child's participation in student vote positively affected their decision to cast a ballot.

BC students have participated in student vote programs within the 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011 federal elections as well as for the 2005 and 2009 provincial elections. In the last election, 580 schools registered to participate and 85,000 students cast a ballot.

"This will be our seventh parallel election in British Columbia, and we are hoping to reach more schools and students than ever before," said Taylor Gunn, chief election officer of student vote. "Our team looks forward to helping teachers make the best learning experience out of this election."

To register for Student Vote BC 2013, visit: [www.studentvote.ca](http://www.studentvote.ca) or call 1-866-488-8775.

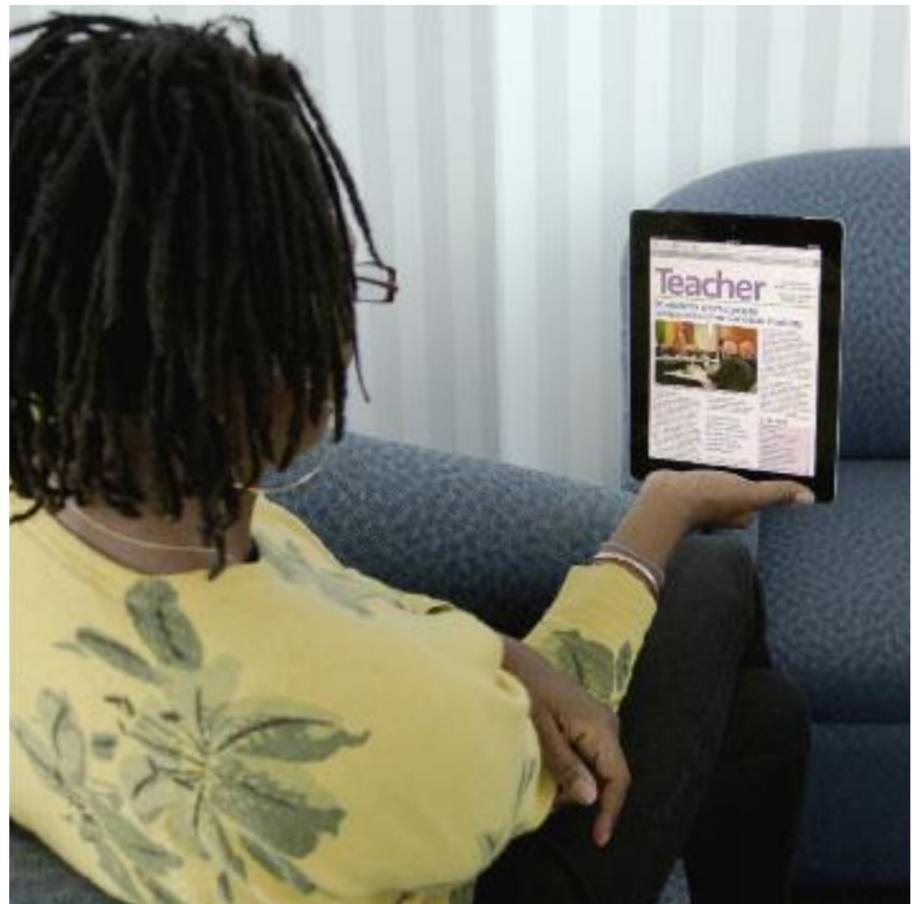
David Halme  
BCTF Communications  
and Campaigns Division

## The newsmag online

The October 2012 edition of *Teacher* was published in an online digital format only. You can access it here: [bctf.ca/TeacherNewsmagOct2012](http://bctf.ca/TeacherNewsmagOct2012)

The link to the October edition was sent to members via e-mail. If you are not on our e-mail list and would like to receive the newsmagazine in this format, please forward your e-mail address to [newsmag@bctf.ca](mailto:newsmag@bctf.ca) and let us know if you are a member—TTOC, on leave, or retired.

This Nov./Dec. edition is in print and has been mailed to our usual mailing lists but the Jan./Feb. 2013 edition will again be in online digital format only.



KAREN STEEL PHOTO

## Readers write

Congratulations! Very smart idea!  
– Vicki

\*\*\*\*

This is the way to go! – Bev

\*\*\*\*

I am glad to see you are now online. I prefer to receive newsletters online and save paper. Our board has recently gone to electronic meetings to save paper. Thank you.

– Leightan

\*\*\*\*

I won't be reading it very much! I tried to click on the link below and Internet Explorer wouldn't open it. Probably because my SD issue Dell laptop needs to be upgraded!

– Fran

\*\*\*\*

Congratulations and best wishes. This is a big change and a great idea especially for the environment and cost as you mentioned, but I will miss reading your newsletter in print.

– Sharon

\*\*\*\*

That's all very well but some of us cannot read long messages online.

– Jean

\*\*\*\*

Thank you for my October edition of our newsmagazine. I always look forward to reading the articles (cover to cover) and staying informed. However, I just browsed

through this edition, and found the print too small on my computer, even in expanded form.

I am 55 years of age, and perhaps my "old-school" ways are an issue, but I sincerely detest receiving my newsmagazine in this fashion. I appreciate your desire to save money and trees, but I will end up not reading our magazine at all, if this is the only format you will make available to us. I want to be able to have my own copy, share articles with my friends, and family, cut out posters, etc.

As a BCTF member for 33 years, I know that my dues more than cover the cost of continuing to make this magazine available to me in hard copy. I am sure we have other members who feel the same way, so for the next number of years (until you have teachers who only want electronic copies) I suggest you continue to meet the needs of all your members, as we have paid for this service.

Please mail me a hard copy of each edition as it is published. – Kim

\*\*\*\*

I do not know who to contact to say thank you for putting the *Teacher* magazine online and sending me a link. A currently non-practicing teacher, I was no longer receiving *Teacher* at home and I really enjoyed getting a chance to read it. – Brenda

\*\*\*\*

# Teacher

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## CORPORATE from page 1

Here in British Columbia, there is a need to be concerned about the influence of Pearson and the Gates Foundation, as well as other corporations like Cisco that are heavily involved in the Global Education Leadership Program (GELP) that the BC Ministry of Education is aligned with. My concerns about GELP are two-fold. Firstly, the ministry claimed to have no real knowledge of where the BC Education Plan was going and wanted to consult with the various communities. The evidence shows that there was a plan in the works prior to these consultations. The second, is that the program is run by a handful of individuals and sponsored by not one, but a handful, of corporate foundations and corporations primarily dealing with technology. The changes to education they desire is one that promotes personalized learning and technology. In whose interest do you believe those corporations are behaving? It is likely not the electorate.

David Komljenovic  
Westside Secondary School, Kamloops  
BCTF Executive member-at-large

## WCB update

The BCTF recently received a decision by the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal denying a teacher's claim for an injury suffered during a fun staff versus students' softball game played at lunchtime on a school day. The vice-chair placed great weight on a WCB policy that states, "The organization of, or participation in, recreational, exercise or sports activities or physical exercises is not normally considered to be part of a worker's employment under the Act." The vice-chair concluded that the policy would allow compensation in exceptional circumstances only and that this case did not meet the exceptional circumstances' test for the following reasons:

- The lunch hour is not a normal working hour.
- As a social studies teacher, the worker was not involved in an activity that was part of his job.
- The activity was voluntary.
- The principal did not directly supervise the activity.
- Fitness was not a job requirement.

Members are advised to think twice about participating in any recreational or physical activities outside of instructional time. Not only do you place yourself at risk of being injured, now you place yourself at risk of not receiving WCB coverage for your injuries.

Sarb Lalli  
WCB advocate  
BCTF Income Security Division

## Corporate influence in the BC Ed Plan

By Tara Ehrcke

It is easy to think that we are immune here in Canada from the influence of the global "education reformers" who claim to want to improve schooling. What they really want is to reduce government expenditures, reduce public service delivery, and reduce the levels of service that are publicly funded. At the same time, they want to create a massive opportunity for corporations in the long sought after K-12 "market."

BC is actually a case study in how these ideas have been purposely propagated as part of a global strategy.

*What they really want is to reduce government expenditures, reduce public service delivery, and reduce the levels of service that are publicly funded.*

Take a look at GELP, otherwise known as the Global Education Leaders' Program. If you are familiar with ALEC (the American Legislative Exchange Council—a right-wing organization that is propagating reactionary anti-union legislation through all the US states), GELP will look frighteningly familiar. It is a global group of "leaders" with a vision—transform public services so they do more with less (so they say), with private partners. It is kind of like charter schools or vouchers, except with the appearance of making things better—more 21st century.

GELP describes themselves on their web site: "GELP is a community of system leaders, policy-makers and thought-leaders collaborating to transform education at local, national and international levels, to equip every learner with the knowledge and skills to thrive in the 21st century."

They acknowledge their "partners"—Promethean, a "global education company that supports teaching and learning through integrated technology and training," the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Cisco Systems Inc., the Ellen Koshlan Family Fund, and Innovation Unit, a "not-for-profit social enterprise that supports innovation in public services."

One of GELP's jurisdictions is none other than BC. There is a proud link to the bcedplan video here: <http://tinyurl.com/9emv9ea>. And a little more digging finds a GELP case study report on, yes; you guessed it—the bcedplan. You can find the whole thing here (<http://tinyurl.com/9nofbsv>), but interestingly, the report identifies the origins of the plan: "At an international conference held in Vancouver in 2009, a team from the Ministry connected with Valerie Hannon, a director of Innovation Unit and a consultant in the Global Education Leaders' Program (GELP). Her presentation, Only Connect,

struck a chord with the BC Ministry and under the leadership of Gordon Campbell, then Premier in the Province, a series of high level meetings took place which resulted in a radical vision for transforming education in British Columbia."

What is Hannon's view of a "radical vision"? Some insight can be found in a paper she co-authored for Cisco Systems. In "Developing an Innovation Ecosystem for Education" (<http://tinyurl.com/94p48vs>), the radical vision is described clearly: "how to design public services that deliver different and better outcomes at a lower cost." (page 7). This is done through "radical efficiencies," such as "a reduction in the number of interventions made by professionals," "decommissioning of space," "looking to alternative providers," and having "users of services frequently assume a more active role in their delivery, which serves to enhance the benefits of the service for these and other users and to reduce the costs of provision."

What does this mean in BC?

Well, just one example is special education—perhaps one of the most expensive areas of our current school system. The process of gutting special education services began back in 2002 with the elimination of targeted funding for most students with special needs. It has progressed through the decade with the elimination of class-composition limits and with the loss of over 700 special education teachers.

*It is critical that teachers see through the smoke and mirrors presented as 21st century learning and see the corporate agenda underneath.*

Evidently, there is more work to be done. Here is how GELP's case study describes the "next wave of reform"—"Decategorisation of special needs education. In the words of

Rod Allen, there will be 'no labels and no medical model. In a 21st century personalised world, I'll tell you what a special education looks like if you can tell me what a 'normal' education is.'"

It is not surprising that Gordon Campbell was struck with Valerie Hannon's ideas. The past decade has been all about the same type of "savings" she describes. As the BC Education Coalition ([stopeducationcuts.org](http://stopeducationcuts.org)) pointed out back in 2010:

- Between 2000-01 and 2009-10, the Education Ministry reports that BC has seen a net loss of 148 schools (what Hannon calls "decommissioning of space").
- Net loss since 2001-02 of public school teachers: 9% (what Hannon calls "reduction in the number of interventions made by professionals").

It is critical that teachers see through the smoke and mirrors presented as 21st century learning and see the corporate agenda underneath. Only then can we advocate for better schools for all students in BC.

Tara Ehrcke  
president, Greater Victoria Teachers' Association

Reprinted from  
[www.staffroomconfidential.com](http://www.staffroomconfidential.com)  
Tara Ehrcke's blog



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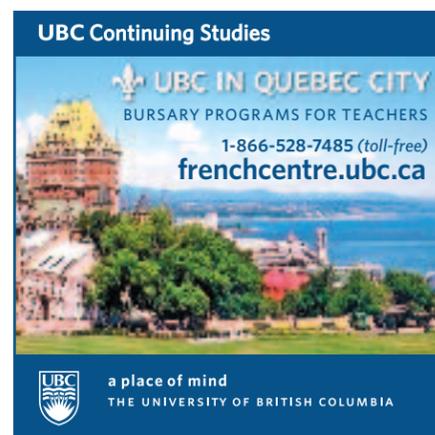
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## Looking back

## 70 years ago

The United Nations have taken the first steps for the liberation of Europe. We hover on the brink of the final struggle to strike down Hitlerism for all time. Canada faces sacrifice and change. At such a time of trial, teachers must understand one thing very clearly. We must understand that we are in the classroom for the business of war. Brave words? Our business is to make them living facts. British Columbia schools have already made many valuable contributions to victory. Yet the plain truth is that we British Columbia teachers in general have not nearly matched the heroism of our fellow-teachers in Britain, the Soviet Union, China, and occupied Europe. This heroism is shown in matchless classroom achievements. – *The BC Teacher*, November–December, 1942

## 50 years ago

There are still some school trustees who take the position that teachers cannot be considered a professional group because they insist on bargaining over salaries. This attitude ignores the fact that bargaining is an inevitable process in modern society, whether it be a commodity, a right, or a service that is up for sale. All over the country, day in and day out, individuals or groups or associations are negotiating, bartering, dickering, contracting, buy and selling, lending and borrowing, renting and leasing, producing and distributing, all upon terms and under conditions reciprocally accepted—in short, bargaining. Out of this unending welter of bargaining come food, shelter, clothing, amusements, the cost of living, inflation, deflation, wealthy, poverty, success, and failure. – *The BC Teacher*, November 1962

## 30 years ago

Cutbacks in spending on education mean that schools must rely more heavily on homes to support and supplement the work of teachers. But fewer families in these hard times can keep pace with what the schools require of them. Inevitably, children are the losers. Older students feel the pressure to take a part-time job after school, to earn spending money if not to help pay the rent, or to buy gas for the family car. Younger students may be unable to participate in sports programs or music programs, because they have no means to earn the money. Some students feel embarrassed about not having the same equipment as others do, like a calculator in math class. – *The BC Teacher*, November–December 1982

## 10 years ago

The BC Liberal government is reshaping public education through privatization and a market approach to education. Many districts have moved quickly to bring in international students, who pay high tuition and top up the district budget. In 2000-01, districts charged them an average tuition of \$10,000. On average, they spent \$5,000 per student, leaving an average profit of \$5,000. Some students, speaking no English, are being put into classes, sometimes without ESL support. With the stripping of language from the collective agreement, the potential for even bigger profits is great. – *Teacher*, November–December 2002

Chris Bocking  
Keating Elementary School  
Saanich

# A place to dream big and put imagination into action

Environmental education: Fostering a generation of youth leaders

By Meg Banavage

In the words of Bob Dylan, *The times, they are a-changin'.*

Today's student generation is quite different than when Sierra Club BC started our environmental education programming in 1998. The speed of natural resource extraction, what we know about greenhouse gas emissions, and the move from overhead projectors to the internet and Google maps has changed remarkably. At the same time, many things remain the same—curious eyes searching for banana slugs in the temperate rainforests, laughter while building snow forts in the mountains, and the resounding "Yes!" when students are asked if they are willing to help protect our natural surroundings.

*For us, environmental education is a framework that helps us learn concepts of biodiversity, cultural history, economic ventures, social justice, harvesting and resource use, and leadership.*

Since 1969 Sierra Club BC has been an active voice for environmental protection in British Columbia. We are a non-profit environmental organization whose mission is to protect and conserve British Columbia's wilderness, species and ecosystems, within the urgent context of global warming impacts. We advocate the responsible use of BC's natural resources while promoting a modern, equitable economy that sustains our planet in every way. Sierra Club BC views youth as a key indicator of sustainability, and we have been providing curriculum-linked, in-class school programming for grades K–12 for almost 15 years.

Environmental education isn't just biology, and it isn't simply resource management. For us, environmental education is a framework that helps us learn concepts of biodiversity, cultural history, economic ventures, social justice, harvesting and resource use, and leadership. From analyzing Thoreau's *Nature* in English class, to understanding the value of wood with instrumental music students, environmental education crosses all sectors of the curriculum.

The goal of Sierra Club BC's education team is to develop a population that is aware of, concerned about, and connected with the environment. Our team of professional educators works hard to provide lesson plans and online education resources that are catered to each grade level and region of BC. We keep educators updated on environmental events and new teaching approaches in our regular online Education e-newsletter. Sierra Club BC also organizes a Youth Steering Committee, a group of environmental and community-conscious high school youth who meet over the school year to implement youth action in the Greater Victoria Area and participate in outings and clean-ups.

These outings, as well as our resources, are constantly being updated to reflect our dynamic ecosystems. Yet the core of what we do—visiting classrooms and delivering interactive school programs—has remained the same since 1998.

Our current roster of programs is themed around temperate rainforest ecology, climate change, non-timber forest products, BC's unique eco-provinces, ecostewardship, water and food security, economy and wealth, and youth action for sustainability. Ranging from one to multiple visits, our programs support student-led sustainability projects in schools. These programs reflect Sierra Club BC's diverse campaigns: from our work on ecosystem-based management in the Great Bear Rainforest, park protection in the Flathead River Valley, to sustainable seafood and a tanker-free coastline. At the heart of the education program is the desire to equip youth with the tools to understand scientific knowledge, recognize the complex sides of environmental issues, and feel empowered to become a generation of future leaders, today.

Our programs have always been offered at no cost, and as such, depending on our funding levels in any given year, we sometimes have to focus our school visits within an easy travel distance from our Victoria office. We also work toward school sponsorships from individuals and organizations wanting to bring our programs into their community. If we are unable to visit an interested classroom, we encourage teachers to sign up for our e-newsletters and take advantage of our education resources: <http://lsierraclub.bc.ca/education/resources-tools>

Sierra Club BC's team of advocates and educators believe a healthy planet starts with motivated individuals willing to get

*At the heart of the education program is the desire to equip youth with the tools to understand scientific knowledge, recognize the complex sides of environmental issues, and feel empowered to become a generation of future leaders, today.*

their hands dirty. We are always available to support students and teachers, whether it is a visit to your Green Team, an online fact sheet, or suggested ideas for action projects. Like all teachers, we do what we do because we know that our future poets, CEOs, scientists, and advocates need a place to dream big and put imagination into action.

Learn more about the work we do at <http://lsierraclub.bc.ca/education>.

Meg Banavage  
school programs co-ordinator  
Sierra Club BC

# Thanks Teach!

<http://thanksteach.wordpress.com>

By Jeff Leitch

Which of your teachers had the greatest positive impact on your life? Wish you could tell them how much you appreciated them? Then this site is for you. We are two teachers (Bill Upward and Jeff Leitch) and one youth worker (Roy Dimond) from British Columbia, Canada. With over 60 years of collective experience we know how rare it is that teachers get to truly understand the effects they have on students' lives. And we think this is a shame; and an opportunity lost. Receiving just one sincere thank-you can do wonders to refresh, re-inspire, and motivate teachers to reinvest themselves with their students, wanting to learn even more methods that will captivate minds and ignite curiosity. Feel free to browse and share the existing stories, but we're really hoping you'll pen your own tale (and encourage others to do likewise) to keep the gratitude train rolling. Who knows, your teacher may just read your story or you may even inspire a young person to take up this important profession. Welcome to "Thanks, Teach!"

\*\*\*

To this day I still remember my Kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Glass, showing me where to hang my coat, where to put my Superman lunch kit, and that putting up my hand allowed my message to be heard much quicker.

Interruptions to Mrs. Glass were a quick one-way trip behind the piano, which I supposed equivocated to future generations' time out. Those who did not accept their consequence contritely were subjected to "missing stations" and that meant not being able to use the Tinker Toys or (gasp)... the new shiny red Hot Wheels car at the City Station! A crueler fate could not be imagined, we silently whispered to each other.

One winter mid-morning as we peeled off our snow pants, toques, and mittens, Mrs. Glass spoke above the post-recess din.

"If you can't follow the rules, then the rules will follow you," Mrs. Glass announced. "A little bird told me that somebody has taken the new Hot Wheels car," dramatically pausing to expose the guilty soul of the delinquent.

But no one raised their hand. No one looked skyward to the heavens, or fumbled awkwardly with their feet. Even my car-collecting best friend, Ty, who would whistle incessantly when on the wrong side of the law, was silent.

Mrs. Glass smiled, swept the room with her grandmotherly eyes, and although not satisfied, deployed us to our respective stations. Shrugging off the accusation, but considerably upset, I proceeded to the rainbow circle mat and rifled through the Reading Centre to choose a picture book to "read."

Picking up a book, my heart leapt as a shiny red hood caught my eye at the bottom of the bookrack.

"The Hot Wheels car!" I silently screamed. Before I could assert myself as classroom hero (who would undoubtedly be knighted with special privileges until the end of time), two of my classmates threw me under the school bus with collective pointer fingers as I reached and held the now-found cherished talisman of Classroom 201.

"Jeffrey has the new hot wheels car!" "He stole it!"

My little heart dropped. I paused and stammered a meek "No, I didn't!" still stinging from the accusations and the condemning shocked eyes of my peers. But my choked pause was an indictment of guilt. My eyes slowly wandered up a long pleated skirt, up the white-shouldered sweater, through the reading glasses and into the eyes of Mrs. Glass who now stood before me.

"I... I..." but my voice would not be heard, as Mrs. Glass stopped me short with a quiet, "No interruptions." She knelt down, put one hand on my shoulder and slowly turned me to face my peers.

I imagined my life sentence behind the piano with no snack and exactly zero friends forever. My eyes welled with hot tears, my nose leaked, and I put my head on my collared shirt and prayed for some level of redemption to protect my innocence.

Mrs. Glass looked at me and asked, "Did you take the car, Jeffrey?"

I found my voice in this potential vote of self-confidence from my teacher, and my excited heart leapt into my throat with a quick, "No."

And Mrs. Glass spoke, the most important words a child can hear: "I believe you."

My heart burst with pride and it was my turn to stare into my classmates' eyes for what seemed like hours, but was only seconds, of sweet vindication and even sweeter relief.

But it wasn't for seconds, Mrs. Glass; that memory was forged into my tiny frame for a lifetime; you helped a little boy navigate safely through incidence, coincidence, and justice. But most of all, you protected my dignity.

And now a teacher myself, I am always wary of the sacred line you drew for me when I challenge my own students to be better than yesterday.

I write this today, some 38 years later to thank you, Mrs. Glass. I just wanted to let you know how deeply your message resonated and how far your echo has travelled.

Believe me.

Jeff Leitch  
Terry Fox Secondary School  
Coquitlam



Canada's next green journalist

## Environmental defence challenge

Young Canadians are challenged to find litter solutions in National and International Journalism Competition. Canada's Next Green Journalist gives Canadian youth the opportunity to have their article, photo, or video about litter published.

This school year, Environmental Defence is asking Canada's youth to think about environmental issues in their community and look for a solution through a journalism competition. The contest, open to youth aged 11–14, 15–18, and 19–21, is an opportunity for young people to contribute an article, photo, or video about an environmental issue that affects us all—litter.

"How we are impacting our environment today will affect our youth tomorrow," said Stephanie Kohls from Environmental Defence Canada. "Through Canada's Next Green Journalist, we are encouraging Canadian youth to think about litter—a local environmental issue—and what they, and their friends and family, can do to make a difference."

The deadline for submissions is March 1, 2013. Submissions will be reviewed by a panel of judges and the winners will be announced in April in time for Earth Day.

Winners will have their submission published online, as well as winning other prizes, an opportunity to compete

internationally in the Young Reporters for the Environment international competition, and an all-expense trip to report on an environmental education mission. Every year, hundreds of young people from 28 countries participate in the program.

One of last year's winners, Becca Williams, from Unionville, ON, created a short video about veganism and how it's an environmentally friendly lifestyle choice. Her video not only won in Canada, but went on to receive a top award internationally. Williams, along with three other winners, departed for Copenhagen, Denmark, on October 24 to learn more about

environmental issues with other youth from around the world.

Interested youth can visit [www.youngreporters.ca](http://www.youngreporters.ca) where they can find more information, including contest and submission details and writing, videography, and photography tips.

Environmental Defence is Canada's most effective environmental action organization—[environmentaldefence.ca](http://environmentaldefence.ca)

We challenge, and inspire change in government, business and people to ensure a greener, healthier, and prosperous life for all.

[jmayville@environmentaldefence.ca](mailto:jmayville@environmentaldefence.ca)



## Why do they want to silence teachers?

By Ken Novakowski

Delegates to the BC Liberal convention held in Whistler October 26–28, 2012, were looking for ways that government could curb the power of public sector unions, in particular, the power of the BCTF. Vaughn Palmer's headline to his column on page 3 of the October 30 *Vancouver Sun* said it all—“Delegates agree teachers' union power needs curbing.” We need to look at the government's record on public education and at our response to try and understand why the BC Liberals would like to silence teachers.

In their 11 plus years in office in this province, the BC Liberal government has time and again attacked the collective rights of teachers and belittled their professional roles, while focusing on picking fights with teachers instead of working with them to build a better education system in BC. They started with legislatively trying to limit our right to strike by declaring education an “essential service.” Then they unilaterally stripped our collective agreement of substantive terms and conditions of employment that teachers had fought for

*In their 11 plus years in office in this province, the BC Liberal government has time and again attacked the collective rights of teachers and belittled their professional roles...*

and sacrificed to achieve through a generation of collective bargaining. And they made it illegal to bargain critical issues such as class size and composition. While we were still reeling from the negative impacts their actions would have on the school system, our work lives, and the education of the students we teach, they fired the duly elected teacher representatives of the College of Teachers and replaced them with hand-picked government appointees.

We did not take any of this lying down. We responded as best we could through the media and public communications, in the courts, with other trade unionists, and in one-on-one encounters in our communities, with our neighbours and the parents of our

students. The government backed down on the College of Teachers issue and reinstated an elected board, albeit, less representative than the previous one. And on the bargaining front, government actions in legislating yet another contract, had us out on a two-week strike in 2005 where we won public support for improvements in the classroom conditions that had deteriorated with the stripping of our collective agreement several years earlier.

And that is exactly why the BC Liberals do not like teachers and the BCTF. It's because we stand up to them. We protest, we organize, we communicate, and we usually do all of this effectively in all parts of the province. But most of all, we persistently continue to advocate for an improved public education system, for better classroom conditions for the students we teach. And they don't like that.

Government revenues had increased as a result of the contract stripping. Financial savings gained from increasing class sizes and reducing the numbers of specialist teachers went to help pay for the tax cuts introduced by the BC Liberals. The result was increased workloads for teachers, diminished learning opportunities for students, and tax cuts mostly for the well to do.

Then, we experienced an unusual circumstance. Government wanted “labour peace” during the then upcoming Winter Olympics so they found the money for public sector wage increases and teachers, along with other public sector workers successfully negotiated a deal. Remember though, that the law, as changed by the BC Liberals, did not allow us to negotiate key terms and conditions of employment such as class size and composition. The most recent round of bargaining concluded earlier this year and the stress and distress that government actions and legislation (Bill 22) created for teachers is still fresh in our minds.

The BC Liberal convention did pass a motion that urged the government “to enact legislation prohibiting public sector unions from using union money for any political purpose.” It is public knowledge that the BCTF does not donate money to any political party. So do they mean that union

dues could not be used to run a public campaign to oppose government actions to strip our collective agreement? Or do they mean that we could not use those funds to publicly advocate for better funding for public education? The reality is that almost everything that happens in society is

*A party that thinks it can continue to rule by using their spent majority in the legislature to stifle democratic discourse is a party whose time to leave office has come.*

political—taxation, public services (public education and healthcare), government budgets, and so on. What kind of political party would choose to trample on the democratic, collective rights of its citizens to organize and advocate?

Palmer reports in his article that the convention considered a motion to “remove the requirement for teachers who teach in public schools to belong to the BCTF.” First of all, that requirement is part of the teacher collective agreement, freely negotiated between teacher locals and their school boards in the first round of local bargaining in 1988–89. In the first round of provincial bargaining, both parties agreed to continue with this provision. Prior to being in the

collective agreement, membership in the BCTF had become a statutory provision of government in 1947. At that time, 93% of BC teachers had already voluntarily belonged to the BCTF. Twice governments tried to do away with this provision. When the WAC Bennett Social Credit government did it in 1971, the BCTF responded by signing up all but 69 of the 22,000 public school teachers at the time. A new government subsequently restored statutory membership and in 1987 the Bill Vander Zalm Social Credit government did away with the provision again. The BCTF undertook a voluntary sign up of all public school teachers with a success rate of over 99%.

That's when we then negotiated the provision into our collective agreement. The motion to do away with that provision got 40% support from the delegates at the convention but the majority adopted other means to curb the power of the BCTF. A party that thinks it can continue to rule by using their spent majority in the legislature to stifle democratic discourse is a party whose time to leave office has come.

Teachers need to be out in droves to help them do this next May.

Ken Novakowski  
retired teacher, former BCTF executive director, BCTF past president

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# Spontaneous drawing and aesthetic energy

By Bob Steele

*All spontaneous drawings are language artifacts  
Most are imbued with aesthetic energy  
A few reach the status of work of art.*  
– Drawing Network Credo

Thousands of drawings by children have come my way over the years, each an amalgam of the drawer's unique perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Given the opportunity, children learn the power of their own invented language of graphic symbols. It begins in the second year of life when words first appear, but the significant difference is that words are coded and drawing is not. Drawing is a largely free medium articulating, expressing, and communicating important life experiences. (These are different functions.) Oral expression, on the other hand, is severely limited in these early years. I am, of course, referring to the spontaneous drawings children produce without help from adults except loving support, recognition of drawing's importance to mental development, and occasional thematic motivation.

Spontaneous drawing is a language medium children are born with, one that flourishes and grows in complexity and subtlety with daily practice. In our culture, children who are left on their own, draw sporadically and tend to limit themselves to repeating their own cultural stereotypes. Authentic drawing, i.e., based on life experience, is limited to those with a special talent. Children do need adult supervision, but any attempt to influence how children should draw to achieve correct or adult-approved standards of naturalism is counterproductive.

The more I study children's drawings the more they seem to radiate what I call "aesthetic energy" and some are so completely charged with this elusive quality that they deserve to be called "works of art." I am dodging a definition of these terms, preferring to let them emerge in the analysis of the three drawings that appear below. It is necessary to point out that in this age group very few verbal expressions, oral or written, can be similarly identified because children must first learn the codes of literacy.

Analyzing or simply enjoying pictures is more profitable when two kinds of seeing are used. (1) An analytical mode, which uses a sharply focused, rational, scientific approach and (2) scanning, which is, soft-focused, non-analytical, and engages the preconscious, intuitive mental functions. The analytical mode tends toward the rational accumulation of facts and relationships, and the logical assumptions that seem consistent with the facts. The scanning mode is best at finding hidden or less obvious relationships and apprehending the relationship of parts to wholes. It awakens the subliminal, intuitive powers of the mind and is at the heart of any creative activity. Scanning is the mode that engages empathy, the natural modality of children when they are drawing. Empathy is much talked about these days, but not much attention is given to authentic drawing which is the richest daily source of it.

## The raven and the eagle

(Ernest, age 8) His teacher had been discussing First Nations myths and this became the motivation for many drawings by the children in her class.

- The text appears on the drawing illustrating the close relationship of literacy to drawing. Words were also used in the pre-drawing motivation that included a visit to a Native centre and later, in the post-drawing discussion. The close relationship of drawing to literacy and literacy to drawing is discussed more fully in other Drawing Network pieces.

- The contrast of forms solidly arrayed

along a baseline (this time, the bottom edge of the picture plane) in contrast to the birds soaring into space, a chase that gives a visceral sense of lift is, in my view, the richest source of aesthetic energy in this picture.

- The unit consisting of crow, sun, moon, and stars is exquisitely rendered and is a perfect example of the unity of form and content. It shifts the momentum of the print from straightforward illustration to an image of cosmic significance. Again, aesthetic energy is a radiating presence.

- A line drawn through the centre of roof pitch, eagle, and crow terminating in the crow's bill would be a gentle reverse curve, an example of "the hidden order of art." The English painter, Hogarth, thought this curve was a form of supreme compositional beauty! Is this part of our natural response to formal beauty or is it culturally implanted? I would opt for the former and that a trace of it occurs in this child's spontaneous drawing.

- Every form—long houses, cedar trees, totem poles, and birds—end in a spiky triangle. It dramatically appears in the two cedar trees, which along with salmon, were nature's special gift to the Pacific Coast tribes. It is also the tree from which the totem would have been carved.

A repeated form contributes to unity, and is typically a product of the scanning mode. This entire arrangement of houses, trees, and totem is a wealth of aesthetic energy.

- Another source of aesthetic energy is the quality of line throughout, a classical contour line typical of most children's drawings and not a single line, suggests hesitation or doubt, a huge accomplishment that the artist managed without even thinking much about it. He was flying on automatic pilot.

- One final point: We should be grateful that Ernest's teacher opened the way to a huge area of thematic subject matter for the daily draw—and let me nail down the principle that subject matter and content are why artists make art—and this includes the child artist—not to create attractive patterns or be wowed by fancy techniques. This drawing represents the marriage of social studies and art to the benefit of both. Social studies is no less intellectual when spontaneous drawing is brought into it as an auxiliary language.

## Santa and his reindeer

(Brendan age 5) We have established that drawing is a language that produces aesthetic energy and that some drawings—the three in this study, for example—are works of art. We have yet to establish the connection between these terms and the mental health of children. We should not forget that an entire profession of art therapy practitioners supports this relationship. Translated into practice this means that children whether they are more or less normal or suffering from psychological or sociological problems, will benefit from daily drawing. The assumption is that projecting images from the deep wells of the unconscious through empathic drawing will contribute to mental health and if needed, mental healing. This does not suggest that non-professionals should become amateur psychologists, only that all children should be offered regular and caring opportunities to draw spontaneously.

Their mental health will be better for the experience and as a secondary benefit they will be better citizens.

- The preceding drawing was based on a First Nations myth, this one is based on the myth of Santa Claus. We might think of it as a myth of childhood. Myths are stories with deep roots in human psychology and the scenarios that give birth to and sustain them make them excellent subjects for daily drawing. And let's not forget the contemporary myths children are attracted to in comic books and other media. Indeed, popular culture is filled with mythological heroes.

- Without necessarily being able to name them, children seem to have an instinctual feeling for the principles of formal organization. This drawing is organized around the principles of balance and tension. The figure of Santa is balanced against on one side and his sleigh and reindeers on the other. And, true to the metaphor, the house peak provides the fulcrum.

- Draw an axial line starting the sleigh rising to the lead reindeer—a Hogarthian curve of beauty again—and arrayed along this line a dizzying complexity of forms, a tangle of legs (24—the correct number for 6 animals) and every reindeer complete with antlers. Not bad for a five-year-old.

- Balancing this huge complexity is Santa on the other side of the fulcrum, a free agent, free, that is, to distribute gifts to children.

- As I like to do from time to time, I pose the question: Could a five-year-old manage anything close to this drawing in the emerging language of words? Would articulation be equally possible? Expression? Communication? This is not to suggest that drawing is superior to literacy.

In the long run, literacy is the language we need the most and it is useful in ways drawing could never achieve. As the codes of literacy are gradually achieved, drawing becomes an enriching auxiliary, but in the early years when language as the umbrella concept for a cluster of media—dance, music, drama, math—is so important to mental development, uncoded drawing truly is special for children. And how serendipitous it is that it is also an aid to literacy.



*The more I study children's drawings, the more they seem to radiate what I call "aesthetic energy" and some are so completely charged with this elusive quality that they deserve to be called "works of art."*



## Attacked by sea monsters

(Laura age 5) Laura's drawing is based on a real dream, the nightmare we all have from time to time. My own experience is that nightmares were more horrifying and frequent in my younger days. This tightly packed drawing sums up a five-year-old's nighttime experience. It is charged with aesthetic energy and is clearly a work of art.

- The forms are tightly organized in a circular pattern, a closed circle except for the opening near the bottom edge of the picture plane.

- Forms precisely touch neighbouring forms in at least six places, e.g., the girl's foot in the shark's mouth. These create what I will call energy sparks. The child's psyche was disturbed by the trauma of the dream and placing forms in a precise relationship to each other was part of the healing process. I would suggest this was one way to establish the order of the waking state from the dream's chaos. Another example: The same child's other foot just touches the surface of the wave highlighting the perilous situation—in the water for danger, another kind of danger. Another spark. The drawer may be saying: I am now awake and able to place forms in a precise relationship. I am no longer in the land of chaotic and fearsome dreams.

- The section we have been describing—a dangerous situation, one that creates the most intense alarm—is rendered in perfect clarity. Now turn your attention to the girl in the boat. It is a far more complex suite of forms, but again it is handled with clarity. This highlights a quality I find in most drawings by children in this age group, their unerring feeling for placement, for giving each piece of the puzzle breathing room. ("I just put a line around what I know," said one child when asked how she drew.) This is the way it is, the firm line and expressive, but controlled forms seem to be saying, this way and no other.

- And now this drawing's mystery marks. Note the dots on all the protagonist's eyes. What is it about eyes, especially the eyes of dream characters? And what are we to make of the deliberately emphasized dot within the boat shape? First, it is not in the boat but on the drawing. It must be important because it is placed intuitively in the centre of the drawing, precisely centred latterly and roughly centred vertically. Perhaps it helps if we remember that the image is circular and the dot can then be thought of as the hub of a wheel form. I wonder if Laura herself would be able to tell us. Still, we should be grateful because it fills the "hidden order of art" premise perfectly.

## Concluding remarks

If you have been taking children's drawings more or less for granted and if you have been won over to the claim that drawings are language artifacts (or if you knew it all along) then you must be wondering about the evidence I have put together here to establish the "aesthetic energy" and "work of art" principles. (I am in a continuous state of wonderment too, but how else can we account for the evidence?) In this article I have discussed the near-perfect source of aesthetic energy in Ernest's "crow and eagle" drawing, Brendan's extraordinary essay on balance and tension in "Santa and His Reindeer" and Laura's nightmare horror story. These examples are taken from a book-in-progress, which may include as many as one hundred works of art, before it's finished, so these qualities in drawings are not all that rare. We have to admit that this is an astonishing dimension of the psychology of childhood and alas, one that appears to be somewhat rare. (I hope I'm wrong.)

If there is an explanation for this phenomenon, it might go along these lines: It is familiar to anyone who has watched a child immersed in the act of drawing that they are lost in the process and are entirely



unself-conscious. This also means they have no critical standards to meet, no culturally imposed goals or objectives. This means to me an automatic acceptance of pictorial elements as symbols just as words are symbols and not just the crude beginnings of representations. I suggest that the prevailing assumption is that the ultimate goal is naturalism and that the goal of achieving naturalism is too difficult to achieve. The typical first symbol for a human person is the two-year-old's circle for head/body with lines for limbs and a happy smile for emotional content. Whether the child knows it or not this is a symbol just as the letters for MOM is a word symbol. The child knows that his mother is not remotely like the head/body reduction, but it gives him a language unit, allows him to express thoughts and feelings that otherwise would remain bottled up. When he is five, the symbol has become enriched by experience and Brendan's far more complex symbols permit a far richer story. The direction was toward realism (true to the experience, however crude the drawing). This is what it was from the beginning, realism and not naturalism, i.e., optical correctness. When he drew the Santa drawing, Brendan was in control of a

growing graphic language, both vocabulary and syntax, to make statements that originated in his eyes, his heart, and his mind.

All this requires a theory of mind and as I am not a psychologist I will keep this simple but as persuasive as I am able. First it assumes that children have limited powers of analysis, which means the artists who made these drawings could not possibly have consciously planned the astonishing relationships we find in their drawings.

Where do they come from, these remarkable drawings? We use the conscious mind with ease, and the unconscious mind too. I rarely encounter a function of mind halfway between the two and it's called the preconscious. We might label it intuition, and I have called it "flying on automatic pilot." This brain function is active when the child experiences empathy in imaginative play, sports, performing music and dance, and always in spontaneous drawing when the focus is on personal experience and mental growth.

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## Mt Seymour offers five ski scholarships for Lower Mainland Grade 3 classes

Application deadline: December 14, 2012

Mt Seymour is offering five, low-income, Metro Vancouver Grade 3 classes the opportunity to try skiing and snowboarding for free.

The scholarships, funded by the sale of chairs from the old Mystery Peak chairlift, offer children the opportunity to experience a day of skiing and snowboarding who would otherwise not be able to do so.

The scholarship, based around 40 students, includes:

- a full-day lesson program of four hours of ski/snowboard lessons including lift ticket and rentals.
- transport to and from your school to Mt Seymour.
- lunch from our cafeteria.

To be eligible for the Mt Seymour Ski Scholarship, your Grade 3 class must be located within the Lower Mainland, studying the BC curriculum, never taken a class on a field trip to Mt Seymour, and is part of a low-income school.

Eddie Wood, general manager of Mt Seymour Resort Ltd., commented, "Ask any Vancouver resident where they learned to ski or ride as a child and most will say Mt Seymour! We operate the longest running professional Ski and Snowboard School on the North Shore and we would like every young person in the Lower Mainland to have the opportunity to experience skiing or snowboarding. To work toward making this vision a reality we are offering scholarships to five Grade 3 classes from low-income schools that would otherwise be unable to visit us."

The original Mystery Peak chairlift was replaced this year with a \$5 million high-speed Doppelmayr quad chair that reduces line-up times by more than half, doubles capacity, and reduces travel time by six minutes compared to the old lift.

For further information, or to apply for a Mt Seymour Ski Scholarship, please contact Mt Seymour on 604-986-2261, ext 215 or e-mail [schools@mountseymour.com](mailto:schools@mountseymour.com).

Applications close on December 14, 2012.



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## Opinion

# Wi-Fi is safe: Health Canada and the World Health Organization

By Greg Payne

In the October 2012 edition of *Teacher*, teacher Dan Baljak writes an article titled, "Wi-Fi Technology: Is it time to reconsider?" This question is answered with great clarity by Health Canada—here is the relevant quote from their website: "...current scientific evidence supports the assertion that RF energy emissions from Wi-Fi devices are not harmful. Health Canada's conclusions are consistent with the findings of other international bodies and regulators, including the *World Health Organization*, the *International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection*, the *Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers* and the U.K. Health Protection Agency."

Baljak cautions us that Wi-Fi might be dangerous. However, the three main respected science-based institutions that he himself repeatedly references in his article to support a reconsideration of Wi-Fi policy, clearly disagree with him (Health Canada, the WHO and IARC). Health Canada goes on to say that, "no pre-cautionary measures are needed." You can view the entire page by googling "Health Canada Safety of Wi-Fi Equipment"—it's a quick read that simply demonstrates that the answer to Baljak's title question, at this time, is a categorical "no."

This seemingly controversial issue would be dealt with much more productively if the public was better informed and made aware that a scientific consensus exists on this topic. This scientific consensus is hard fought and reliable, with institutions such as Health Canada and the World Health Organization reviewing thousands upon thousands of papers to determine it. High quality research is given more weight in establishing this consensus and necessary adjustments are regularly made when convincing new evidence is discovered. It's very important to

keep this in mind when trying to determine the validity of any health-related claim.

The public also needs to be made aware of another community, motivated by various financial and ideological reasons, which

***This seemingly controversial issue would be dealt with much more productively if the public was better informed and made aware that a scientific consensus exists on this topic.***

promotes unfounded ideas about the radio frequency energy used in Wi-Fi, mobile phone, television, and radio technologies. Though this alarmist group exists largely outside of the mainstream scientific community, they have been effective at using the media, the internet, and their own online journals to confuse a segment of the population into believing that the radio waves that we commonly use in every-day life are dangerous. There are many reasons why the ideas held by this community are accurately described as pseudoscience; a survey of their publications reveals that they commonly misrepresent scientific studies or conclusions, cherry-pick only the information and quotes that back their agenda, cite studies that have not been replicated, and misleadingly apply conclusions from lab or animal studies to humans when proper epidemiological studies have yet to be performed. The contributors to the excellent website "EMF & Health" have done an admirable job of exposing such pseudoscience.

However, here is the most important thing to remember about this alarmist community; they haven't convinced the scientific community of their extraordinary and

inaccurate claims. If the EMF alarmist claims were true, and backed by compelling scientific evidence, this would certainly be reflected in the recommendations from institutions such as Health Canada and the WHO. Consequently, anyone who tries to convince you that these or other well-respected scientific institutions do not have the best available information, backed by the best available evidence, runs the risk of venturing into the shady world of conspiracy theorists; it is simply ludicrous for anyone to seriously put forward the idea that these institutions might be unaware of, be ignoring, or be covering up compelling scientific evidence. A simple awareness of these science-based institutions should come as a great relief to those of us who do not have the time or the expertise to evaluate the myriad of unfounded claims that are sometimes irresponsibly promoted in the media or forwarded to us in e-mails by well-intentioned, but misinformed, friends. It is reassuring to know that reliable information, conclusions, and recommendations to help us make sense of these topics are just a click away.

A seemingly important development in this debate occurred in May 2011 when the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a branch of the WHO, added radio waves to its Group 2b list of 272 agents that are possibly carcinogenic. Since then, both the media and alarmists, have frequently misrepresented this development. For example, this classification applies only to radio waves from mobile phones (see WHO fact sheet #193), not from Wi-Fi technologies or cell phone base stations—and yet alarmists seldom, if ever, make this distinction. While both Health Canada and the WHO acknowledge that more research of cell phone use and cancer is warranted (particularly in children), it's essential to

keep in mind that neither institution ever comes close to suggesting that cell phone use causes cancer. This is important to remember when considering any suggestion or encouragement made to reduce radio wave exposure from cell phones. Specifically, the WHO itself states unequivocally that "based on a recent in-depth review of the scientific literature, the WHO concluded that current evidence does not confirm the existence of any health consequences from exposure to low level electromagnetic fields" while Health Canada states, "The IARC classification of RF energy reflects the fact that some limited evidence exists that RF energy might be a risk factor for cancer. However, the vast majority of scientific research to date does not support a link between RF energy exposure and human cancers."

To conclude, any study that we might come across, or that someone might send to us, has probably already been evaluated by Health Canada, the WHO, and other science-based organizations; you can verify new or extraordinary claims by using these institutions' websites. These organizations, representing the scientific consensus, have done the heavy lifting for us and can be considered as both reliable (to the best of our current knowledge) and authoritative. In today's information age our teachers, school boards, parent advisory councils, and politicians at all levels of government, are best served by making decisions backed by science-based institutions. At this moment, they clearly indicate that Wi-Fi is safe for home and schools.

Greg Payne

Princess Margaret Secondary School, Surrey

References available upon request.

# PSA October conferences rock

## Computer-using educators

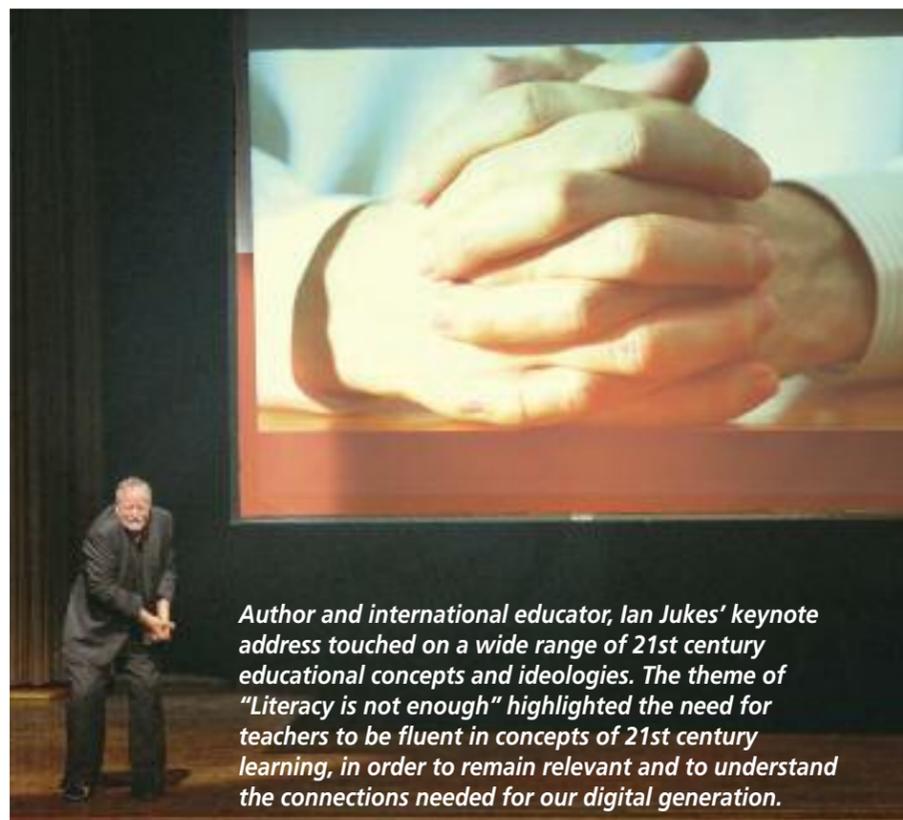
### Literacy is not enough

The annual conference for Computer Using Educators of BC (CUEBC) took place at John Oliver Secondary School in Vancouver. Over 650 educators from around British Columbia were in attendance. More than 30 workshops were on offer with a variety of technology themes, including: flipped classrooms, digital literacy standards, digital games, and mobile device integration in the classroom.

This year's keynote speaker was author and international educator Ian Jukes (@ijukes). Jukes has written over 12 books and contributed over 200 published articles on technology and education. His 90-minute speech touched on a wide range of 21st century educational concepts and ideologies. His theme of "Literacy is not enough" highlighted the

need for teachers to be fluent in concepts of 21st century learning in order to remain relevant and to understand the connections needed for our digital generation. Jukes believes that educators should be adapting to the evolving needs of our digital generation of students and that creating tangible connections is still paramount to being an effective educator, but we need to go about it in a different way. Eleven lucky registrants walked away with an iPad in the door prize draws; others won laptops and Adobe Creative Suite packages. Highlights from the conference can be seen at [www.cuebc.ca](http://www.cuebc.ca). Also, don't forget to follow @cuebc on Twitter to connect with like-minded educators from across the globe.

*Jon Hamlin (@jonhamlin)  
executive member, CUEBC*



## Primary teachers

### Mindful play

On October 19, 2012, Dr. Stuart Shanker addressed the audience of teachers gathered at the Marriott Pinnacle Hotel in Vancouver for the annual BC Primary Teachers' Association conference, "Mindful Play."

He spoke to us about his five-domain model of self-regulation, which includes:

1. Biological Domain—how you respond to stimuli at a biological level.
2. Emotional Domain—how you deal with strong feelings.

*"We are in the midst of a revolution in educational thinking and practice. Scientific advances in a number of fields point to a similar argument—that how well students do in school can be determined by how well they are able to self-regulate."*

*—Stuart Shanker*

3. Cognitive Domain—how you process, store, and retrieve information.
4. Social Domain—how you understand and respond to social cues.
5. Prosocial Domain—how you demonstrate positive social skills like empathy.

Teachers need to help children move toward managing their own self-regulation. Successful self-regulators know how to:

- feel calm and alert and know what it feels like.
- know the signs of stress and what causes it.
- have a desire to deal with those stressors.
- recognize stressors both inside and outside of the classroom.
- develop strategies to deal with stressors.
- be able to recover efficiently and effectively from stressors.

Teachers left the keynote address inspired and interested to put his ideas into practice.

*BC Primary Teachers' PSA*

## Teacher-librarians

### We're in! Inquire, inspire, innovate!

BC teacher-librarians rocked Riverside Secondary School in Port Coquitlam with more than 340 participants, 41 workshops, and 24 vendors, to meet the needs of every attendee at this year's PSA. I would like to thank our hosts Coquitlam School District SD43 and the three co-chairs of the conference—Joanne Howey, Heather Daly, and Leslie Ikeda—for putting on a wonderful event that truly did let us inquire, inspire, and innovate throughout the day.

*Our libraries are places where everyone is building, doing, and making (learning commons). The path to learning is participatory.*

Keynote speaker Dr. David Loertscher's words on learning commons and how technology increases the efficiency and the learning for students was encouraging. He reminded us that technology is not a playground; it's an opportunity to learn using collaborative tools. By learning, exploring, and inquiring together, we create a greater result and understanding than any of us working individually. Our libraries are places where everyone is building, doing, and making (learning commons). The path to learning is participatory. Thank you, Dr. Loertscher for your inspiring words.

## Home economics

### Fresh: 21st century approaches to teaching home economics

Don't ask me how, but I can spot a home ec teacher conference from a mile away. Maybe it's the fact that the vendor's hall displays costumes, graduate program information, computer programs, and RealCare™ babies.

This year, THESA (Teachers of Home Economics Specialists' Association) held their annual conference in Kelowna. Entitled "Fresh: 21st Century Approaches to Teaching Home Economics," 140 attendees came from across the province, the Yukon, and the United States. This year, we were honoured to have Joanne Pearson attend, the vice-president of the International Federation of Home Economists (IFHE).

*We discussed why home economics is devalued, even though our course content is so valued.*

The conference started with a keynote address by Mary Leah de Zwart, who reminded us of home economics' past, as it's only by investigating our past that we are truly able to look forward. We also heard from Lisa McCullough, superintendent for SD 48, who spoke about new directions in education. Our



West Vancouver Superintendent Chris Kennedy spoke with us about the big pieces being possible because we have technology. "Libraries are relevant, connected, and unlimited. Technology is powerful when used to do new things kids couldn't do if they didn't have technology." Chris encouraged us to tell the story of tomorrow by leading the way today.

New to our PSA this year was live video streaming through ustream. A huge thanks to Richmond's co-ordinator of Library and Information Services, Gordon Powell, for broadcasting live throughout the conference. Teacher-librarians continue to lead the way in how we connect and share information.

Congratulations to our award winners Moira Ek Dahl, Tammy Reynolds, Val Hamilton, and Bonnie McComb.

*Val Martineau  
member-at-large, BCTLA*

speakers reminded us of the importance of home economics courses for our students.

Sessions included investigating lesson ideas for students with celiac disease, using web cams in class for demonstrations, colour theory, vegan cooking, sharing sessions for middle school teachers, and using inquiry as a model for professional development. Along with three members of the THESA executive and the VP of IFHE, I was part of a panel presentation that focused on the future of home economics. We discussed why home economics is devalued, even though our course content is so valued.

I've now attended home ec conferences in three countries (Australia, Canada, and the US) and rather than being entertained by the similarities, I am comforted. I realize the passion that I feel for what I do is shared amongst a group of professionals. Home economics courses have direct impact on students' daily lives, both present, and in the future.

Teachers left this year's THESA conference renewed and inspired, reminded that they, like all teachers, are superheroes.

*Denise Nembhard  
Teachers of Home Economics PSA*

## Music educators

### Unison 2012

The BC Music Educators' Association proudly hosted over 500 teacher delegates at the conference "Unison 2012: Coming together in music education" but there were many more involved over the course of events. With 35 industry partners on site in the Marketplace displaying the newest technologies and resources teachers were sure to find some wonderful treasures for their music programs. The event kick-off was at the delegate's reception Thursday night and included a celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Canadian Coalition for Music Education, a national voice for music advocacy.

Friday evening and Saturday afternoon focused on the accomplishments of our students in five different performance ensembles: concert band, concert choir, vocal jazz, jazz band, and orchestra. These auditioned ensembles represent the highest performance levels of secondary school students from across the province and in turn, the dedication to excellence upheld by their music teachers. Performing for an audience of 800 parents, teachers, and community members, these performances were one of the many highlights of the three-day event.

Delegates had their choice of 58 clinics including a wide variety of topics such as technology in music education, specific

instrument tips, choral techniques, African drumming, conducting, and Kodaly- and Orff-based elementary music. With 45 clinicians from across Canada and the United States, our Conference Planning Committee worked to ensure delegates had the superior professional development opportunities they have come to expect at BCMEA conferences.

The keynote address by Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser brought laughter, tears, encouragement, and rejuvenation. He guided teachers to reflect upon the path that brought them to this point, to remember those who inspired them, and to know the importance of the positive impact that they are currently having on the next generation. The audience took pause knowing that their passion is recognized and appreciated by the hundreds of students they work with daily.

The connections made and associations formed during the annual conference are invaluable and seen by many to be of equal importance to the clinics and meetings held over the three days. Uniting for the goal of professional development at PSA events, the music teachers left the conference knowing that though often working in isolation, they have a strong network and kinship with their fellow musician teachers across BC. The BCMEA is already looking forward to and planning the 2013 conference.

*Regan McLachlan  
editor, BCMEA*



## Modern languages

### Celebrating languages conference

Delegates at the British Columbia Association of Teachers of Modern Languages (BCATML) "Celebrating Languages!" conference enjoyed a new feature, the World Café discussion forums. In small groups, teachers of various languages and programs discussed issues and concerns, and shared ideas and experiences on a range of topics such as curriculum, assessment, and communicative teaching.

Celebrating Languages! was an occasion for both elementary and secondary teachers to enjoy workshops related to

their specialty areas including teaching French, Spanish, German, Japanese, Mandarin, and Punjabi, as well as generic workshops of interest to teachers of any language. This was indeed an event in which a celebratory atmosphere prevailed in workshop themes such as music, culture, storytelling, technology, and practical classroom activities and ideas.

Underlying the selection of topics was of course the ever-present goal of connecting language teachers to enhance their work in bringing rich language learning experience to their students.

*Sandi Kostur  
co-president, BCATML*

## Culinary arts

### The mighty Fraser



British Columbia Culinary Arts Specialist Association's fall conference this year was called "The Mighty Fraser." Before we went up the Fraser, from Mission, to explore the cultural, historical and social aspects of the river, we listened to a speaker from the Vancouver Aquarium's "Ocean Wise" program. The presentation included the destructive nature of commercial fishing and that if the current practices continue most of the world seafood will be wiped out. We were told that one of the positive trends is the influence of chefs in our choices of sustainable seafood.

On the Fraser we observed traditional native fishing of chum salmon that has sustained itself for hundreds of years because of their less destructive ways of fishing. At the historical town of Kilby we learned the historical and cultural significance that the river had on both the natives and on European settlers. Our lunch was blessed by a First Nations man acknowledging the importance of the river in all aspects of life.

*Eric MacNeill  
BC Culinary Arts Association president*

## Learning assistance

### Healthy minds matter

The Learning Assistance Teachers' Association annual fall conference "Healthy Minds Matter: Education and youth mental health" was held October 19 in Burnaby.

Keynote speaker Don Buchanan, from Ontario's Centre for Child's Studies, presented "Building Mental Health Literacy in Educators." Buchanan explained the two competing models of understanding mental health—the emotions model and the genetic model and their limited belief systems. Research concludes that stress releases neurochemicals, which in combination with genetic vulnerability is believed to cause most of the mental illness/health experienced. Buchanan provided an overview of a mentally healthy classroom using case studies, strategies, and participant involvement. The afternoon breakout session featured an in-depth discussion based on the publication, *Making a Difference: An Educator's Guide to Child and Youth Mental Health Problems*—a 15-section resource conference that participants and members received from LATA.

Dr. Peiyoong Lam, of Vancouver and Dr. Bertrand Wicholas, who currently practices in Seattle, along with Lily Yiu, a teacher, all of whom work (or worked) with students at the Provincial Eating Disorders

Program at BC Children's Hospital, jointly presented a powerful image of children with disordered eating, and highlighted the host of physical and mental effects on the human body. Foremost for teachers is the fact that the brain shrinks if a child is not eating adequately, and that learning is difficult due to the physical and psychological factors associated with eating disorders.

Dr. Ron Manley, a Vancouver registered psychologist, presented "The Development of Self-Regulation of the Nervous System in Educators and Students." Manley explained how the brain and nervous system function and store trauma and stress. He emphasized the need to pay attention to the limbic system of the brain where trauma is stored versus frontal lobe therapy where continued talking about trauma may stimulate re-traumatization. He also shared current research on work in traumatology and how it applies to students.

A key message in the presentation was the importance of supporting students to learn how to self-regulate and to provide opportunities to take in positive experiences to build resiliency.

*Maureen Bencze  
vice-president, LATA*

## PSA conferences continued

### Educators of the gifted

#### Supporting gifted students

Reading and writing with gifted students and supporting social and emotional development of gifted learners

On October 19, Stephanie Tolan, the keynote speaker at the AEGTCCBC Council's annual conference, eloquently shared insights into gifted education, imparted valuable wisdom, and shared strategies for working with gifted students. Tolan is the Newbery Honor winning author of *Surviving the Applewhites*, and has written over two-dozen novels for children and young adults. She co-authored *Guiding the Gifted Child* and created the well-known essay "Is it a Cheetah?" which has been translated into over 40 languages. As an advocate for gifted education and a senior fellow at the Institute for Educational Advancement, she was instrumental in the creation of Yunasa, a camp for highly gifted children that focuses on bringing holistic balance to young people's lives.

Tolan explored many rich ideas, and her witty and articulate conversation covered topics ranging from the social emotional needs of gifted students, the continuum and diversity of gifted individuals, and the nature of intelligence and learning itself. She invited the audience to participate in a nuanced investigation into the power that reading and writing have to transform ideas and open up pathways for gifted students to share their thoughts and get to know themselves as learners, in



*Tolan explored the "Is it a Cheetah?" metaphor, which likens gifted students to being able to run quickly and freely like a Cheetah when they are able to exercise their potential.*

order to explore the inner recesses of their imaginations.

The presentation commenced by highlighting how unique gifted students are, and Tolan emphasized the idea that each gifted individual has their own constellation of unique abilities. She then explored the "Is it a Cheetah?" metaphor, which likens gifted students to being able to run quickly and freely like a Cheetah when they are able to exercise their potential. According to the metaphor, sometimes school systems unwittingly restrict gifted students' desires to run and explore their passions and ideas. As educators, we must strive to create inspirational, open-ended, and personalized learning environments that allow the gifted "cheetah" to truly run free and be intellectually nourished. Tolan suggested that numerous gifted children may not at first glance appear to be cheetahs, but they must be given the freedom, respect, and understanding to dwell in the realm of ideas, thoughts, and passions.

The afternoon culminated in a discussion of children's literature and writing. Tolan imparted some writing techniques to help gifted students become more attuned to connecting with their thoughts and crafting pieces in a freer, exploratory manner where they follow the whims of their pens. Additionally, she discussed the value that choosing books that inspire critical thinking can have in order to give gifted students the intellectual sustenance they so richly need. It is important to find literature that stimulates ideas and matches students' advanced cognitive levels, but that is still developmentally appropriate to where they are emotionally. Finding this literary equilibrium can be challenging, but Tolan suggested some beautifully thought-provoking material, ranging from issues of bullying, dystopia, thinking differently, and making friends, which would work for a variety of ages.

After a day of motivational ideas and rich discussion, one quote from an Osho Zen Master that really resonated with me was: "You are not accidental. Existence needs you. Without you something will be missing in existence and nobody can replace it."

This empowering statement is something I want to pass on to my students, so that they can harness their inner power and realize that they each bring something special to existence.

*Shera Niewenhuizen  
president, Gifted PSA*



### Art and drama educators

#### Dualing arts

There was definitely some artistry in the air last month in Surrey. During the PSA ProD day in October the Art and Drama Professional Specialist Associations co-hosted a conference in Surrey at Clayton Heights Secondary.

The "Dualing Arts" saw more than 250 delegates attend the two-day conference. Many attending delegates commented how effective and beneficial it was to have the two PSAs join together as we so often work together in schools. TTOCs also commented how worthwhile it was for them to essentially attend two conferences for the price of one.

Some of the many highlights of the weekend included the wide array of workshops offered (over 55), great food, many door prizes, and lots of



opportunities to connect with peers and visit exhibiting vendors.

A special thanks to the conference coordinators and the Art and Drama PSA executives for seeing this worthwhile event come to fruition so successfully.

*Colin Plant  
PSAC-SAC Chair 2012-13*

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## The "Every Teacher in Every School" teacher survey

What do teachers think about the climate of Canada's schools for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Two-Spirit, and questioning (LGBTQ) students, students with LGBTQ parents, and other students who are homophobically harassed?

Every teacher across Canada is asked to respond to a survey that asks about your views and the situation in your own school. All the teacher organizations across Canada have agreed to ask their members to go online and express their views on the survey.

The study is aimed at exploring which approaches to inclusion seem to work, and in what contexts, and which don't; what supports educators in doing this work, and what holds us back.

Project reports will be distributed widely throughout the school system and good practice recommendations for educators working in a variety of contexts will be available on [MyGSA.ca](http://MyGSA.ca) and teacher organization websites after the survey is completed.

Please take the survey at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/8hvk6c>



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## Beyond BCeSIS, but not soon

By Larry Kuehn

The good news is that BCeSIS will be replaced. The bad news is that it won't be soon, and getting it right the next time will not be easy.

BCeSIS is the troubled student information system that the ministry has spent \$100 million on in the last decade. That doesn't count the many local costs and the price of extreme aggravation of many teachers produced by the limitations of BCeSIS.

The ministry knew by the fall of 2010 that BCeSIS had to be replaced. There had been a disastrous opening of school where the system simply failed to deliver at a crucial time in the school year. In addition, the Pearson corporation bought out the company that developed the software for BCeSIS, the AAL company.

Pearson is expanding its reach into all aspects of education by buying companies and closing down their products. In effect, they are buying a customer base for their existing products. Pearson told the ministry that the company would stop supporting BCeSIS software as of 2013 and offered its PowerSchool student information system to replace it.

Pearson's offer was not accepted and the ministry started a process of finding another alternative. The process has included getting advice from consultants and defining design requirements.

*However, designing the future primarily based on correcting the failures of BCeSIS in the past is what Marshall McLuhan called driving forward while you are looking in the rear-view mirror.*

The ministry, last summer, brought together a group of 44 administrators, teachers, and others to define the "functional requirements." Superintendents recommended those involved to the ministry. The functional requirements are a key to whether the new system will be better or worse for educational practice.

Ursula Franklin tells us that, "every tool shapes the task." The student information system shapes what goes on in our schools and a different one will shape it differently, therefore it must be consistent with what we philosophically believe is appropriate for a sound public education.

The tool shapes the task—so the design of the tool is crucial. The functional requirements are that chance to influence the design of the tool.

The document that the ministry has produced has 48 pages of what will be told to the businesses that want the contract for the next student information system. The functional requirements are up on the ministry website: <http://bcedplan.ca/actions/technology.php>.

Not surprisingly, a significant share of the requirements identified is aimed at not repeating the problems we all had with BCeSIS. It must have a user interface that is friendly and easy to use. It has to be flexible and eliminate what Assistant Deputy Minister Renate Butterfield calls the "pain points," the many elements that took too much time, were inflexible, and didn't do what they should.

However, designing the future primarily based on correcting the failures of BCeSIS in the past is what Marshall McLuhan called driving forward while you are looking in the rear-view mirror. The BC Education Plan is supposed to lead to some changes in practice in our schools. What kind of student information system will serve the needs of a system that is different from the one that existed when BCeSIS was designed?

But designing for the future is difficult when the BC Education Plan is a work in progress, is centred on "personalization," and has no common definition. The functional requirements document addresses that by calling for flexibility in many of the areas, presumably allowing the software to

be shaped to fit the evolving definition of BC's education system.

The next stage of the ministry process is to issue a request for proposals. This invites companies to respond with a proposal for a system that would meet the needs defined by the functional requirements.

Is any company likely to meet all those requirements? They certainly were not when BCeSIS was developed. The ministry says that the technology consultants they hired to survey what is out there said that there are off-the-shelf systems that have been developed for a number of states in recent years. The US government has thrown hundreds of millions to have states develop centralized data systems. Unfortunately, that is because the No Child Left Behind and the Obama education policies require states to focus on identifying "failing schools" and creating systems aimed at merit pay and firing teachers based on student standardized test scores. They are not directed at supporting progressive pedagogy in a high-performing school system.

The ministry doesn't want to buy software or hardware or run the implementation and training necessary for a new system. Rather, they want to buy a service for a 10-year period from a company, much as many employers buy a payroll service, for example. Only a large corporation that is already running a similar service is likely to be able to provide this. And, of course, the expectations of this system will be substantially more complex than for a payroll system, which has a lot of standard components, rather than many flexible elements required of a personalized education system.

The ministry, and most of the other "stakeholders" except the BCTF, insist that the new system must be centralized. Two reasons are given for this. One is that BC has a centralized education funding system and the student information system must provide the information needed for the allocation of funds.

The other reason for centralization is that BC has a situation where increasingly students are cross-enrolled. Because of this, the ministry contends a central system is necessary to keep track of students wherever they are.

Neither of these, of course, is the only way of organizing a school system. The information needed for a funding system does not require all the other personal and academic information about an individual student to be in one comprehensive database.

A number of other elements will particularly raise the eyebrows of teachers.

One, for example, is that the functional requirements document suggests direct parent/student access to a portal with information from the teacher "grade book." The name grade book itself suggests a traditional record-keeping system of summative marks rather than a flexible system of formative assessment and feedback.

The requirements document also indicates that data from the student information system would feed a data warehouse and that "analytics" tools would be provided.

Built into the definition of requirements is an assumption that personalization will require that every student has their own student learning plan. Students with special needs would have IEPs that are just more complex versions of the student learning plan, thus facilitating inclusion by eliminating the labels. This suggests some fundamental shifts in support for students with special needs that need to be discussed as policy issues, not adopted through the design of a student information system.

These and many more issues deserve attention by more than IT specialists. Every tool shapes the task and it is essential that all teachers pay attention to the shaping of a new student information system.

Larry Kuehn  
director, BCTF Research and Technology

## Labour history in Chicago

Another chapter in labour history was written in the city of Chicago.

By Kip Wood

In 1886, an important chapter in labour history was written in Haymarket Square in Chicago. May 1, 1886, was declared by unions to be the beginning of the era of the eight-hour workday. Sixty-hour workweeks were common at this time and employers and their numerous supporters were not willing to relent on the issue. Strikes escalated and on May 4, 1886, 170 police officers were brought in to disperse the crowd in Haymarket Square, a bomb from an unknown source was thrown toward the police, and shots were fired. Seven police officers and at least four civilians were killed.

The First International Workers' Day, or May Day, was held on May 1, 1890, commemorating the Haymarket Riot and the struggle for the eight-hour workday.

In an attempt to downplay the significance of the Haymarket Riot, the USA and Canada both declared the first Monday

*In September of this year, another chapter in labour history was written in the city of Chicago. The Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU) went on strike...*

in September as the official Labour Day. Many attempts to re-establish Mayday as the workers' holiday have occurred including May 1, 2012, when marches occurred throughout North America protesting wealth inequality. Extraordinary protests for economic justice and workers' rights occurred in 2011 in the State of Wisconsin and six months later, the "Occupy" movement was born.

In September of this year, another chapter in labour history was written in the city of Chicago. The Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU) went on strike from September 10–18 in a bold and desperate attempt to conclude a bitter round of bargaining.

On one side of the dispute was Karen Lewis, the CTU president. Lewis was a rank-and-file member of the CTU teaching chemistry and contemplating retirement when she was elected in 2010. Her campaign promise was to maintain the vitality of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and her speeches galvanized members around that promise. In a school district with 87% of its students designated as low-income, Lewis's assertive presence provided hope. In her short time as CTU president, Lewis has demonstrated timely resolve and has continually provided formidable leadership. A tweet that was sent after being introduced before a speech affectionately stated, "Karen Lewis is a rock star."

The CTU produced a 46-page booklet entitled *The Schools Chicago Students Deserve*, and Lewis became the champion of the document's 10 key recommendations. Similar to our own *Better Schools for BC*, the CTU document recommends a reduction in class size, more support for students with special needs, adequate prep time, and greater professional autonomy. The CTU document also acknowledges the "apartheid-like" system managed by the CPS where the neediest schools are denied resources while students compete for spots in nine "selective-enrolment" schools.

On the other side was Rahm Emanuel, the mayor of Chicago and the former chief of staff, and current fundraiser, for President Obama. Emanuel wields immense power in how the CPS is managed. Not only does the mayor appoint the CEO of the CPS, the mayor appoints the entire seven-member board. A Republican-dominated state legislature bestowed these powers on the

mayor's office in 1995 when it amended section 34 of the *Illinois School Act*. The amendment was specific to the city of Chicago and, unlike publically elected boards elsewhere in Illinois, the CPS board is only accountable to one man—Mayor Emanuel.

Labour disputes are usually about two things: economic benefits and working conditions, but this dispute was more than a typical labour struggle. The CTU was facing a challenge of significant magnitude and complexity. The management of the CPS tabled a raft of concessions including a longer work day, an increase in healthcare premiums, evening or Saturday ProD, elimination of sick-day accrual, removal of class-size provisions, and teacher evaluations tied to student test scores. With all of these proposed concessions and many others, the Chicago teachers prevailed and were able to defend their profession against this attack.

In addition, with a school board appointed to serve corporate interests, the CTU was pushing back against the Obama-supported trend toward charter schools that aim to eliminate the presence of unions, are funded by public money, and lack any form of democratic oversight. The CPS board is made up of CEOs, partners, and entrepreneurs selling educational materials. Board member Penny Pritzker is an heir to the Hyatt Hotels fortune and a member of the fifth wealthiest family in America.

Faced with the demise of the public school system and a further erosion of workers' rights, the usual issues involved in a contract dispute were less significant but no less challenging. Add Emanuel's connection to the Obama administration, the implications for the US presidential election, the trend toward privately managed charter schools, a broken US labour market, and increasing inequality, the stakes in this dispute could not have been higher nor could the task have been more daunting.

*Out of 26,502 members in the CTU, 24,262 (92%) cast their ballots and of those who voted, 23,780 (98%) voted yes.*

But like May 1886, something incredible happened in Chicago in September 2012. Chaos and tragedy marked the Haymarket Riot. Extraordinary union organization was the difference in the Chicago teachers' strike. After rallies in the spring that saw thousands of teachers and their supporters in the streets of Chicago, the result of the vote authorizing strike action was issued in a press release on June 11, 2012. An Illinois state law requiring 75% of a union's members authorizing strike action in order for the strike to be deemed legal was not an issue. Out of 26,502 members in the CTU, 24,262 (92%) cast their ballots and of those who voted, 23,780 (98%) voted yes. With that mandate, pressure on both sides intensified before school started in September. On Labour Day, (this year September 3 in the USA and Canada) Lewis spoke to a crowd of 18,000 people. A week later, the members of the CTU picketed the Chicago Public Schools. On Wednesday September 19, 2012, Chicago teachers returned to work with a tentative agreement in hand.

Wisconsin and Occupy were the most important stories of struggle in 2011. In 2012, it was the story written by the Chicago teachers.

Kip Wood  
Nanaimo District Teachers' Association

# Teachers retired

The following teachers retired prior to November 1, 2012.

## ALBERNI

Lauretta Howard-Dyer  
Douglas Lindores  
Brian Petch  
Christyne Pitt  
Carl Vesterback

## ARROW LAKES

Ruth Fraser  
Hank Hastings

## BOUNDARY

Laura Burnell-Higgs

## BULKLEY VALLEY

Mary-Jean Cosman  
Adele Grieve  
Deborah Law  
Judith Littler  
Moira McMillan  
Mark Reed  
Jim Stuart  
Maureen Stuart  
Marlene Vandergrift  
Irene Wojtecka Williams

## BURNABY

Peter Agg  
Gayle Barnsley  
Paul Batten  
Debbie Booth  
Patricia Collins  
Marilyn Dewald  
Linda Eterman  
Nancy Evans  
Barbara Everitt  
Lorraine Gannon  
Elizabeth Greenway  
Dianne Guy  
Anne Hall  
Dorothy Hibbert-Hyde  
Joan Hui  
Gertrude Jenkins  
Cheryl Kay  
Patrick Kennedy  
Olga Kudyba  
Leslee Letford  
Lorna MacDonald  
Nancy Mann  
Maureen Martell  
Judith Mathot  
Sandra McDonnell  
Laurie Molstad  
Naomi Murao  
Kevin Murawsky  
Salma Nuraney  
Margaret Oliver  
Yvonne Roberge  
Douglas Scott  
Elaine Sharpe  
Barbara Sheldon  
Monica Standell  
Paul Stanley  
Tracy Thompson  
Kenneth Trafananko  
Geraldine Woodward

## BURNS LAKE

Susan Lemoine-Wood  
Peter Roberts

## CAMPBELL RIVER

Judy Antonelli  
D Bennett  
Gretchen Dolan  
Sarah Ferron  
Mark Freeland  
Reid Herkes  
Robert Isenor  
Selma Kennedy  
Tom Kennedy  
Darlene Kerr  
Joan Lihou  
Patrick Lihou  
Maureen Major  
Trevor McMonagle  
Kathleen O'Neill  
Douglas Spence  
Daniel Stevenson

## CARIBOO-CHILCOTIN

Sophie Alphonse  
Leslie Bell  
Jesse Belonio  
Ronald Bisaro  
Rocco Catalano  
Christine Coates  
Darryl Grams  
Murray Hoffman  
Louise Hoyrup  
Lorraine Jasper  
Jocelyne MacDonnell  
Jocelyn Moon  
Colleen Moore  
Patrick Radolla  
Judith Reid

Shary Stephen  
Dyane Willis

## CENTRAL OKANAGAN

Kenneth Bartel  
David Currier  
Caprice Desjardins  
Peter DeVries  
Darlene Ewings  
Neal Facey  
Jack Fonseca  
Gloria Garrison  
Patricia Good  
Gloria Harrold  
Charlotte Heidt  
Jadine Leclaire  
Charlotte Levell  
John Logan  
Heather MacNaughton  
Claire Meuser  
Mary Mitchell  
Valerie Muir  
Lindea Parnell  
Helen Potts  
Carla Rivere  
Lorne Schumacher  
Joanne Sexsmith  
Laura Shiskin  
Christel Silzer  
Wendy Sparks  
Gail Thiesmann  
Edgar Tonn  
Donald Treadgold  
Patricia Ursell  
Garth Vickers  
Rick Walker  
Frederick Way  
Shelley Weber  
Patricia Weicker

## CHILLIWACK

Sandra Anvik  
Debbie Best  
John Caulfield  
Ariel Eastman  
Bryan Foster  
Leona Gardiner  
Victor Gladish  
John Goldsmith  
Janet Harvey  
Robert Hopkins  
Beverly Hutton  
Lois Klassen  
Ronald Meadwell  
Lynda Neetz  
Jacqueline Rowe  
Dawna Shane

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Roger Purdy

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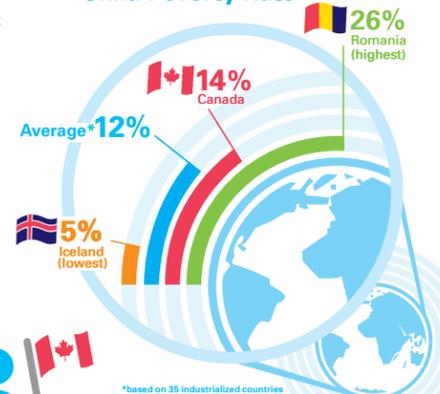
Report Card 10 [unicef.ca/irc10](http://unicef.ca/irc10)

**Are children falling too far behind?**

Too many children in Canada live in poverty. With a 14 percent child poverty rate, Canada ranks higher than the average and places 24<sup>th</sup> of 35 industrialized countries.

**Children in Canada are more likely to live in poverty than the overall population.**

It's time to make children our priority.

**Child Poverty Rate**

14% of Canadian children live in poverty

12% of all Canadians live in poverty

**Canada can do better.**  
Allowing children to grow up in poverty limits individual potential, reduces economic prosperity and increases social costs for all, such as:

- Courts and social protection
- Health and hospital services
- Social assistance

**Put children first!**  
Canada needs:

- A national strategy to eliminate poverty, with a focus on children.
- National Commissioner for Children and Young Persons to protect the rights of Canada's most vulnerable children.
- Improved child benefits.
- Measures to enable low-income families to keep more income.

**Take action!**  
Join UNICEF Canada to tackle child poverty. Learn about the issues by reading UNICEF Report Card 10: Measuring Child Poverty and ask your MP to put children first.

[unicef.ca/irc10](http://unicef.ca/irc10)

## BCTF Advantage Program celebrates fifth anniversary

The BCTF Advantage program is celebrating its fifth anniversary. With 41,000 members the BCTF, as an organization, has significant buying power. Businesses want our patronage. As a result, we have been able to obtain savings on various products and services for members. The BCTF Advantage program allows your membership in the BCTF to work for you in areas outside of your employment relationship. Have you taken advantage of your BCTF membership lately? Below is a short list of current Advantage promotions.

### Are you planning a vacation?

The BCTF Advantage Member **Discount Hotel Program** is pleased to offer a winter vacation getaway.

Book your hotel today and win a free hotel stay!

Each room night booked between October 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013 qualifies for entry in a draw to win the value of your first night booking.

Search for hotel discounts around the world provided exclusively for BCTF member families. Our savings are as much as 50%, and average 10%–20% below market rates!

### Do you need to rent a car?

As preferred suppliers for the BCTF, **Avis** and **Budget** are pleased to extend to you their best available discounted rates for leisure rentals up to 25% off. Plus, at their dedicated Avis and Budget websites you will always find valuable coupons, from free upgrades to free weekend days, and to further cash discounts on top of our already discounted rate to save even more!

### Need a new mattress?

**Sleep Country Canada** is pleased to offer all members of the BCTF Advantage program a very special "Friends and Family" offer. Go into any Sleep Country store locations, purchase a mattress and don't pay the taxes!

### Hockey fans: Do you want to see tomorrow's NHL stars today?

BCTF members can purchase tickets at discounted rates to watch the **Vancouver Giants**, **Prince George Cougars**, and **Victoria Royals**, in WHL action.

### Are your tires ready for winter?

BCTF members and their families earn Air Miles and receive the following discounts at **Fountain Tire**, over and above all sale prices, including the 4 for 3 Events:

- 12% off passenger car tires
- 10% off light truck tires
- 8% off farm equipment tires and specialty tires
- 10% off labour
- 5% off parts

With winter around the corner, take advantage of this great deal today.

### Do you like to read?

**Black Bond Books** offer BCTF Advantage members 15% off on personal purchases and 20% off book purchases for the classroom. Shopping from home is easy with their online store, and orders over \$50 are sent free of charge.

### Have yarn...will travel

**Baad Anna's** provides affordable, diverse, and eco-friendly yarn, knitting supplies and classes. They strive to create a community space for diverse crafters, parents, artists and non-conformist knitters in their East Van neighbourhood. Not your mama's yarn store! BCTF Advantage members receive 10% off all yarn at the store.

If you would like more information about how to obtain the savings mentioned above or other aspects of the BCTF Advantage program, please visit the BCTF Advantage website at <http://bctfadvantage.com>

Check the Advantage website regularly to see how the program is expanding to provide you with the BCTF Advantage.

Sarb Lalli, [slalli@bctf.ca](mailto:slalli@bctf.ca)

## Factor 88? Don't wait

A member who has attained age 64, has reached factor "88" (age plus contributory service), or is in receipt of a retirement pension under a registered pension plan, may voluntarily withdraw from the long-term portion of the Salary Indemnity Plan. Withdrawal may be made during any school year in which one of the foregoing conditions has been met and upon the completion of the appropriate withdrawal form. Withdrawal will be effective, upon approval, in September for applications received in that month. Applications submitted later will be effective the month following approval of the application.

In making application for withdrawal, you should ensure that in the event of serious

illness or accident you have sufficient accumulated sick leave which, when combined with 120 days of benefit from SIP short-term, will protect your salary to the end of the month in which you reach factor "90" or the end of the month you attain age 65, whichever comes first.

Principals and vice-principals should contact their HR department to inquire if they are members of the BCTF SIP or the disability plan offered through the BCPVPA. The BCPVPA plan will have its own withdrawal guidelines.

Applications are available online at: <http://tinyurl.com/7qrrnxx>, or call the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.



Our futures are not determined simply by what we do but how and why we do it.



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**Whistler Athletes' Centre**

The Whistler Athletes' Centre offers two unique accommodation options – an Athletes' Lodge and Townhomes – and access to the High Performance Centre. The HPC features a strength and conditioning gym, gymnastics hall, and more. We welcome groups or individual bookings for athletes, coaches, educational, arts, and cultural organizations!

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[whistlersportlegacies.com](http://whistlersportlegacies.com)

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**SOUTH OF FRANCE** villa in lively, lovely market town of Limoux. 4 bdrms. 2 bath. Sleeps 8. All mod cons. Near lake and river swimming and historic Carcassonne. Great rates. Deep discounts for long-term, off-season. [www.southoffrancerental.com](http://www.southoffrancerental.com)

**FRANCE**. Ultimate vacations, privately owned, beautiful furn. 1 bdrm. central Paris. Wkly/mthly. 604-738-1876, 604-879-4936, [irene.roland@gmail.com](mailto:irene.roland@gmail.com) [www.ultimateparis.com](http://www.ultimateparis.com)

**MAUI, KIHAI**, Privately owned, fully furn. 2 bdrm, 2 bath condo, across from Kamaole Beaches. Great complex, Great location. 250-598-6955.

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**SEE EUROPE** like you've never seen it before! Highly-rated tours of Europe and Britain. Teacher owned and operated. [www.onelifetours.ca](http://www.onelifetours.ca) for details.

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**WHISTLER** townhouse, sleeps 6. Fully equip. 604-925-7669 or Gary 604-669-7212.

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**REVELSTOKE** downtown heritage home available ski season, Jan. 15 to April 1, \$500/wk. +utilities, 2 bdrm. [tonijohnston@rcvtonline.net](mailto:tonijohnston@rcvtonline.net)

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**KILSILANO** furnished sublet Feb. 16 to May 16, 2013. 1 bdrm., view, single preferred. \$1,300 all inclusive, [jinj1994@hotmail.com](mailto:jinj1994@hotmail.com)

**NEEDED HOUSE/DOG SITTING** – Christmas. Van. Island, between Campbell River and Courtenay. 3-bdrm house, dog is 13, kid-friendly, needs company. 40 min to ski slopes/trails. Dec 23 to Jan 4. Contact: [cabele@telus.net](mailto:cabele@telus.net), 250-923-9126.

## Miscellaneous

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**NEED TEACHERS** to write self-paced courses for all secondary subjects. For examples and contact information, For examples and contact info, visit [www.mathwncp.ca](http://www.mathwncp.ca)

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**VOICE LESSONS**, White Rock area. Ivy Charyna, SD#36 Music and Drama teacher. [ivycharyna@gmail.com](mailto:ivycharyna@gmail.com), 604-817-7174.



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\*Conditions apply.  
When booking a ski school class program.

# PD Calendar

## JANUARY 2013

**29-31** Edmonton, AB. Train the Trainer Certification Program. De-escalating Potentially Violent Situations. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: 204-452-9199, [www.ctrinstitute.com](http://www.ctrinstitute.com) e-mail [info@ctrinstitute.com](mailto:info@ctrinstitute.com)

**18-23** Online. Best Practices in Instructional Design. The focus of this CEET Meet is investigating what current research offers teachers and others to develop effective online courses. The course tutor is David Le Blanc, an experienced online guide, Moodle expert and eLearning practitioner. <http://ceetbc.ning.com/page/ceetmeets>

## FEBRUARY 2013

**8-13** Online. Breaking Down the Walls Creating an Open Classroom. Register at <http://ceetbc.ning.com/page/ceetmeets>

**14-15** Vancouver. BCAEA (BC Alternate Education Association) "Challenge and Change." Keynote Gabor Mate. 30 different sessions focused on helping at-risk youth presented in varying styles and topics including technology, film-making, art, outdoor education, and mental health. Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre. Register online at <http://lbctf.ca/bcaea/conference.html> For more information, contact DJ Pauls at [djpauls@shaw.ca](mailto:djpauls@shaw.ca)

**21-22** Richmond. SEA (Special Education Association) Annual spring conference "Scattered Minds, Beyond the Medical Model: A bio-psychosocial view of attention deficit disorder and other childhood developmental disorders." Keynote: Gabor Mate. Two-day conference at Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel, 7551 Westminster Highway, Richmond. Contact information: Alison Ogden, conference chair, [seaconferencechair@gmail.com](mailto:seaconferencechair@gmail.com). Please see our website [www.seaofbc.ca](http://www.seaofbc.ca) for conference program information starting November 1, 2012.

**21-22** Online. The 8: 1 Program. Three big trends in technology the Internet of things, the rise of mobiles, and the consumerization of technology are completely reshaping the way we engage with information and each other. The goal of this CEET Meet is to collaboratively produce a white paper assessing the effect of these trends on education and sketching out a vision for the future school. The course tutor is Brad Ovenell-Carter, the Director of Educational Technologies at Mulgrave School in Vancouver. Register at <http://ceetbc.ning.com/page/ceetmeets>

**26** Kelowna, BC. Understanding Mental Illness. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: [www.ctrinstitute.com](http://www.ctrinstitute.com), 204-452-9199, e-mail [info@ctrinstitute.com](mailto:info@ctrinstitute.com).

**27** Vancouver, BC. Understanding Mental Illness. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: [www.ctrinstitute.com](http://www.ctrinstitute.com), 204-452-9199, e-mail [info@ctrinstitute.com](mailto:info@ctrinstitute.com).

**28** Victoria, BC. Understanding Mental Illness. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: [www.ctrinstitute.com](http://www.ctrinstitute.com), 204-452-9199, e-mail [info@ctrinstitute.com](mailto:info@ctrinstitute.com).

Future October PSA Days:  
2013 - 2014: October 25, 2013  
2014 - 2015: October 24, 2014  
2015 - 2016: October 23, 2015

## PD Calendar website

<http://lbctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProDIPD-Calendar.cfm>

Additions/changes:  
Contact Betty Goto at [bgoto@bctf.ca](mailto:bgoto@bctf.ca)



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SECONDARY Sept. 4, 2012 - May 10, 2013

# Celiac disease and school-aged children

By Shirley Bond

My daughter, now entering Grade 12, was diagnosed with celiac disease (CD) while in Grade 3. Until high school, we met with teachers each September to explain the condition and what it meant for her in the classroom. It was always very reassuring for my daughter when a teacher acknowledged a basic understanding of CD and how it could impact her at school.

## What is Celiac disease?

Celiac disease (CD) is an inherited autoimmune disease in which a person cannot tolerate gluten. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye. Oats are also excluded due to contamination during growing and processing. When a person with CD eats gluten it inflames the villi, which are tiny finger-like projections that line the small intestine and grab nutrients as they pass through. This inflammation stops the absorption of nutrients including proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals such as iron, calcium, and folate, leading to serious health problems.

*Common symptoms in children are fatigue, inability to focus, abdominal cramps and bloating, diarrhea (may include urgency and frequent bathroom requests), anemia, constipation, poor growth, dental enamel defects, delayed puberty, and irritability.*

CD is thought to affect 1 in 100 in North America, yet 97% have not been diagnosed. First-degree relatives of a person with CD have a 1 in 20 chance of developing it. CD testing is also recommended for those with T1 diabetes, thyroid disease and Down syndrome because they have a higher risk.

## Symptoms and testing

Attendance at school may be an issue for undiagnosed or untreated children. Common symptoms in children are fatigue, inability to focus, abdominal cramps and bloating, diarrhea (may include urgency and frequent bathroom requests), anemia, constipation, poor growth, dental enamel defects, delayed puberty, and irritability. Dermatitis Herpetiformis is a skin form of CD characterized by a blistering and itchy skin rash.

Symptoms of CD can develop at any age, but diagnosis may take years as symptoms are often confused with other conditions such as allergies, irritable bowel syndrome, lactose intolerance, chronic fatigue, or stress. Diagnosis is made by a simple blood test, usually followed by an intestinal biopsy. The child must still be eating gluten for the blood test and biopsy to be accurate. Delays in diagnosis or not adhering to a gluten-free diet can result in chronic poor health, infertility, osteoporosis, and certain cancers.

## Treatment for Celiac disease

CD is a life-long condition, there is no cure. The only treatment is adherence to a gluten-free (GF) diet. Wheat, barley, rye, and oats are excluded for life. After gluten is removed, the intestine starts to heal, normal absorption of nutrients begins and symptoms are eliminated, usually over the first year. While following a GF diet, it is unlikely that a celiac will exhibit any noticeable symptoms of CD. Effects of eating gluten are cumulative and do not produce the sudden life-threatening anaphylactic response common with peanut allergies.

Getting a diagnosis of CD can bring real relief to a child who has been suffering with symptoms, and it's good news to have a condition that does not require shots or pills or hospitalization. Newly diagnosed celiacs are referred by their doctor to registered dietitians at local health authorities for instruction on how to manage a GF diet and overcome nutrient deficiencies the child has experienced. These testing and dietitian services are covered by the provincial medical services plan.

Getting diagnosed is just the beginning. Learning which foods contain gluten, and reading labels to find hidden sources in food, vitamins, and medications is challenging and adds time to shopping and preparing foods. Safe GF flours made from sorghum, rice, teff, quinoa, beans, millet, and amaranth will present unfamiliar tastes for the child. Gluten is found in regular pasta, cereal, bread, candy and baked goods, frozen burgers, canned soups, marinades, processed meats, and so on. Cross-contamination with gluten-containing foods is a huge challenge; as little as 1 mg of gluten per day may prevent healing. (1/50th of a slice of bread = 1 mg gluten.) At home,

celiac sufferers need their own margarine and peanut butter jars, as well as a toaster that

has not been exposed to gluten. Serving utensils and BBQ grates cannot be shared with gluten-containing foods. No more bulk food bins or McDonald's drive-through. Accidental or deliberate ingesting of even trace amounts of gluten will cause continued intestinal damage, even without noticeable symptoms, and will increase the risk of associated conditions.

*FAQs on websites of name brand art supplies identify their gluten status. Play Doh, Crayola Dough, Elmer's finger paints, and paper mâché contain gluten, so are not safe for celiacs.*

## In the classroom

- Most kids in school face social challenges, but a special diet can add to these. The child may be teased and feel forgotten when they cannot eat birthday cupcakes at school or ice cream cones on a field trip. The desire to feel normal and fit in can be overwhelming, especially for the newly diagnosed.
- Teachers can notify the child and parent in advance if treats like birthday cake or pizza will be served. The parent can send "look-alike" options such as a GF cupcake or Lay's potato chips to minimize the attention drawn to the child's special diet.
- Suggest that the parent send a bag of Hershey's chocolate kisses or M & M's to store in your desk for rewards or when unplanned treats are served.
- Washed produce is GF, so celiacs can participate in the Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program.
- FAQs on websites of name brand art supplies identify their gluten status. Play Doh, Crayola Dough, Elmer's finger paints, and paper mâché contain gluten, so are not safe for celiacs. Gluten on hands can transfer to food they eat and be ingested. Even if the celiac does not mix the paste for paper mâché, airborne gluten in the same room may cause symptoms. GF play-doh and paper mâché recipes are available on-line. GF pasta can be used for crafts. The parent can provide safe craft materials, or if not, suggest that the child record the events.
- Food-course teachers should provide the parent with the menu schedule. The child can participate in selections that are GF and parents can suggest GF alternatives to consider. Celiacs should not participate in

a class using flour. Provide the child with an alternate activity during these classes and consider giving credit for basic baking they can do at home.

- If field trips include lunch or snacks, notify the parent so the child can bring an alternative. Parents can also call ahead to a restaurant to make arrangements. Chaperones should be informed about the child's dietary restriction.
- Notify the parent if the child accidentally or deliberately ingests gluten, as unexplained symptoms are always troublesome. Newly diagnosed and younger celiacs may be helped by reminders to manage the change in diet.
- Special bathroom privileges may be required before or during diagnosis or if a celiac ingests gluten. "Holding it" may be impossible.



- Older children may be encouraged to present to the class on CD.
- Consider purchasing an age-appropriate book on CD, or borrow one from the parent, to read to the class.

The following children's books about CD are available on Amazon.com:

- Cilie Yack is Under Attack*, Caryn Talty
- Mommy, What is Celiac Disease?*, Katie Chalmers
- No More Cupcakes and Tummy Aches*, Jax Lowell
- Eating Gluten-Free with Emily*, Bonnie Kruszka

Shirley Bond, volunteer, Victoria chapter, Canadian Celiac Association (a social and educational support group for celiacs and those with gluten sensitivity). (<http://victoriaceliac.org>)

For further information:

- [www.celiac.ca](http://www.celiac.ca)
- [www.celiaccentral.org](http://www.celiaccentral.org)
- <http://celiacdisease.about.com>

