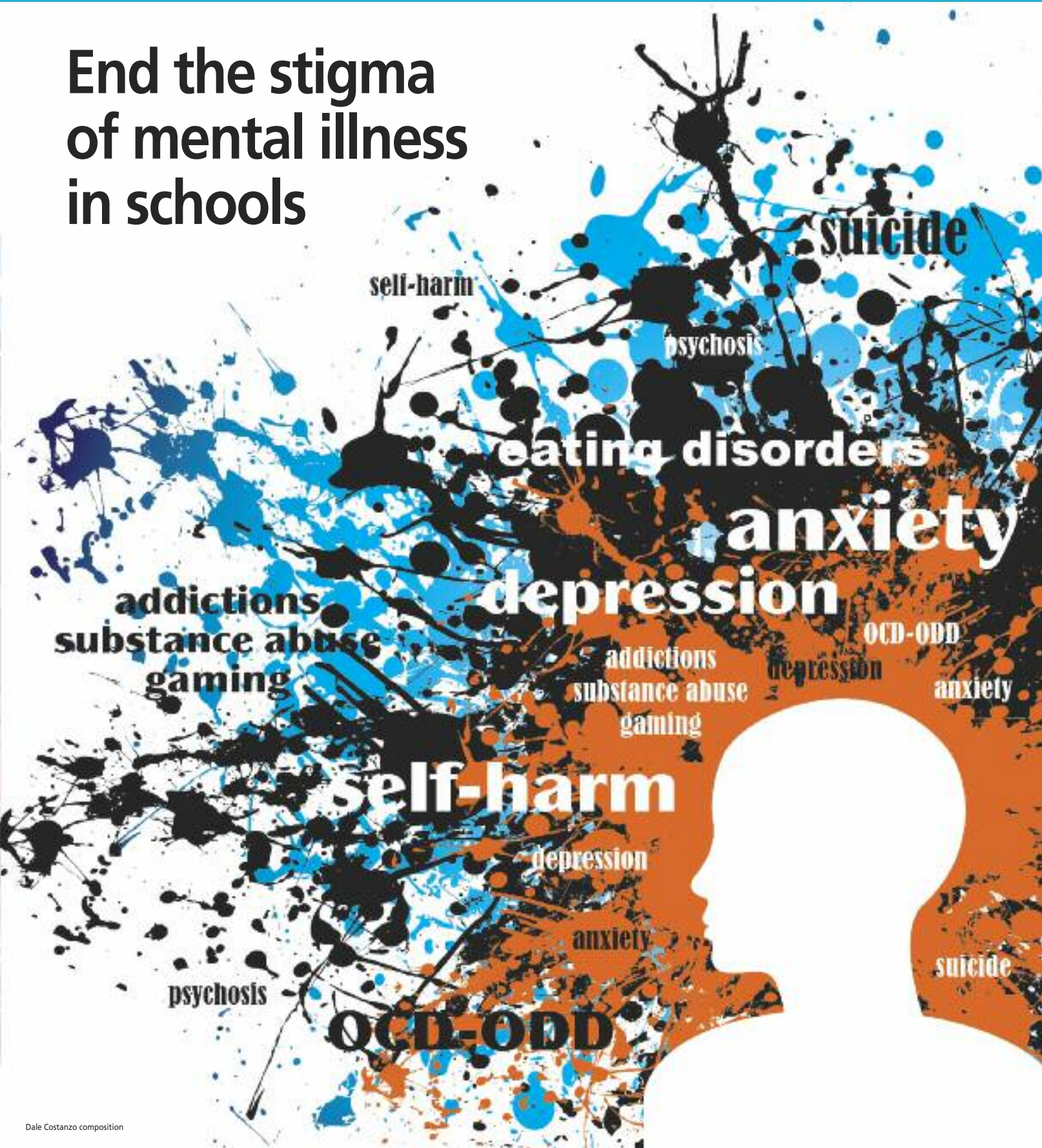


# Teacher

Newsmagazine  
BC Teachers' Federation

Volume 26, Number 4  
Jan./Feb. 2014

End the stigma  
of mental illness  
in schools



## Commitment, strength, and resolve



At the start of every new year, we reflect on the year that was and look forward to what needs to be done in the year ahead. Many of us make resolutions about

our professional lives and the lives we lead outside of work with our friends and family.

It is the latter that is so important and we don't talk enough about it at the BCTF. We must all take care to look after our health, find meaningful work-life balance, and spend quality time with loved ones. As teachers, it can be hard to find that balance as we are pulled in many different directions and face significant stresses.

Making a resolution to get healthier or find more balance is one thing, following through can be tough. It takes commitment, strength, and resolve. As a union, we are going to need all three in the months ahead as we continue bargaining with the provincial government.

For me, two things are at the heart of our efforts this year at the bargaining table. I want to see improvements to our working conditions, which includes salary, and new investments in resources and support levels for our students. The two goals are completely linked. For over a decade, teachers have been doing more

with less and a generation of students have been shortchanged by cuts that were directly tied to the government stripping our collective agreement in 2002.

As working and learning conditions deteriorated, stress levels have gone up and students have been put into larger classes and lost time with specialist teachers. BC students are now funded \$1,000 less per year than the national average and we have Canada's worst student-educator ratio. That means teachers and students are not getting the support or resources they need.

That's why we must work hard to get a fair and reasonable deal that is negotiated, not imposed, at the bargaining table. It's not going to be easy. In November and December, it became clear that the government is once again trying to strip key provisions of our collective agreement that protect working conditions. Also, the government refuses to acknowledge comparisons with other provinces that show our working conditions and wages lag behind our colleagues in other parts of Canada.

At the bargaining table, we have done our part to create space for a deal. We encouraged government to bargain at the table, not in the media. We tabled reasonable proposals that will improve class size, class composition, preparation time, ratios for learning specialist teachers, and working conditions for TTOCs over time. We are asking for a wage increase that respects the work we do, helps us catch up to our Canadian colleagues.

It's time for government to now do its part and come to the table with proposals that respect the work teachers do and enhance our education system.

If the government continues to push for concessions, strips, and unfair wage settlements, they will not find the stability we are all hoping to achieve.

I remain hopeful there is a deal to be found, but it will not be easy and we will need to support each other as we go forward.

*Jim Iker*

### LETTERS

#### Efforts well received

Please convey to all that I was very impressed with the new format of the *Teacher Newsmagazine*.

I thoroughly enjoy reading the articles and seeing what is happening in education these days.

Keep up the terrific work and know that your efforts are well received. Thank you very much.

*Margaret Little*  
Peace River North

### BCTF financial statements

The audited financial statements of the BC Teachers' Federation are available online, in the portal and accessible at: <https://www.bctf.ca/myBCTF/content.aspx?id=27285>

# Teacher



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**CALM** Canadian Association of Labour Media  
**CEPA** Canadian Educational Press Association





# Prep time matters

## Providing instruction to students is only part of a teacher’s work

by Richard Hoover

Teachers need preparation time during the instructional day to prepare and create lessons and resources, attend to marking and record keeping, consult and collaborate with other staff, undertake school committee work, communicate with parents, make arrangements for events and field trips, set up displays inside and outside the classroom, and much more.

Teachers also spend many hours before and after school, in the evenings and on weekends attending meetings and completing other work that can’t be done during the school day. With very little support, if any, teachers must attend to a multitude of tasks, from photocopying and filing to developing assessment tools, preparing report cards, and setting up and maintaining inviting, interesting classrooms.

Every year, more and more tasks fall to teachers. There is increased paperwork and more forms to fill out, additional reporting requirements, and more

### Notice of AGM 2014

As required by *The Society Act*, the following formal notice of the 2014 Annual General Meeting is made to all BCTF members pursuant to By-law 8.1 by publication in this edition of *Teacher*.

The 98th Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, BC, beginning on Saturday, March 15, 2014 and continuing to Tuesday, March 18, 2014.

responsibilities regarding the development and implementation of IEPs and attending to students with special needs. Despite this increase in workload, preparation time for many BC teachers has been frozen for decades.

Some collective agreements in other provinces specify preparation time and some specify limits on instructional time. The accompanying table, based on BCTF Research and Canadian Teachers’ Federation data, gives a sampling of preparation time and instructional time provisions for teachers in several provinces across Canada. Often different jurisdictions, even within a province, have different provisions for preparation time. There are often different provisions for instructional time and preparation time for elementary and secondary teachers.

As you can see, elementary teachers in BC have some of the lowest amounts of preparation time of any teachers in Canada.

Our proposal at the bargaining table is to increase preparation time for elementary teachers so that it is consistent with what is made available to teachers in other provinces. For secondary teachers, whose preparation time is closer to the national average, our proposal is to address issues around semestered schools.

*For more information about preparation time and bargaining visit: [bctf.ca](http://bctf.ca), sign in to the BCTF Member Portal, and look for the “A Fair Deal for Teachers/Better Support for Kids” banner.*

Canadian teacher prep-time comparisons	
British Columbia (Vancouver)	
Elem:	90 min. a week
Sec:	193 min. a week
Saskatchewan (Saskatoon)	
Elem:	285 min. a week
Sec:	285 min. a week
Manitoba (Brandon)	
Elem:	240 min. per 6-day cycle
Sec:	390 min. per 6-day cycle
Ontario	
Elem (Ottawa):	240 min. per 5-day cycle
Sec (Toronto):	375 min. non-teaching time a week
New Brunswick	
Elem:	175 min. a week
Sec:	175 min. a week
Nova Scotia (Halifax)	
Elem:	30 min. a day
Sec:	30 min. a day
Alberta (Edmonton)	
Elem:	max. 1,430 min. a week instructional time
Sec:	max. 1,430 min. a week instructional time
Quebec	
Elem:	240 min. a week non-instructional time
Sec:	420 min. a week non-instructional time

# Teachers as well as students suffer

by Charlie Naylor, BCTF researcher

Did you know that mental illness places a significant toll on the health and welfare of British Columbians? Consider the following:

- Estimated in any given year, 20% of British Columbians experience a mental illness.
- Mental illness is the third largest contributor to BC's burden of disease—and the greatest contributor for people aged 15 to 34.
- Mental illnesses are leading causes of disability. The World Health Organization predicts that over the next 20 years, depression—not all mental illness—just depression will be the second greatest health burden on earth, the second after cardiovascular disease.
- International research shows that teachers are at high risk of stress-related disorders. The European Foundation, the United Kingdom Health and Safety Executive, and COMPAS Inc. have conducted research showing that people employed in the health, education, and social service sectors experience high levels of stress due to the front-line work they do. And here in BC, the BCTF's Salary Indemnity Plan (SIP) spends about \$12 million a year supporting teachers suffering from mental illnesses.

Teachers also see their students exhibiting mental illness. Anxiety is becoming a growing problem affecting a student's ability to concentrate on school work. Depression, eating disorders, and OCD-ODD,\* rare in the past, are now

more prevalent. And with cuts to school-based counsellors, teachers are often at a loss at how to proceed with these students.

*The World Health Organization predicts that over the next 20 years, not all mental illness—just depression will be the second greatest health burden on earth, the second after cardiovascular disease.*

Recognizing the significant and growing issue of mental illness in schools and society, the BCTF Executive Committee recently passed a comprehensive recommendation to address both teachers' and students' mental health. Essentially, the BCTF has a two-pronged plan that focuses on teachers and students. We will focus on teachers' mental health by examining Salary Indemnity Plan (SIP) data linked to mental illnesses and also provide locals and members with pertinent mental health information.

Secondly, the BCTF will focus on students' mental health in a number of ways, including promoting the BCTF's Teaching to Diversity web page, connecting members with a mental health discussion forum, advocating for mental health resources, and calling for the restoration of school counselor positions.

BCTF Research is analyzing data for every BC school district that shows wide disparities in SIP claims for mental

disorders: Why do some districts have much higher claims than others? While we believe that some age and gender demographics are indicators, we are also considering other contractual and contextual factors, such as a member's access to the number of accumulated sick days or the level of conflict in a district.

Several provincial specialist associations (PSAs) such as school counselors, learning assistance teachers, and alternate educators offer conference sessions on students' mental health issues, while the BCTF Teaching to Diversity web page is developing a section on students' mental health, with a range of resources and related links: [bctf.ca/teachingtodiversity](http://bctf.ca/teachingtodiversity). Teachers Diana Mogensen and Lily Yiu (both BCTF members who teach at Children's Hospital Eating Disorders' Unit), and Dave Mackenzie, a Vernon school counselor who attends the BC School Mental Health Coalition Network, have campaigned for a greater recognition of mental health issues within the union.

The BCTF also hopes to connect with an upcoming "School Connectedness" initiative funded by the Ministry of Health. Students who are well connected or feel that they belong at their school are at lower risk of mental health disorders. This initiative will explore and document approaches to strengthening school connectedness for students. If you teach in a school where such initiatives are taking place, and wish to have your school considered for this project, please contact either Charlie Naylor in BCTF Research ([cnaylor@bctf.ca](mailto:cnaylor@bctf.ca)) or Dave Mackenzie ([dmackenzie@sd22.bc.ca](mailto:dmackenzie@sd22.bc.ca)) of the school counsellors' PSA.

\* OCD-ODD: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder–Oppositional Defiance Disorder

# Working with kids on the margins

by Susan Croll

*"I love what I do. I leave work at the end of the day smiling."*

These are Mike Shaw's words. Mike works with young people in Grades 10–12 who attend a storefront school in Westbank. Mike didn't begin his working life teaching. He is a carpenter but decided to get his teaching certificate so he could teach kids about trades. For three years, he could only get work as a teacher teaching on call until he finally secured a contract working with kids enrolled in an alternate education program. He hasn't looked back. He describes the last 23 years as absolutely amazing.

Mike is also the president of the BC Alternate Educators' Association (BCAEA), a BCTF provincial specialist association. Each year, the BCAEA organizes their *Challenge and Change* conference bringing together alternate and special education teachers, classroom teachers, counselors, child and youth workers, Aboriginal education teachers, and support workers as well as social workers and academics.

Many of Mike's students experience mental health problems. He believes that many of their problems stem from living in difficult and unstable situations. They may be anxious or depressed, use drugs and alcohol, and eventually get in trouble with the police. Some students are coping as young parents. Regardless of their problems, Mike says the regular system doesn't fit their needs; his students don't come to school regularly and when they do, often only attend for a couple of hours.

"We provide a flexible, self-paced program. Some kids only take one course the whole school year. We are there to provide a safe, non-judgmental, and respectful space so our students can learn."

This year's conference features Gordon Neufeld, a developmental psychologist based in Vancouver. Gordon Neufeld, along with Gabor Mate, co-authored *Hold on to your Kids*, a popular parenting book in 2004. They argue that kids lose their way and can even develop debilitating mental-health disorders because they lack secure and healthy attachments with key adults in their lives. Subsequently, they look to their peers to fulfill attachment needs. Their peers, also young and immature, cannot, nor should they be expected to provide, emotionally healthy relationships or the role-modeling human beings require to grow and develop.

Mike says that Neufeld is a favourite speaker at their conferences. "He speaks volumes to the work we do—it's about the connection with the kids. When the connection is solid, we're able to make progress with our students. You respect them and they respect you."

All kinds of workshops are offered at this conference including "Troubled kids and the digital world." Mike says there are



some positives for his students who are digitally connected such as connecting with like-minded kids, which helps minimize their isolation. The downside is that many kids are dependent on their technology. He describes it as Pavlovian. "Their cell phone dings and regardless of what they are doing, they respond to the ding." He quotes a study that shows that on average, kids browsing the internet change sites 37 times an hour. "No wonder kids can't focus for long periods of time."

Mike looks forward to attending a workshop new to their conference this year about Aboriginal perspectives on pedagogy. "Some of our students have Aboriginal ancestry. We need to understand their history and to be open. We can never throw kids away again."

To learn more about the upcoming conference on February 20–21, 2014, and the BCAEA, go to <http://www.bctf.ca/bcaea>



# Test your knowledge about eating disorders

Excerpted from the guide "Understanding Eating Disorders in Schools," written by Diana Mogensen and Lily Yiu, two BCTF members who teach in the Eating Disorders Provincial Resource Program. The guide was funded by the Ministry of Education and will be available for wide-based distribution in the new year in the form of a PDF.

## True or false

To check your understanding of eating disorders, go through the statements below and decide if they are true or false; then compare your answers to the answer key (page 14).



6. Certain aspects of the BC curriculum are triggering to students with an eating disorder.
7. Eating disorders are more prevalent in females than males.
8. Children and youth with an eating disorder who use exercise to burn calories should integrate back into a physical education class.
9. Students with an eating disorder should not be expected to comply with the behavioural expectations of the classroom because they are in distress.
10. The media triggers eating disorders.
11. A child/youth who was able to successfully complete their treatment is "cured."
12. Students with an eating disorder often maintain good grades.
13. Over exercising is a form of purging calories.
14. Mirror gazing contributes to poor body image, which can worsen the symptoms of an eating disorder.
15. School connectedness is a protective factor against the development of an eating disorder.

Having worked through the true and false exercise, it can be seen that eating disorders are complex in their cause and development. Making a diagnosis must be left to professionals.

For more information about eating disorders or other mental health matters concerning children and youth, contact Diana ([dmogensen@cw.bc.ca](mailto:dmogensen@cw.bc.ca)) or Lily ([lyiu@cw.bc.ca](mailto:lyiu@cw.bc.ca)).

Answer key on page 14.

1. Children and youth who have an eating disorder are superficial, conceited, and narcissistic.
2. Children and teens develop eating disorders to rebel against their parents and/or their families.
3. Parents cause their child's eating disorder.
4. Parents' involvement in treatment leads to power struggles. Parents should never be involved.
5. Teaching about eating disorders is a form of prevention.

## Love your body, love yourself

by Shelley Hine

Eating disorders and disordered eating are genuine problems in British Columbia schools. McCreary Centre Society research (2009) showed that 53% of girls and 14% of boys in British Columbia with a healthy weight were trying to lose weight. Too many teenagers have tried some form of dieting and too many school-age children think that going on a diet when they get older is normalized activity. All are bombarded with some form of media messaging every day, letting them know

that regardless of many variables that can make up a person's body type, only one body type is acceptable—one that is extremely thin; what we call "The Thin Ideal."

The Jessie's Legacy Program holds the provincial mandate for eating disorders prevention. We feel passionate about our work because we have seen too many young lives hijacked by an eating disorder: The 13-year-old girl who goes

on a diet and is over-exercising because she's been teased about the normal changes occurring in her body and called fat, and she believes it because there is no support for her to think otherwise; the 15-year-old boy who believes he needs "6-pack abs" to be acceptable, is over-supplementing with Creatine, over-using protein shakes to bulk up, and is spending six hours with weights and training programs every day.

Eating disorders begin with disordered eating, and disordered eating falls on a continuum. At one end are normal, healthy eating habits; along the centre of the continuum are things like weight and shape preoccupation, yo-yo dieting, excessive exercising, steroid use, compulsive overeating, orthorexia (fixation on righteous eating), drunkorexia (binge eating combined with alcohol abuse); moving into distorted body image and finally, into a full-blown eating disorder.

It is in the centre of this continuum that vulnerable youth can get into real trouble if no one knows how to intervene. It can be very difficult for teachers to know how to approach a student they suspect has disordered eating and to know how to best support them. At the Jessie's Legacy Program, we know that adult influencers are critical to eating disorders prevention in children, and that teachers play a crucial influencing role. We also know that adult influencers need to know the correct information before they can help effectively. It is also true that we get bombarded by media messaging around body stereotypes, and aren't immune to forming opinions around weight and shape that might be influenced with better information.

We have designed our Jessie's Legacy web page ([jessieslegacy.com](http://jessieslegacy.com) – Resources for

Educators) with a resource stream on eating disorders prevention, resiliency, media literacy, curriculum, videos and other website referrals, designed especially for professionals and educators. The website is updated as new information becomes available, with special attention to this page because of our belief in adult influencers being one of the best lines of defense in the prevention of eating disorders in children and youth.

Our speakers bureau offers a presentation to both elementary and secondary schools, on eating disorders, disordered eating, resiliency, media literacy, and weight and shape bias. A PDF of this presentation is also available for qualified delivery in other regions of the province where speakers are not available.

Jessie's Legacy also leads the Provincial Eating Disorders Awareness (PEDAW) Campaign, a province-wide effort to raise awareness around prevention and early intervention of eating disorders as well as media literacy, resiliency, building healthy body image and self-esteem. This initiative is a collaboration with Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre, Looking Glass Foundation, St. Paul's Specialized Adult Eating Disorder Program, BC Children's Hospital Eating Disorders Program and Healthy Minds, Healthy Campuses, and Project True. PEDAW is launched the first full week in February

with activities and events taking place throughout the year. The ongoing theme for PEDAW is "Love Our Bodies, Love Ourselves." Themed wristbands are available. PEDAW 2014 is under way with a number of projects and events being planned, including a wristband challenge and multi-media contest. A calendar can be found on the PEDAW section of the Jessie's Legacy website, [jessieslegacy.com](http://jessieslegacy.com). If you have questions call us at 1-888-988-5281, extension 204, or e-mail us at [family@familyservices.bc.ca](mailto:family@familyservices.bc.ca)

See also:

- E-mail: [pedaw@familyservices.bc.ca](mailto:pedaw@familyservices.bc.ca)
- Facebook:
  - [facebook.com/JessiesLegacyEatingDisorderPrevention](https://facebook.com/JessiesLegacyEatingDisorderPrevention)
  - [facebook.com/loveourbodiesloveourselves](https://facebook.com/loveourbodiesloveourselves)
- Twitter: [@loveourbodies](https://twitter.com/loveourbodies)
- Blog: [loveourbodiesloveourselves.blogspot.ca](http://loveourbodiesloveourselves.blogspot.ca)
- Website: [jessieslegacy.com](http://jessieslegacy.com)
- Youtube: [youtube.com/user/loveourbodies](https://youtube.com/user/loveourbodies)



*Shelley Hine, child and family therapist, Family Services of the North Shore and co-ordinator, Jessie's Legacy Eating Disorders' Prevention Program*



## Carol Todd

# Keeping Amanda's legacy alive



by Susan Croll

*When I think of Amanda Todd, I think of relentless bullying, helplessness, hopelessness, and suicide. I also think of Carol Todd, Amanda's mother, and the unimaginable pain that comes with losing a child so young.*

Yet Carol Todd has taken her grief and is trying to turn it into change by making it her mission to educate, advocate, and speak out about why the eerie silence surrounding mental illness needs to be broken. Carol Todd is not only a mother, but also a teacher and BCTF member, and because much of this issue of the *Teacher* newsmagazine is devoted to raising awareness about mental illness, I decided to call her and ask her for an interview. On Wednesday, December 18, I met Carol Todd at Learning Services, where she works in Coquitlam.

Carol Todd is smart, intuitive, and committed to her daughter's legacy: to making sure that mental illness is not a topic to avoid, not something to feel embarrassed or ashamed about. She is forthright in her belief that people need to talk openly and informatively about anxiety and depression and show kids that there are strategies for dealing with suicidal thoughts and feelings.

As we began our conversation, Carol remarked that so many kids are seemingly anxious these days. She thinks that a lot of anxiety is caused by unchecked stress and pressures: the pressure to be smart, to be in a girl-boy relationship, to look good, to be skinny—especially for girls, to get good marks, and so on. She adds that in a world of insistent advertising, many kids feel a sense of entitlement and feel that the

"shoulds" should just come to them naturally. When the "shoulds" don't appear, some kids don't have a way to untangle why they didn't get what they wanted, nor do they have the resiliency to overcome their feelings of disappointment. But anxiety is not the propriety of girls; the percentage of boys who complete suicide is double that of girls.

Add in social media, which Carol coins as "brag and slag," and given this public upmanship, some kids end up feeling not good enough. She says the social media race isn't limited to material things, like getting a new smartphone. Kids parade their relationships on social media, posting photo after photo, not realizing they are jeopardizing their own privacy. Some kids viewing the photo parade, notably those without a prized relationship and those who are in the friend's social circle, may end up feeling like failures, becoming despondent, depressed, and disengaged.

Carol maintains that kids often don't get the support they need when they feel sad or depressed. She says they may be told that their feelings will go away, that their feelings are trivial. Some people think

*"Teaching kids about mental health and wellness is the best prevention we have."*

that if kids talk about their feelings it makes it worse, because it's a form of indulgence. Carol believes this way of thinking exists because people don't know how to have these difficult conversations with kids. It's easier not to talk than to talk.



She also says that sometimes we don't realize how much someone may be hurting. She talked about her own daughter and how one day Amanda wanted to go summer clothes shopping. When they reached the mall entrance, Amanda froze; too anxious to go

***...we must talk and teach about mental wellness: what it is, what it looks and feels like, and what to do when we feel anxious and depressed.***

through the doors. She thought people would recognize her, point her out because of the posting of the intimate photo and the Facebook comments made after that. They didn't end up going shopping and at that moment, Carol knew her daughter was really struggling with high anxiety.

Carol was able to obtain reliable help and support for Amanda, but she stresses this is not the case for other youth and their families. She said the child and youth mental health system is so stretched that unless the youth is suicidal or prone to harming themselves or others, the services are slow to appear. She explains that kids who are depressed can't wait for the bureaucracy to turn its wheels. Youth mental health is also inconsistent and sporadic throughout BC. Each health authority has different protocols and different resources. What are common, however, are the limited funds and limited resources.

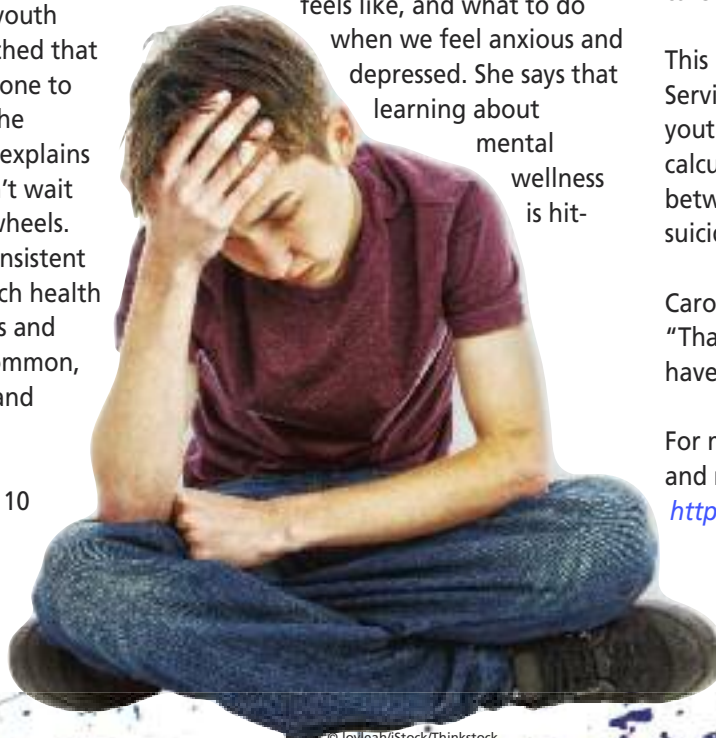
The Fraser Health Authority has 10 beds available in its Adolescent Psychiatric Unit at Surrey

Memorial Hospital. Not a lot of beds when you consider the number of municipalities between Burnaby and Chilliwack.

Carol says that if a child self-harms and ends up in a hospital, that the resources upon discharge could use some improvements. Amanda's first follow-up appointment with a child psychiatrist was scheduled for two months after discharge and in her case, two months too late.

Carol feels that Amanda took her own life because she thought it was the only solution to take away her pain. She adds that Amanda was a vivacious and creative young woman who ultimately wanted to live but that persistent, chronic bullying broke her down and led to depression and despair. She says that Amanda did not have the coping skills, strategies, or understanding to deal with what she was feeling and experiencing.

That is one of the reasons why Carol believes so strongly that as teachers, we must talk and teach about mental wellness: what it is, what it looks and feels like, and what to do when we feel anxious and depressed. She says that learning about mental wellness is hit-



and-miss in the education system and that it is vaguely referred to in curriculum. Instead, she'd like to see the topic of mental health openly taught as part of the ministry's new curriculum.

***But anxiety is not the propriety of girls; the percentage of boys who complete suicide is double that of girls.***

"Teaching kids about mental health and wellness is the best prevention we have." Carol says. She also states that the cuts to public education and health have done nothing to help kids suffering with mental health problems.

"Just look at the reduction of resource teachers and counsellors in both elementary and secondary schools. Amanda had a learning disability. These teachers can make a huge difference in kids' lives. Kids need counsellors to talk to. Now counsellors in secondary schools share their work duties with course and career guidance."

This past September, the BC Coroners Service released its review of child and youth suicide. Given yearly averages, calculated on the past 22 years, 19 youth between the ages of 10-18 will commit suicide in 2014.

Carol shakes her head at that number. "That's 19 youth too many. That is why I have to continue what I do."

For more information on cyberbullying and mental health, visit <http://amandatoddlegacy.org/>

# Know the signs of despair



© michele placquadro/istock/Thinkstock

by Chris Holt

I spend a great deal of time talking about youth suicide as the full-time executive co-director of NEED2, a youth suicide prevention non-profit in Victoria. It's not something most people discuss every day, in fact, it's a topic that most folks have difficulty discussing at all. The stigma and fear around this topic still pervades our relationships regardless of recent media coverage of Retaeh Parsons, Amanda Todd, and anti-bullying legislation. We fear contagion, we fear implanting ideas, we fear not being able to help, and we are troubled by the lack of resources when youth do reach out. And yet Statistics Canada has data showing two youth die by suicide every day in Canada.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among secondary school aged youth and some 25 to 30 students kill themselves every year in BC. If you have a classroom filled with youth, odds are some students are thinking about it.

The fact a youth is seriously considering suicide is indicative of deep distress and they need help.

While suicide intervention/prevention training comes in many forms including ASIST Training, Mental Health First Aid, and others, teachers do not often have the time or financial resources to commit to these extensive training programs. While many teachers successfully rely on their own instincts and experience, compassion and related training to help a youth, they may still hesitate to discuss this issue with a student, may miss some of the signs, and may not feel confident in broaching the subject. Yet the burden is always upon them to respond if they see something amiss with a student.

Since 1996, we at NEED2 have been working with lower Vancouver Island schools to introduce middle- and secondary-school students, teachers, and staff to the dynamics of youth suicide conversations. Through our classroom presentations, NEED2's volunteers discuss the dynamics of suicide and how youth can help each other.

Our work in schools has given us direct evidence that supports the current research on the numbers of youth who

consider suicide. In every class there are youth who disclose to our volunteers that they or a friend needs to talk. In those instances we connect them to school counsellors and ensure they receive help. We also connect youth to our online crisis

*I spend a great deal of time talking about youth suicide... It's not something most people discuss every day...it's a topic that most folks have difficulty discussing at all.*

portal [Youthspace.ca](http://Youthspace.ca), which provides youth with connection to trained volunteers for chatting and texting about their emotional issues and how to get help.

We have discovered that for teachers the fact that so many students contemplate this act is disturbing and they often request short introductory training sessions that can help them make informed approaches to one of their students. And while we can accommodate schools within lower Vancouver Island, we cannot provide services across the province.

We have three programs available on our website at [NEED2.ca](http://NEED2.ca). The secondary-oriented courses are less than \$30. The commission on these programs is quite reasonable and so by taking a course you help to contribute to funding our national crisis service [Youthspace.ca](http://Youthspace.ca), as well as our Whole School Suicide Awareness programming.

## Middle-school educators' program

At-Risk for Middle School Educators uses uniquely effective and engaging educational gaming technology to prepare educators to identify, approach, and refer at-risk middle-school-aged



students. In the simulation, users learn by engaging in conversations with emotionally responsive student avatars that show signs of psychological distress including depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide.

### High school educators' program

Users assume the role of an educator and engage in conversations with three emotionally responsive student avatars that exhibit signs of psychological distress. These avatars "react" to users' decisions, effectively replicating real-life interactions. Through this virtual role-play, users adopt effective conversational tactics and motivational interviewing techniques to effectively:

- broach the topic of psychological distress.
- motivate the student to seek help.
- avoid common pitfalls such as attempting to diagnose the problem or giving unwarranted advice.

The training programs were developed by Kognito Interactive with input from nationally recognized mental health experts and over 250 high school educators in the US. Introduced in 2010, the program is listed in Section III of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Best Practices' Registry and has been adopted by state agencies and non-profits to train over 200,000 teachers in seven states including Texas, Ohio, New Mexico, Alaska, Arizona, and New York.

You can see more about the training at <http://need2.ca/on-line-training> and the courses can be taken at anytime. For more information on NEED2 you can check out our Website at [NEED2.ca](http://NEED2.ca) and please check out [Youthspace.ca](http://Youthspace.ca) as a resource for your students.

*Chris Holt is executive co-director of NEED2*

## Breaking the silence through drama

*by Sara Raouf, Richmond teacher*

I returned to school after my maternity leave ended in September 2012, and sat down to review my caseload as a resource and learning assistance teacher that year. Several of my students were dealing with their own mental health issues, and more were grappling with a family member's mental health. I wondered why we weren't teaching kids about mental health. I remembered the burden of dealing with my own father's mental illness as a student and wondered why, 25 years later, schools still weren't doing much to address this complex issue.

We know that one in five Canadians experience a mental illness in their lifetime and that mental illness is something that affects people of all ages, all cultures and all socio-economic levels. So why weren't schools talking about it?

This difficult question was the catalyst that turned into a collaborative effort amongst various mental health organizations in Richmond and the school district. My sister works for the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in Vancouver and she put me in touch with Dave Macdonald, the Executive Director at CMHA in Richmond. We discussed how we could start the conversation about mental illness in schools, and before I knew it, we had a plan that included applying to Pacific Blue Cross' Community Connections program for a \$12,800 grant to fund 20 performances of a play by Green Thumb Theatre that ran from November 25 to December 6, 2013.

The play is called "People Like Vince" and it deals with a young girl named Myrtle trying to navigate her relationship with her uncle who suffers from bipolar disorder. She feels embarrassed by his

"uniqueness" and struggles with making sense of his mental illness. The play was both an accessible and entertaining way to broach a tough subject. More than 2,000 students in Grades 4 to 7 in Richmond watched the play.

Larry Antrim, Richmond School District's co-ordinator for Counselling and Social Responsibility and Roz Walls, from Vancouver Coastal Health's Richmond Supporting Families with Parental Mental Illness and/or Addictions, were instrumental in supporting this project, from applying for funding to implementing the project in schools. Many teachers, school counsellors and other mental health organizations in Richmond worked together to create a study guide to complement the play. Pre-play and post-play activities were included for teachers and their students, as well as a comprehensive list of local mental-health related resources.

Mental illness is a topic often avoided in schools. It's the elephant in the room people hesitate to talk about. I hope that by showing students the play, we can further build and strengthen their knowledge about mental illness. I also hope that through further education about mental illness, we can help to remove the barriers that prevent people from accessing medical help and community supports, and build greater acceptance and empathy with those coping with various mental illnesses in our communities.

### Sources:

- <http://tinyurl.com/mental-illness-fast-facts>
- <http://tinyurl.com/people-like-vince>
- <http://tinyurl.com/bluecross-community>



**BCTF**  
@bctf

## What are your concerns about mental health issues and services in BC schools? #bced #bcedchat

**Steve Gelhorn@steveybg**

@bctf that there is a major lack of services and support for youth dealing with mental health issues.

**Rob Genaille@rvgenaille**

@bctf lack of education on mental health issues which leads to lack of empathy for those students or teachers struggling. #bced #bcedchat

**Tobey Steeves@symphtly**

I'm concerned about the loss of school counsellors @bctf. Since 2000, loss of how many? And what's counsellor-to-student ratio?

**Nico1e@nico1e**

@bctf I held a student's hand once through a panic attack. 1 yr later she committed suicide. Every school has stories, loss. Anxiety, bully.

**Nico1e@nico1e**

A high school has over 1000 students but only 3 counsellors. How on Earth is there time for them to reach students who need help? @bctf #bced

**Derek Fournier@fournier422**

@nico1e @bctf "Safeteen" is run at my school with Gr. 10 boys and Gr. 8 girls - excellent program

**Amanda Long@MsAmandaLong**

@bctf HSs don't have enough counselors&they're overwhelmed with admin work [course planning/graduation] no time to "counsel" #bced #bcedchat

**Jim Watson@CaptainSuburb**

@MsAmandaLong @bctf my school had to make Sophie's Choice decision of whether to use LIF pittance for counselor time

## Answer key for eating disorders' quiz from page 6

1. F—Self-hatred and self-doubt are the underpinnings of eating disorders among children and youth. They are uncomfortable receiving praise. They believe that they are "unlovable," or are not "good at anything."
2. F—Eating disorders are not about rebellion. An eating disorder is an "emotion-regulation disorder." Children and youth who are unable to process difficult emotions (e.g., anger, shame, guilt) erroneously turn to an eating disorder to help them process their feelings.
3. F—Parents are not the cause. There is no one cause. There are a number of risk factors. These include, but are not limited to, perfectionism, childhood anxiety disorder, traumatic life events, high-level exercise, genetics, and simply being a female adolescent.
4. F—Parents play a vital role to varying degrees in their child's recovery and treatment.
5. F—Research shows that teaching students signs, symptoms, and specific information about eating disorders may be harmful. Teaching draws undue attention to the illness. Instead of explicitly teaching about eating disorders, teachers should focus on positive body image and resilience.
6. T—The Planning 10 and English 12 curricula are examples of two courses that contain materials related to healthy living, food, nutrition, advertising, body image, and exercise. These materials may be triggering for students with an eating disorder as well as those at risk for developing one. The healthy living curriculum is woven throughout Grades K–12.
7. T—According to the statistics, eating disorders are more prevalent in females than males. Ninety per cent of those diagnosed with anorexia nervosa are female. However, males also suffer from eating disorders and are largely under-diagnosed. An estimated one-fourth of children diagnosed with anorexia nervosa are male. Preliminary research for binge-eating disorders suggests that it occurs equally in males and females.
8. T—Physical education classes may seem contraindicated for children and youth struggling with an eating disorder. This is not true. It is important for students to learn to engage in physical activity that is healthy and balanced. The structure of a physical education class is a good starting point for those well enough to participate.
9. F—It is important to ensure as much normalcy as possible when a student returns to school. Though educational expectations of teachers may shift, behavioural ones should not. To make exceptions for this student by ignoring the behaviour would work against the effort to normalize the classroom environment.
10. T—For some children/youth, the "thin is beautiful" message conveyed through the media will trigger them to develop an eating disorder. For others, the pressures found in the media will be inconsequential.
11. F—Time spent in treatment has only facilitated an interruption of symptoms; the student is by no means cured. In fact, the average recovery rate for eating disorders is seven years.
12. T—In some cases, perfectionism drives performance, which compels students to over-function in spite of malnutrition and, therefore, grades may temporarily improve. Research also tells us that the performance of an athlete may also show temporary improvement.
13. T—The bulimia nervosa subtype most commonly uses vomiting to purge calories but may also over exercise to achieve the same result.
14. T—Mirror gazing is a form of body checking that serves to reinforce a negative self-image in the mind of the child/youth with an eating disorder.
15. T—Generally speaking, research informs us that school connectedness is protective for child/youth mental health. Although the factors contributing to an eating disorder are complex, there is little question that a strong connection to school is crucial to a student's recovery.



# Curriculum questions answered

## Does the draft curriculum require me to use more technology in my teaching?

No. The use of technology in your classroom to support learning is your decision as the teacher. There is nothing in the draft curriculum that necessitates an increase in technology.

## The ministry's web page refers to "personalized learning" and "21st century learning," which are only vaguely defined. Is there anything in the draft curriculum that will require me to adopt these methods?

No, nothing in the draft curriculum requires teachers to adopt these undefined concepts. And by the way, aren't we all teaching in the 21st century? Teachers are always looking to keep current and base their classroom practice on sound pedagogy but the drafts do not require any particular way of teaching. You will notice that many learning outcomes are less specific than in the past and that issues relevant to community contexts are suggested as teaching tools.

## What's the timeline?

There is no implementation date yet and the BCTF doesn't know when the drafts will be finalized. We understand that drafts may change based on teachers' feedback to the ministry.

## What plans are there for in-service?

Few, as yet. The BCTF and locals continue to press the Ministry of Education for additional funding to support the implementation of new curriculum. Most local collective agreements speak to the importance of in-service, as well as for resources needed for successful implementation. Locals are meeting with district staff to discuss. The province, school districts, and school-based administrators should not expect the five non-instructional days set aside for teacher professional development to be used for curriculum implementation.

Instead, teachers should be provided with in-service. A sixth non-instructional day does exist and this day could be used to support implementation. This year, however, the minister of education chose "skills, trades and apprenticeships" as the topic for the day.

## Can I start using the draft curriculum now?

The current prescribed learning outcomes (PLOs) remain in place, but teachers can go ahead and try out whichever elements of these draft curricula they wish.

Please note: parents may opt for alternative delivery (<http://tinyurl.com/altdelivery>) for some PLOs in the current *Health & Career K-7*, *Health & Career 8-9*, and *Planning 10* Instructional Resource Packages (IRPs), but no such option is available for other PLOs in any IRPs—and the same is true with the drafts. You do not need permission to teach Aboriginal content nor does alternative delivery apply. Remember, teachers do not need permission from administrators or consent from parents to teach any learning outcome.

## Is the Health & Career IRP disappearing?

The *Health & Career* IRP will phase out. A new course currently in draft, called *Health & PE*, combines parts of the *Health & Career K-7* and *Grades 8/9* IRP with the current *Physical Education* IRP.

Healthy eating, personal safety, and sexual health education move to the new *Health & PE* heading. The future location of the career-related PLOs from the current *Planning 10* and *Health & Career* IRPs is still in limbo. We expect it will be posted on the ministry website in January.

*Arts Education* drafts should be posted by now.

## Are there any other changes to curriculum coming?

Not that we know about. No curriculum teams have been assigned to work on any of the applied skills courses yet. The ministry is holding off on senior secondary drafts until they make decisions on graduation requirements.

## What about the rest of the BC Education Plan?

The ministry has not announced any changes to grad requirements—or to Grades 11 and 12. They have stated that work on Grade 11 and 12 curriculum drafts are delayed until the ministry becomes clearer on the direction for graduation requirements. Conversations with education partner groups continue about the future of the FSA and provincial exams. Educators continue to advocate for assessment methods that align with the draft curriculum. The ministry is still working on the other big item, the "core competencies." Draft continua are in process and focus on critical thinking.

## Didn't BCPSEA have concessions on the table during the last round of bargaining? Didn't they say they needed these concessions for the implementation of the BC Education Plan?

The draft curricula can easily be implemented without any need to bargain a single concession for post and fill, seniority, layoff, or evaluation language. Good will and mutual respect are important for any education change, particularly with curriculum change, with teachers being the key to the process.

*Compiled by Glen Hansman  
BCTF first vice-president*

# Are you a new teacher? This page is for you.

by Teri Mooring

New teachers often face challenges that many of their predecessors did not. They are entering the profession more than a decade after class size, teacher ratios, and composition language was stripped from collective agreements, making workloads substantially more difficult. Without a doubt, teaching is now more complex with fewer supports for both teachers and students.

I recently had the opportunity to discuss these issues with a number of new teachers and with teacher-mentors. They generously shared insights about their experiences as new members. I compiled the following list of supports and services to address the concerns and needs they identified.

1. **Induction ceremonies** are designed to officially welcome new members to the union. New teachers receive the *BCTF Code of Ethics* and a complimentary provincial specialist association membership.
2. **The “New Teachers’ Workshop,”** an introduction to the local union and the BCTF is often booked in conjunction with induction ceremonies. Some of the topics explored are the collective agreement, positive professional relationships, professional issues, the work of the union, and the importance of active participation by new members.
3. **The New Teacher Mentoring Project** is a joint program between the BCTF, UBC, BC School Superintendents’ Association, and the Ministry of Education. The project seeks to provide local, coherent, research-based, and sustainable systems of support for teachers in their early years. The BCTF is working on expanding this program throughout the province.
4. **The New Teachers’ Conference** is held every spring for pre-service teachers and members in their first five years of teaching. See ad, page 5.
5. **Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs)** provide a space for members to exchange ideas about research, teaching strategies, and professional curriculum development. By joining PSAs, new teachers gain opportunities to collaborate and share their expertise in specific areas of interest. These 32 PSAs hold annual conferences, produce publications, and respond to issues to provide services to colleagues and students.
6. **“The Practice of Teaching: A handbook for new teachers and TTOCs”** is a comprehensive resource outlining everything from BCTF governance to classroom management, student reporting, practical classroom tips, and much more. A mobile version will be available this spring.
7. **BCTF grants** are available for locals to provide mentorship and training opportunities for members to undertake leadership roles and become involved in BCTF-related activities. Additionally, eight \$500 grants are provided to a PSA, a local, or a zone conference that includes a significant component for new teachers and teachers teaching on call.
8. **BCTF Provincial advisory committees** are issue-based committees that provide excellent leadership opportunities for teachers from across the province. Teachers teaching on call, the committee for action on social justice, and Aboriginal education are examples of some advisory committees. The provincial TTOC committee also provides support to local TTOC contacts.
9. **Peer Support and Peer Mediation** are two separate programs designed to provide support to members. Peer support assists members with their teaching practice while peer mediation helps teachers undergoing member-to-member conflict resolve this conflict. These services are provided by highly skilled and experienced teachers.
10. **BCTF website and social media.** The website is a rich source of information on numerous topics. A Professional Learning Portal is currently under development and will house resources and provide discussion forums regarding the new government curriculum. Additionally, we encourage you to follow and contribute to the discussions on Facebook and Twitter.

For more information about these opportunities and services, contact your local union office, and explore the [bctf.ca](http://bctf.ca) website.

*Teri Mooring is BCTF second vice-president*

***Teacher newsmagazine wants to hear from new teachers. What are your experiences as new teachers? What’s working, what’s not? How can the BCTF help you and your new teacher colleagues? Send us your ideas at [newsmag@bctf.ca](mailto:newsmag@bctf.ca).***



# Appel à tous les nouveaux enseignants, nouveaux suppléants et maîtres-stagiaires

par Marie-Claude Tremblay, coordonnatrice, Conférence pour nouveaux enseignants

Vous cherchez des idées pour la classe de français langue de base, d'éducation physique ou pour cette nouvelle classe de maths que vous enseignerez en février? Vous voulez des idées pour aider vos élèves ayant des besoins particuliers? Vous avez des questions au sujet des nouveaux curriculums? Vous désirez rencontrer et discuter avec d'autres collègues en début de carrière? Quelle meilleure occasion que la conférence annuelle de la FECB pour nouveaux enseignants qui aura lieu le vendredi 28 février et le samedi 1er mars à l'Hôtel Radisson de Richmond.

L'inscription commencera le lundi, 20 janvier. Les frais d'inscription pour cette conférence de 2 jours restent le même à 70 \$ et comprend 6 ateliers, le dîner (déjeuner) sur les deux jours et le Salon des exposants. Le déjeuner (petit déjeuner) n'est pas compris.

Veuillez noter:

- que l'horaire est le même pour les deux jours.
- qu'il y aura plus d'exposants au Salon.
- qu'une séance plénière est prévue après la première session d'ateliers :
- la plénière du vendredi est une session Q & R avec le président de la FECB, Jim Iker;
- le samedi, le personnel de la FECB et des enseignants parleront de divers sujet tel que l'utilisation des médias sociaux à bon escient et en toute sécurité, que « la charité n'équivaut pas à la justice » et quelques participants courageux partageront une ressource particulière ou une idée géniale.
- qu'une table ronde est prévue au cours de la 2e session des ateliers. Adressez-vous directement au personnel de la FECB avec vos questions sur la santé et la sécurité, le mentorat, notre régime de retraite, la justice sociale dans votre

salle de classe, l'indemnisation des travailleurs, la négociation collective ou donner des suggestions pour la conférence de l'an prochain.

- qu'après la conférence, les documents des ateliers seront publiés sur une page spéciale du site web de la FECB. Tous les participants recevront le lien à cette page Web avec le sondage de la conférence.

Le but de la conférence annuelle pour enseignants en début de carrière repose sur le principe de base d'un perfectionnement professionnel efficace fondé sur le partage de connaissances et de compétences entre enseignants expérimentés avec leurs collègues.

Les places sont limitées alors mettez une note dans votre agenda pour consulter le site Web de la FECB, le lundi 20 janvier!

[mctremblay@bctf.ca](mailto:mctremblay@bctf.ca)

## BCTF conference for new teachers, student teachers, and new TTOCs

**February 28 – March 1, 2014**

**Radisson Hotel**  
8181 Cambie Road  
Richmond, BC V6X 3X9



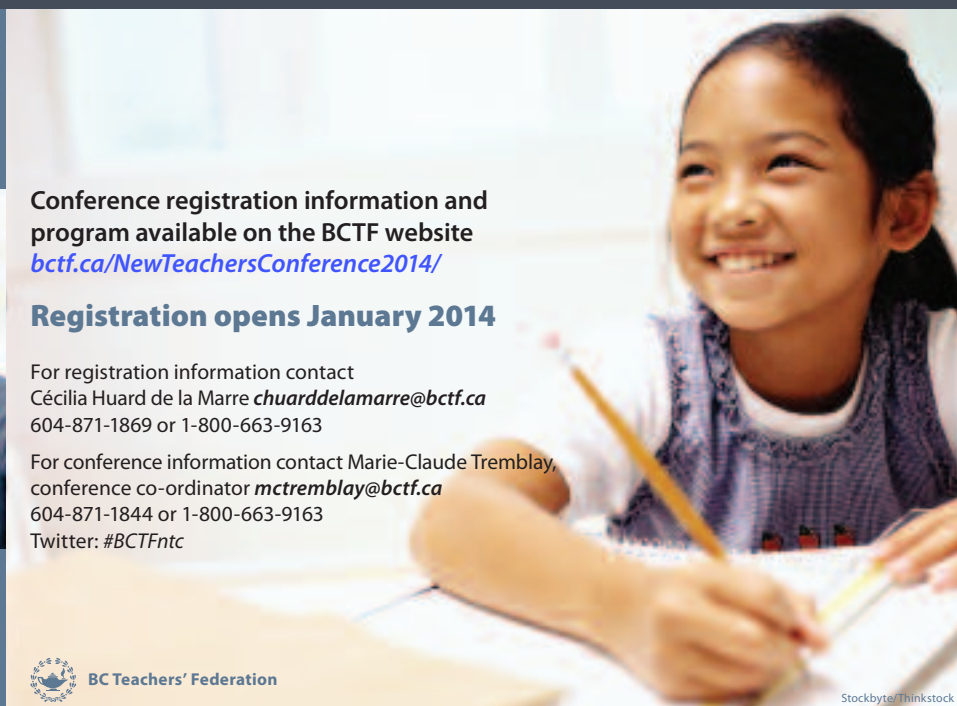
- ✓ visit resource fair
- ✓ attend workshops
- ✓ network with other new teachers
- ✓ collect valuable classroom materials

Conference registration information and program available on the BCTF website  
[bctf.ca/NewTeachersConference2014/](http://bctf.ca/NewTeachersConference2014/)

**Registration opens January 2014**

For registration information contact  
Cécilia Huard de la Marre [chuarddelamarre@bctf.ca](mailto:chuarddelamarre@bctf.ca)  
604-871-1869 or 1-800-663-9163

For conference information contact Marie-Claude Tremblay,  
conference co-ordinator [mctremblay@bctf.ca](mailto:mctremblay@bctf.ca)  
604-871-1844 or 1-800-663-9163  
Twitter: #BCTFntc



Stockbyte/Thinkstock

# NURTURING the LOVE of TEACHING



## Violence at work: Your need to know is your right to know

Here's the thing... No more muddy waters regarding student privacy or confidentiality. You have the right to know when a student in your class or your school poses a real safety risk to you or the people you work with. WorkSafeBC regulations are clear: the employer has a responsibility to inform staff about "all known or reasonably foreseeable health and safety hazards, including workplace violence."

In fact, the WorkSafeBC regulation defines violence as "the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour that gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury." (Injury or harm including bullying or harassment by a co-worker is covered by another regulation).

A recent *WorkSafe Bulletin* states that over 115 workers in British Columbia's education sector each year end up taking time off work due to injuries inflicted by students. "Workers often report that violent incidents happen "out of the blue" or "without warning." However, incident investigations frequently reveal that the student involved had a history, or a known risk, or violent behaviour that was not communicated to workers by way of assessments, individual education plans, or employee safety plans."

Take the time to read this *WorkSafe Bulletin*. Different scenarios including students transferring from one district to another are featured. In the past, administrators often did not inform staff of newly transferred, but potentially violent students, citing student confidentiality. This information can no longer be withheld. Just as importantly, staff also must be informed of any parents who have displayed aggressive or threatening behaviour toward any staff member. Read the *WorkSafe Bulletin* here: <http://tinyurl.com/WorksafeBulletin>

We encourage you to discuss this regulation at your school Health and Safety Committee meeting and at your staff meeting to ensure that everyone is aware of their rights.

## ADULT EDUCATION

# Andragogy: How do we teach adult learners amidst cutbacks?

by Tammy Gates, Adult Educators' Advisory Committee

*Andragogy—the study of adult education and its principles—was popularized by Malcolm Knowles in the 1970s and 1980s when adult enrolment in college and university programs drastically increased.*

Knowles argues that teaching adults is a phenomenon in its own and should be treated as such. Teaching adults must be: democratic/equal, kinesthetic in nature, problem-based, collaborative, important, and meaningful (Knowles, 1984). Working with, and teaching adults is a unique process that involves learning or researching that extends general pedagogy—andragogy. Masters degrees, certificate programs, and continuing education courses are offered at universities that teach how to effectively teach adults. If post-secondary institutions recognize this, why don't our local school districts?

Teachers who work with adults experience the same challenges as their K–12 colleagues, but without the same supports. For example, adult educators (teachers who teach adults the Grade 1–12 curriculum to either upgrade or graduate) do not have access to special education resource teachers, support staff, and counsellors. Student files are often locked up at a separate location and there is no extra time or professional development training to modify or adapt curriculum to suit the adults learning styles or needs.

Adult education is likely offered at an off-campus location in a closed down school that is separate from the regular school system. And, many of the classes are offered during the evening to try to suit the attendance times of the adults who work (perhaps putting teachers' safety in jeopardy).

Adult learners also do not receive the help that is offered to their secondary colleagues, but must meet the same curriculum expectations. These adults may have had negative experiences with schools and teachers in the past, and may carry these experiences with them when they return to school.

Without a learning resource teacher or counsellor on site, learning challenges may go unnoticed and may hinder the students desire to learn. Offering the assistance of a learning resource teacher may help alleviate some of the stress endured by both the student and the teacher. Most adult educators work in a classroom with upwards of 30 students, all at various



abilities, without assistance, without resources, without sufficient space, and without any preparation time. This is unacceptable and needs to change.

Unfortunately, the funding formula for adult education makes it impossible to fund these basic services. The government pays school districts per course and only once, NOT per student, which equals approximately \$400 per course paid to school districts. So, if a student registers for a course more than once, there is no

#### INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

## Mexican teachers protest education reform, standardized tests

by Nancy Knickerbocker

In the middle of the night on January 5, 2014, Mexican authorities moved in with riot police and bulldozers to put an end to one of the most valiant and enduring actions of resistance by Mexican teachers in their long history of struggle for quality public education.

Since the school year began last August, thousands of teachers have taken to the streets and squares of Mexico City to protest the federal government's sweeping education reforms that will undermine labour rights, increase standardized testing, impose teacher evaluation based on test scores, and promote privatization of public education.

After being evicted from the main square with blasts from water cannons and blows from police batons, approximately 4,000 teachers occupied the Monument to the Revolution. Conditions were difficult in their make-shift tents, but determination remained firm.

In November 2013, BCTF President Jim Iker visited the teachers' encampment and delivered a keynote address at an International Solidarity conference organized by the Tri-National Coalition in Defense of Public Education. The event brought together teacher union leaders from BC, Ontario, Chicago, and Los Angeles with Mexican activists, many of whom came from rural states where most students are impoverished and vulnerable.

Iker emphasized the similarities between the neoliberal attacks on teachers and their unions throughout the Americas, although the challenges facing Mexican colleagues are clearly more severe than in Canada. Still, he noted, everywhere across the continent we are seeing deep cuts in the public sector, attacks on human and labour rights, and economic injustice on the rise.

funding for that student/course again because the district has already received the money for the course.

Both the government and school districts need to recognize that teaching adults has a unique set of challenges and that appropriate funding may lead to a higher rate of educational success. If you are an adult educator and have any concerns, please speak with your local union president or contact the Adult Educators' Advisory Committee (Patti Turner, [pturner@bctf.ca](mailto:pturner@bctf.ca)).



NANCY KNICKERBOCKER PHOTO

*L-R: Paul Bocking, (Ontario); Mirna Valenzuela (Chicago); Rosemary Lee, (Los Angeles); Nancy Serrano (Chicago); Jim Iker.*

Teachers from all three countries reported on the negative impact of standardized testing. The Mexicans emphasized that they are not opposed to evaluation per se but that student scores on standardized tests are to be the key measure of teacher competence, a factor that penalizes those working with the most marginalized students. Teachers from Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Veracruz were also critical that the exams are in Spanish, while their language of instruction may be Nahuatl or other indigenous languages.

Nancy Serrano from the Chicago Union of Teachers explained how school funding and teacher evaluation are largely based on test scores. "They use low scores as an excuse to close the public schools and re-open them as charter schools with non-unionized teachers," Serrano said, adding that 50 public schools have closed in Chicago in the past year, resulting in significant teacher layoffs.

## Stop industrial murder Buy “clean” clothes

Twelve and ten years of age. That’s how young Kalpona Akter and her brother were when they began working at a garment factory in Bangladesh. Their pay, for working 15 hour days in a run-down, dilapidated, and unsafe building, was \$6 a month.

Kalpona Akter was in Vancouver in November to speak at a BC Federation of Labour conference. Delegates were spellbound as she spoke about the Rana Plaza garment factory and the collapse of the building that killed more than 1,000 workers last spring. She reminded delegates that this most recent tragedy was not the first but one of many. She recalled her own experience in 1990 when fire broke out in the factory she worked at.

“When we tried to leave, the managers locked the doors. Workers were trying to get down the stairwell but were trapped. Fortunately, the fire did not spread throughout the building. That time no one died.”

She was imprisoned last year for trying to organize a union, and one of her co-workers was brutally beaten and killed. One might wonder why she does this kind of work but her answer is straightforward.



SUSAN CROLL PHOTO

***Kalpona Akter, of the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity, speaks at the Hudson’s Bay store in Vancouver informing shoppers about who makes their clothes and the conditions they’re made under.***

“When I was 15 years old, some of my co-workers and I went on strike because the factory was cutting our pay. I learned about an organization in Dhaka; it was a labour education centre sponsored by the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labour). I took some courses about labour rights and my life was changed. I knew I could not make things better for only me—it has to be done for everyone.”

Kalpona no longer works in a garment factory; instead she runs the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity in Dhaka, the capital city. Her organization advocates for garment workers; they try to enforce regulations, help workers unionize, and lobby for better and safe working conditions.

The BC Federation of Labour also organized a lunch time rally the day Kalpona was in Vancouver to inform shoppers about who makes their clothes and the conditions they’re made under. BCTF Executive Committee and many local representatives participated. Jim Sinclair, BC Federation of Labour president, described the Rana Plaza tragedy as “industrial murder.”

“The factory, before it collapsed, had been cited for safety violations but the owners did nothing. Canadians don’t want to wear clothes made with the blood of workers’ hands.” He called on Canadian companies like The Bay and Canadian Tire to sign on to the Bangladesh Factory Fire and Safety Accord. The accord ensures that independent and regular safety inspections of Bangladeshi garment factories takes place. And if factories violating safety practices have to shut down while carrying out repairs, the workers will not lose any pay.

After the rally, about 50 people, along with Kalpona Akter and Jim Sinclair, crossed the street, entered The Bay, and walked throughout the store chanting “Join the Accord.” One news reporter pointing to a sweater on a rack priced at

over \$200 asked Kalpona how long a Bangladeshi worker would have to work to buy the sweater. She answered that it would take at least six months, but that each day, garment workers produced hundreds of single sweaters like the one on the hanger.



GLEN HANSMAN PHOTO

Loblaws, a Canadian company owned by the Weston family and incidentally the second wealthiest family in Canada, produces the Joe Fresh clothing line, had a contract with the Rana Plaza garment factory. After sustained outcry and pressure, Loblaws have now signed on to the international accord but according to Kalpona have not paid the families of those killed or injured all of the compensation money Loblaws promised them.

When asked how Canadians could support Bangladeshi garment workers, Kalpona stated, “Please put pressure on companies like The Bay, Canadian Tire, Walmart, Gap, and Target to join the international accord. The working conditions will only improve when we have a legally binding accord that has the ability to regulate and set standards.”

Visit the Clean Clothes Campaign at <http://cleanclothes.org/issues/faq-safety-accord> or the Bangladesh Fire and Safety Accord at <http://tinyurl.com/bangladesh-fireandsafetyaccord>



# Judicial Council reports BCTF job action decisions

## STA vs Myles Winch

A three-member Hearing Panel of the BCTF Judicial Council was duly charged with determining if BCTF member, Myles Winch, was guilty of breaching Clause 8 of the BCTF Code of Ethics. It was alleged that Mr. Winch engaged in conduct harmful or prejudicial to the interests of the Federation (By-law 7.1 b), and had contravened Job Action Procedure 44.04.2.b (Strikes/Lockouts) by attending work whether or not BCTF has established a picket line when a lawful work stoppage is taking place.

The charge arose when Mr. Winch reportedly worked during the BCTF job action of March 5, 6, and 7, 2012. There was no dispute of these facts.

The Hearing Panel determined that, by his actions, Mr. Winch violated Clause 8 of the BCTF Code of Ethics.

The Hearing Panel subsequently imposed the following penalties:

1. Pursuant to Procedure 44.16.f. ii.4, Mr. Winch is fined a total of \$750, \$250

for each of the three days, March 5, 6, and 7, 2012, which he worked during a legal job action.

2. Pursuant to Procedure 44.16.ii.1, these findings will be published in the next appropriate printed issue of the *Teacher* newsmagazine.

## STA vs Mike Hoven

A three-member Hearing Panel of the BCTF Judicial Council was duly charged with determining if BCTF member, Mike Hoven, was guilty of breaching Clause 8 of the BCTF Code of Ethics. It was alleged that Mr. Hoven engaged in conduct harmful or prejudicial to the interests of the Federation (By-law 7.1 b.), and had contravened Job Action Procedure 44.04.2.b (Strike/Lockouts) by attending work whether or not BCTF has established a picket line when a lawful work stoppage is taking place.

The charge arose when Mr. Hoven reportedly worked during the BCTF job action of March 5, 6, and 7, 2012. There was no dispute of these facts.

The Hearing Panel determined that, by his actions, Mr. Hoven violated Clause 8 of the BCTF Code of Ethics.

The Hearing Panel subsequently imposed the following penalties:

1. Pursuant to Procedure 44.16.f.ii.4, Mr. Hoven is fined a total of \$750, \$250 for each of the three days, March 5, 6, and 7, 2012, which he worked during a legal job action.
2. Pursuant to Procedure 44.16.ii.1, these findings will be published in the next appropriate printed issue of the *Teacher* Newsmagazine.

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**3:00 p.m.** Full-day workshop with Lois Zachary

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<http://teachermentorshipbc.com>

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# PD Calendar

**January 30–February 1** Vancouver. The Early Years Conference 2014—Shaping Childhood: Factors that Matter. <http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca>

**February 14–April 14** Various cities in BC. "Save Your Sanity: Proactive Strategies for Children with Challenging Behaviour." Phone: 250-572-4144. To register: [www.saveyoursanity.ca](http://www.saveyoursanity.ca)

**February 20–21** Richmond. SEA (Special Education Association) Crosscurrents Conference. Keynote speaker: Norman Kunc and Emma Van der Klift. Keynote and sessions related to students with special and diverse learning needs, for classroom teachers, special education teachers, administrators, educational assistants and parents. Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel, Richmond. Register online at [www.seaofbc.ca](http://www.seaofbc.ca) Rae Perry, [searegistrar@gmail.com](mailto:searegistrar@gmail.com) or Stephanie Koropatnick, [seaconferencechair@gmail.com](mailto:seaconferencechair@gmail.com)

**February 20–21** Vancouver. BCAEA (BC Alternate Education Association) "Challenge and Change" – 27th annual conference. Dr. Gordon Neufeld as keynote; sessions featuring diverse topics relevant to all those associated with vulnerable students typically enrolled in alternative learning environments. Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre, Vancouver. To register go to: [bctf.ca/bcaeal/conference.html](http://bctf.ca/bcaeal/conference.html). For more info: [bctf.ca/bcaeal/index.html](http://bctf.ca/bcaeal/index.html) Co-ordinator: DJ Pauls at [djpauls@shaw.ca](mailto:djpauls@shaw.ca)

**February 21** Victoria. It's Never Too Late to Begin. Connie Foss More presents ideas for creating musical magic with older beginner music classes for upper elementary and beyond. Free workshop courtesy of SD61 LSA and BCKSC. Victoria. 1:00–3:00 p.m. Registration and more info at the BC Kodaly Society of Canada website

<http://www.bcksc.ca>, or e-mail Emily Pollet at [emilypollet1@gmail.com](mailto:emilypollet1@gmail.com), or phone 250-337-8186.

**April 12** Victoria, BC. Building a Successful Choral Program in the Elementary School. Presented by Kelly Foster-Griffin. Ideas to generate and sustain a flourishing, robust choir. Explore necessary components that make up successful and inspirational teaching. University of Victoria, MacLaurin Building A166, Registration and more info at the BC Kodaly Society of Canada website <http://www.bcksc.ca>, or e-mail Emily Pollet at [emilypollet1@gmail.com](mailto:emilypollet1@gmail.com), or phone 250-337-8186.

**April 25–27** Berkley, CA. Ed Roberts Campus in Berkeley, California. "Fourth International Conference on Families with Parental Mental Health Challenges: Addressing the needs of the whole families." View call for abstracts: [bit.ly/1dtSEgF](http://bit.ly/1dtSEgF). Submit an abstract: [bit.ly/1chWqu6](http://bit.ly/1chWqu6). For more information, visit the conference website at <http://bit.ly/1arUT1d>. E-mail [marketing.ipce@ubc.ca](mailto:marketing.ipce@ubc.ca) to get on an enquiry list for updates.

**May 2–3** Vancouver. 2014 Consensus Conference on FamilySmart & Youth Engagement. To view the advance notice, please visit <http://bit.ly/HhitD5>. For more information, please visit the conference website at <http://bit.ly/HhiuqP>. E-mail [marketing.ipce@ubc.ca](mailto:marketing.ipce@ubc.ca) to get on an enquiry list for updates.

Future October PSA days:  
2014–2015: October. 24, 2014  
2015–2016: October. 23, 2015

Changes/additions:  
[bgoto@bctf.ca](mailto:bgoto@bctf.ca)

Online PD Calendar:  
<http://tinyurl.com/94nz4m5>

# Digital learning: Changing the brain?

by Dr. Robert Wilson Ph.D., R.Psych

**No matter how hard his Grade 3 teacher and his parents tried, Jim seemed incapable of memorizing multiplication tables.**

He had problems with spelling. His attention span was short, and he was easily distracted and quickly bored—disruptive. Token economies, special tutoring, and various disciplinary strategies all came to naught. The collective conclusion: Jim had a learning disability requiring psychological testing and guidance.

But something didn't fit. Frustrated as Jim's parents were, they couldn't understand how someone who could master a video game in minutes, surf the net with the agility of a cat, and use his iPad to defeat a world-devouring monster could be such a poor student. He was already a "master" of a game when his father could barely get past "novice." Was this a boy with a learning disability and attention deficit disorder or a child among the growing number of "digital learners?" Jim was training his brain to gather, not memorize, information and to retain only that critical to his digital survival. His motivation to pursue other forms of learning, such as rote recall and linear thinking, appeared to have atrophied.

Sound fanciful? Indeed, Jim is fictional, but the idea that digital learning can change brain organization is not, according to UCLA neuroscientist Dr. Gary Small in his fascinating book, *I Brain: Surviving the Technological Alteration of the Modern Mind*. Dr. Small contends that with the advent of digital technology "we're no longer memorizers but gatherers..., if kids are multitasking and stimulated in a certain way outside

of school, it's hard for traditional learning models to compete." He goes on to write, "If you spend a lot of time with a particular mental experience, the neurocircuits that control that experience will strengthen. But if you don't continue to exercise those circuits, they become rusty."

Neurologist Dr. Judy Willis, adjunct professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and former elementary- and middle-school teacher, writes that "The brain is a dopamine junkie...it wants to remember things that release it...for the dopamine reward system to work, feedback needs to be immediate." Enter video games. University of Wisconsin psychologist C. Shawn Green, who studies the effect video games have on abilities, concludes that "video games change your brain."

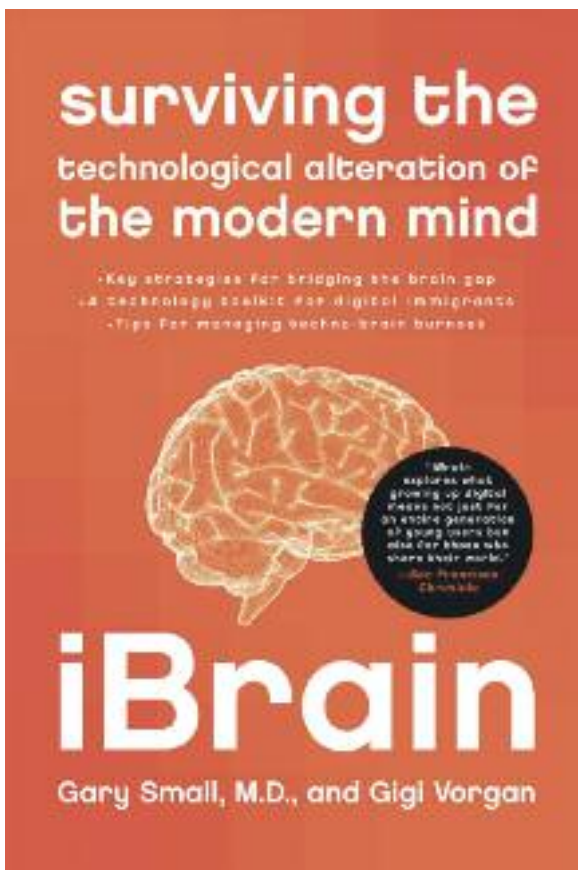
What effect does "digital learning" have in the classroom? Is Jim's experience commonplace or an anomaly? A review

of the literature appears to conclude the jury is still out on this issue. A recent study by Tannis Morgan and Mark Bullen of post-secondary "net" generation students concluded, "...there is no empirically-sound basis for most of the claims that have been made about the "net" generation... nor in their behavioural characteristics and learning preferences" (*Journal of Distance Education*, vol 25 no 1, 2011). Clearly, there is dispute among researchers.

We cannot change or ignore the fact that the digital world is having a significant impact on our lives and may well be altering the way an increasing number of children learn. This can either make the classroom a challenging, stimulating and rewarding place to work or a challenging and frustrating place to work. For those in the latter category, ironically, technology may come to your aide through a growing number of Skype and Facetime peer-support groups. Can't find one, start one.

Robert Wilson:

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