

EEI bulletin

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This has been a very exciting school year for the BCSSA's Ethics Education Initiative. On November 16, EEI-trained facilitators and district contact people from around the province attended the first provincial EEI Forum. Participants shared accomplishments and next steps, and Rushworth Kidder spoke to the group about Institute for Global Ethics (IGE) projects and new initiatives. Rushworth was also one of the keynote speakers at the BCSSA Fall Conference, at which he inspired educators to find out more about the BCSSA's provincial ethics initiative.

In February the BCSSA hosted two training sessions for educators who had attended an Ethical Fitness® Seminar and were interested in becoming trainers for the program. The sessions were facilitated by Paula Mirk, the IGE's vice president of education. Attending the second session was Stacey Huget, the newly-appointed executive director of IGE Canada, which recently established headquarters in Vancouver.

The Ethical Fitness® facilitators trained at these sessions are:

Langley (SD 35)	Charlie Etchell, Assistant Superintendent Harold Krische, Principal
Richmond (SD 38)	Wayne Lownsbrough, Director Maintenance & Operations
New Westminster (SD 40)	Susan Close-Earle, Assistant Superintendent Phil Cookson, Principal Tracy Fulton, Principal Janet Grant, District Principal, Student Services Joey Sahli, Principal John Woudzia, Superintendent
Burnaby (SD41)	Angela Henning, Principal
North Vancouver (SD 44)	Elizabeth Bell, Principal
Prince George (SD 57)	Robin Dielissen, Vice Principal
Peace River North (SD 60)	Sheldon Craig-Steele, Teacher Lilly Frey, Vice Principal

Sooke (SD 62)	Roberta Kubik, Vice Principal Garry Manhas, Principal
Gulf Islands (SD 64)	Wendy Herbert, Superintendent
Okanagan-Skaha (SD 67)	Dave Burgoyne, District Principal, Human Resources
Mission (SD 75)	Carolynn Schmor, Vice Principal Brian Tucker, Principal

The next Ethical Fitness® training session is scheduled for October 13–14 in Vancouver. If you are interested in attending, please contact Ann Naymie at anaymie@telus.net. This session is limited to 14 participants. The registration form can be downloaded from the BCSSA website, www.bcssa.org

The purpose of this (third) bulletin is to provide some scenarios that have been found to be interesting, useful and relevant for the EEI facilitators. Each is in a public school setting. Each presents a right versus right dilemma using several of the four dilemma paradigms of ethical decision-making (short term vs. long term, justice vs. mercy, the individual vs. the community, truth vs. loyalty). Each can also be analyzed using the IGE’s three resolution principles (Rule-Based, Ends-Based, Care-Based).

Scenario #1

District Staff and Professional Recommendations

A school district director of instruction has been asked by a long-term professional colleague and friend to recommend him for the newly available position of district principal, student support services. The colleague is a school-based principal of a large secondary school and has been in the district for most of his career. He has been a solid school leader, managing the complex workings of the school by supporting the work of his teams, being fair and respectful with students, maintaining good relationships with the parents and community and making sound decisions. He has been a loyal member of the district administration team and is respected and liked by his professional colleagues.

Considering the principal’s length of career and good service to the district, the recommendation request is understandable and to be expected. The director of instruction is aware that she and this colleague started out teaching junior high school together in the late ’80s, were active in the local union together, became vice-principals at about the same time, and then principals of the two largest secondary schools. They have always enjoyed a respectful, warm and professional relationship, supporting each other during tough times and stressful situations as well as celebrating their professional accomplishments. They both applied for the director position three years ago.

She is also aware that the district team is in need of an innovative educator who is current with the latest learning research and can motivate and train administrators, teachers and parents on how to best implement practices that improve student learning. She and the superintendent have outlined the role of this district principal to support the district’s mandate by effectively modelling practices, giving

workshops, working with school-based action-research teams and PAC groups and helping individual teachers who need particular mentoring.

She does not feel that her colleague, with his present leadership style and expertise, is best suited to this position. She has a professional dilemma. Should she consider the individual, who has been a good, loyal, competent school leader and is looking to grow professionally? Or should she consider the needs of the district community by recommending an outside applicant who has just finished a term with the Ministry of Education designing these programs? And, how will the community react to an outsider coming in with a lot of expertise? Will they resent this newcomer, feeling loyal to the well-liked school principal? Could the principal, with some support from her, get up to speed on the research and programs and have a more significant impact than the outsider? If she chooses to recommend the outsider, what should she tell her colleague?

Scenario #2

Principal and Changes to the Neighborhood

The Ministry of Health has announced that it will be building a drop-in centre for recovering drug addicts in an urban residential neighbourhood on the Lower Mainland. The proposed centre will be several blocks away from an elementary school and a secondary school.

Immediately after the announcement, the elementary school PAC begins campaigning for the site to be relocated. Parents are concerned that people using the centre will have a negative influence on their children and perhaps put them in danger.

While the principal of the elementary school can understand the concerns of the PAC, he feels that the fears are unfounded and it is important to support the welfare of all citizens. This centre is critical for the rehabilitation of addicts and they have as much right to community support as do children in public schools. He also believes that tolerance, one of Canada's core values, should be modelled by the school community.

The PAC begins a door-to-door petition campaign. It also enlists the local business leaders who have shops close to the location of the proposed drop-in centre to block the initiative. The PAC calls for a neighbourhood meeting at the school to present its case to the ministry. The media have been invited to the meeting, and the PAC chair asks the principal to attend and make the opening remarks.

The principal is in a dilemma. He knows it is right to represent his school community but feels there is a bit of panic and paranoia driving this issue. He also considers his leadership to be modelling Canadian social responsibility. What should he say to the PAC chair and, if he does attend the meeting to speak, what should he say to the assembled group?

Superintendent and Trustee Professional Development

As a result of school board elections in a rural district, there is a radical turnover of trustees. The chair remains from the former board but the other six are new to the position. Among the six is a retired teacher who has started a house painting business, a local policewoman whose son did not finish high school, a former assistant superintendent who has strong ideas of what needs to be changed to support education in the district, a lawyer who is married to a school custodian, the founder and owner of the town's established house painting company, and a minister from a local evangelical church who represents his congregation's desire for fundamental curriculum.

The district superintendent and the board chair have a good working relationship. They are open and respectful with each other. They also prepare each other for impending issues so there are no surprises at the meetings (unless they are both surprised).

After the election, the superintendent requests a meeting with the board chair to discuss the agenda for the first board meeting. Behind closed doors the superintendent raises the issue of building a team with these six newly-elected community leaders. The board chair agrees that the sooner the group understands how to best serve the school community the more effective it will be. They both recognize how important it will be to establish standards for professional conduct, ethical decision making, respectful debate and confidentiality.

Together they discuss the possibility of sending the board to the BCSTA's three-day Trustee Academy in December. Immersing the new board in these sessions, including seminars for new board members, will be the most effective way for the group to bond, see modelling behaviour from effective boards, understand the current issues from a local and provincial perspective, and network with trustees from other rural districts. It is far and away the best professional development available to the new group.

They both agree that the cost (\$15,000) will be worth the investment, even though it will use all of the money allocated for board professional development.

The trustees attend the December academy and it is a worthwhile session for individuals and the group. However, in January a tricky issue comes up and board members form alliances and political divisions that start to undermine authentic discussion at the meetings. The board chair calls a meeting with the superintendent and proposes that the group attend the BCSTA three-day AGM in April to get the group "back on track."

The superintendent understands the chair's concerns and the importance of re-establishing a healthy team mentality with the trustees. He is also concerned about the budget and knows that in their district \$15,000 is a significant amount of money for services to students in the classroom. He recognizes that parents would question spending additional money for these seven adult leaders who have already had three days of professional development. Should the superintendent recommend

the BCSTA session? If he does, what is the most proactive way to inform the school community about this decision? If he does not support the chair's proposal, how should he support effective team-building for this important group?

Scenario #4

Principal and School Programs

The school board has had a long-standing practice of listening to its community and providing programs to meet students' needs. Well over a decade ago, the board listened very carefully to presentations by parents, teachers and students lobbying for French Immersion in the district.

After careful consideration of the impact of implementing a new program into the district and conducting a study to determine the interest, the board voted unanimously to implement a Late French Immersion program in its only middle school.

The program was very successful—so successful that parents lined up overnight to ensure their children were registered for the program beginning in grade six. Each year the demand was greater than the number of seats.

In the meantime, the middle school had a change of principal. The new principal was very concerned with the divisions she observed between the French Immersion and the regular program. Parents were open in their statements that they chose the French Immersion program because their children would have classes without problem students. These same parents expressed dissatisfaction with the standards and expectations of the teachers in the regular program. They felt strongly that the French Immersion teachers had higher standards and expectations for their students.

Similarly, the teachers of the regular program complained about their class composition and the fact that it was their classes which gained new students over the year, thus raising their size over and above the size of the French Immersion classes. French Immersion classes were always lower in average enrolment than the regular program classes.

Although the school was organized in cross-grade pods for the teaming of teachers and students, the French Immersion team was its own separate pod. This separation further added to the feeling of difference, rather than similarities.

The new principal focused her efforts on celebrating the successes of all students, bringing French Immersion and regular program teachers together as much as possible and with the purpose of sharing teaching strategies and assessment methods. She worked diligently with her parent groups and with her feeder schools to help them understand the strength of both programs. Gradually, the regular program began to develop a positive identity and this was reflected in greater pride in student accomplishments and parent support for the school.

She was well aware that enrolment in French Immersion historically declined as students moved closer to graduation. She knew full well she should have robust numbers in the middle years to provide for viable numbers in the senior grades.

The result of this remarkable turnaround is that over the past three years, registration in Late French Immersion has declined. In fact, her projections for next year will show a drop in one French Immersion division and steady registration in the regular program. This is in addition to the gradual enrolment decline the district is facing. To facilitate the French Immersion program she will have to combine grades and the numbers in each French Immersion class will be close to 30. The regular program classes will, for the first time, have a lower average enrolment per class than the French Immersion.

This principal is now wrestling with what to recommend. Should she continue with the French Immersion program at lower numbers and questionable splits? What would be the impact on the continuation of the French Immersion program with such small numbers? Is it better for all students if she were to collapse the French Immersion program and equitably spread out the students over divisions creating smaller class sizes?

Truly effective schools are those with a shared covenant clearly articulating the school's core values and providing a standard by which actions will be judged. Leaders must not only take the lead in formulating the covenant but actively support it.

–Thomas Serviovanni

The only way to live in the world ethically is to engage in struggle.

–Danielle Gauld

Moral leadership begins with moral leaders. Great leaders embody the message they advocate: they teach, not just through words, but through actions.

–Howard Gardner

If you have any questions or concerns about the BCSSA's Ethics Education Initiative, please contact Ann Naymie (tel 604 221-2231, anaymie@telus.net).