

BCSSA VANCOUVER ISLAND CHAPTER SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

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Vision for the Future

British Columbia's education system is among the best in the world, with a high school education available to virtually everyone in the province. It is an education system that strives to meet the diverse needs of all students and boasts an impressive body of well-trained educators, involved parents and caring administrators. With that said, there are still many areas that need addressing in today's schools. The schools I want would be communities of educators, students and parents working collaboratively to continually assess the education system. Schools would recognize each student's individual skills and interests, and work hard to meet their needs. Each school would uphold the universal values of equality, diversity, tolerance, respect and safety within a positive, welcoming environment.

The school I want has teachers, parents, administrators and students all playing important roles in providing the best education. A *good* teacher is one who is able to teach the curriculum in a limpid manner, with the majority of students passing the course. A *brilliant* teacher is one who does this while developing positive relationships with his students. The brilliant teacher is engaging, and gives her class a reason to learn. The ability to teach is important, but beyond this a teacher has to be able to set standards and goals with his class, and help the students reach these goals. Most of all, a brilliant teacher simply loves teaching, and loves children.

While school is largely considered the most significant place to learn, a well-rounded education begins at home. In an ideal school, all parents would play a significant role in their children's education, encouraging good study habits and stressing the importance of personal responsibility and diligence. In the schools I want, parents will be the teachers of necessary life skills, and courses like Personal Planning will no longer have a place in our schools. Parents will communicate with their children so that issues obstructing student success such as drugs, bullying and violence would be eliminated, avoided or greatly reduced.

In the schools I want, the role of school-based administrators will be revised. As they are in a position of power and generally looked up to by the student body, principals and vice principals will create more constructive guidelines with their students. These school guidelines will reciprocate the students' respect. Rather than policing the school, administrators would focus on developing

a relationship with *every* student. By sharing a mutual respect with the student body, administrators will be in an excellent position to make connections with, and change the way of life for, at-risk youth. Students will feel they have a voice that is listened to. Essentially, the most effective principal is a caring educator, a role model and a mentor.

Ideally, every school would embrace every one of its students and strive to meet individual needs. Structured public education is not for everyone, and schools need to support students who struggle. For many high school students, courses such as physics and Principles of Math are completely irrelevant career-wise, and can be great sources of anxiety. Course selection should be determined not only by ministry guidelines, but also by local interest and needs as well. For example, a student who would like to get her welding ticket should not be required to take a Science 11 course in order to graduate. In the schools I want, the ministry's responsibility will be to properly expand trades and arts courses and consequently value students excelling in the arts and the trades equally as much as those who excel academically. The foundation of creating the schools I want is recognizing and addressing the diversity of student needs.

The schools I want would be safe and welcoming to all students. They would embody a set of values that everyone would model and practice. Everyone in the school would embrace tolerance towards all religions, all races, different sexual preferences and different individual abilities. These values would enhance the safety and emotional well-being of everyone. Students would judge each other on their actions, rather than their appearance and/or beliefs.

There is a quote: *It takes a village to raise a child*. The schools I want cannot exist in isolation, as much as teachers and administrators, parents, students and community members must all be educators. These "educators" within every school community will hold an undying belief in the endless capabilities of its students. Universal values such as equality, empathy and respect will be instilled before students reach the elementary level, and reinforced all the way through graduation and beyond. These values will help students become contributing members of their community. In the schools I want, all learners will be treated fairly, as equals, and all learners will be given equal chances for success. ❖