

BC Teachers' Federation Sept/Oct 2024

Teacher



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BCTF
Kids Matter
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THIS IS YOUR MAGAZINE



Do you enjoy writing? Have a story to tell? Know of a project at your school or in your local you want to share with colleagues? Then consider writing for *Teacher*, the flagship publication of the BCTF! Submission guidelines are available at teachermag.ca.

We also welcome letters to the editor. Send your letter to teachermag@bctf.ca.

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Clint Johnston
photo by
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE START of a new school year is always a time of renewal and possibility. It's an opportunity to reconnect with students, inspire new minds, and continue the important work we do every day.

As we head into the fall, many of you will be guiding your students through lessons and discussions about democracy that are centred around our upcoming provincial election. These lessons are vital in helping our students understand the impact of an election and the importance of everyone exercising their right to vote.

Last month's news of the BC United party pausing their campaign means there is a lot at stake in the upcoming election. John Rustad and the BC Conservatives have made some extremely concerning promises related to public education. For example, Rustad promised to scrap SOGI 123, which will make schools more hostile for 2SLGBTQIA+ students, staff, and parents. He has also voiced that he is in favour of ditching portables for larger class sizes, showing a complete disregard for collective agreements.

Teachers are already feeling the burden of underfunding and understaffing in public education. The recent BCTF membership survey found that 55% of teachers believe their workload is unmanageable, with more than 58% of members reporting that their overall workload increased last school year from the year before. (Scan the QR code to read the survey results.)

The larger class sizes proposed by the BC Conservatives will only exacerbate workload issues and worsen the staffing shortages in BC public schools. This is a path we can't afford to go down.

Students, families, and teachers need politicians to make BC public schools a clear priority.

Heading into the election, I encourage each of you to engage your local candidates. Attend candidate town halls or meet-and-greet events and stay up to date on the education platforms. Ask your local candidates to give you a reason to vote for them and ask them how they will improve public education in our province.

Public schools are cornerstones of our communities. Teachers' dedication and hard work ensure that our schools are safe, welcoming, and supportive spaces for all students. But we need meaningful investment from politicians to address the staffing shortages that make it hard to ensure every child has access to the supports they need.

I look forward to advocating for teachers throughout the school year and ensuring teachers' voices are heard.

I hope the school year ahead brings inspiration, accomplishment, and the satisfaction of making a lasting impact. Thank you for all that you do to support your students and colleagues.

In solidarity,

Clint Johnston
BCTF President

MESSAGE DU PRÉSIDENT

LE DÉBUT d'une nouvelle année scolaire est toujours synonyme de renouveau et de possibilités. C'est également l'occasion de renouer avec nos élèves, de nourrir de nouveaux esprits et de poursuivre le travail important que nous accomplissons chaque jour.

Cet automne, nombre d'entre vous guideront leurs élèves dans des leçons et des discussions sur la démocratie, plus particulièrement avec la venue des élections provinciales. Ces leçons sont essentielles pour que nos élèves comprennent l'incidence d'une élection et l'importance pour chacun d'exercer son droit de vote.

Le mois dernier, le parti BC United a annoncé qu'il suspendait sa campagne, ce qui signifie que les enjeux des prochaines élections sont considérables. John Rustad et les conservateurs de la Colombie-Britannique ont fait des promesses extrêmement inquiétantes en ce qui concerne l'enseignement public. Par exemple, M. Rustad a promis d'abandonner le programme SOGI 123, ce qui fera des écoles un endroit plus hostile pour les élèves, le personnel et les parents LGBTQS2+. Il a également fait savoir qu'il voulait cesser l'utilisation des classes préfabriquées et augmenter le nombre d'élèves par classe, montrant ainsi qu'il méprise totalement les conventions collectives.

Les enseignants subissent déjà les lourdes conséquences du sous-financement et du manque de personnel dans les écoles publiques. Selon le récent sondage mené auprès des membres de la FECB, 55 % des enseignants et enseignantes estiment que leur charge de travail est ingérable, et plus de 58 % des membres de la Fédération ont déclaré que leur charge de travail totale avait augmenté lors de la dernière année scolaire par rapport à l'année précédente. (Scannez le code QR pour accéder aux résultats du sondage.)

L'augmentation du nombre d'élèves par classe proposée par les conservateurs de la Colombie-Britannique ne fera qu'exacerber les problèmes de charge de travail et aggraver les pénuries de

personnel dans les écoles publiques de la province. Nous ne pouvons pas nous permettre d'emprunter cette avenue. Les élèves, les familles et le personnel enseignant ont besoin que les politiciens fassent des écoles publiques de la Colombie-Britannique une priorité claire.

À l'approche des élections, j'encourage chacun d'entre vous à communiquer avec vos candidats locaux. Assistez aux assemblées publiques des candidats ou participez à leurs activités. Tenez-vous au courant de leur programme électoral en matière d'éducation. Demandez à vos candidats locaux une raison de voter pour eux et ce qu'ils feront pour améliorer l'éducation publique dans notre province.

Les écoles publiques sont les pierres angulaires de nos collectivités. Le dévouement et le travail acharné des enseignants et enseignantes font de nos écoles des espaces sûrs, accueillants et réconfortants pour tous les élèves. Nous avons cependant besoin de véritables investissements de la part des responsables politiques pour remédier aux pénuries de personnel qui empêchent de garantir à chaque enfant l'accès à l'aide dont il a besoin.

Je suis impatient de défendre les intérêts des enseignants et enseignantes tout au long de l'année scolaire et de veiller à ce que leur voix soit entendue.

J'espère que l'année scolaire à venir sera inspirante et riche en réalisations et qu'elle vous apportera la satisfaction d'avoir obtenu des résultats durables. Je tiens à tous vous remercier de tout ce que vous faites pour soutenir vos élèves et vos collègues.

Solidairement,



Clint Johnston
Président de la FECB



BCTF MEMBER SURVEY

Read more about the results of the second annual BCTF membership survey by scanning the QR code or visiting <https://qrco.de/bek5xY>.

SONDAGE DES MEMBRES DE LA FECB

Pour obtenir plus d'informations sur les résultats du second sondage annuel des membres de la FECB, scannez le code QR ou cliquez sur le lien suivant : <https://qrco.de/bek5xY>.

THE FUTURE OF LITERACY INSTRUCTION

By **Kathleen Cherry**, school psychologist, Sooke, and **Heather Trotter**, teacher, Saanich

LITERACY INSTRUCTION has stepped into the spotlight for the 2024–25 school year, with added attention from government, universities, social media, and the BCTF.

This is evidenced by funding ear-marked for the early identification of students at risk of reading challenges through the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care. As well, the BCTF Executive Committee is tasked with reporting back to the 2025 Winter Representative Assembly around the literacy instruction provided in preservice teaching programs.

The discussion of preservice teaching programs was sparked by a motion raised at the BCTF AGM by the Saanich Teachers' Association. The motion asked that the BCTF advocate to the Ministry that all approved teacher education programs in BC provide instruction on scientifically based research about reading and writing (see motion below).¹

The Saanich Teachers' Association made the motion with the recognition that many teachers are working incredibly hard to learn research-based practices to better meet their students' needs. This is a heavy load for any educator, and it is feared that the absence of information around empirically validated models of literacy development in all preservice programs will make those first years more onerous for our new colleagues.

A BC Teachers' Council survey of new teachers lends credence to this concern. When asked for feedback about their preservice programs, the lack of concrete teaching skills taught, especially in relation to literacy, was the issue most frequently cited.²

In aiming to further the discussion around literacy instruction, there needs to be clarity around literacy buzz words that trend on social media platforms yet may be poorly understood. One such term is

the “science of reading.” The Reading League, an educational non-profit led by educators, experts, and researchers provides this definition:

“The Science of Reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. This research has been conducted over the last five decades across the world, and is derived from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages.”³

It is also important to acknowledge that fads have been a frequent part of our educational landscape. This leads to concerns that the science of reading might be yet another “flavour of the month” or a single program providing instruction around a limited skill set.

However, as is noted in its definition, the science of reading is neither new, nor a program, but rather a body of scientific knowledge amassed over decades and in multiple languages.

Models like Scarborough's Reading Rope (pictured right) have stood the test of time and provide a wonderful representation of the complexity of skills needed for reading competence.⁴

Neuropsychologist Reid Lyon summarizes current knowledge about how the brain learns to read and its impact on instruction. A key concept is the difference between primary and secondary biological skills.⁵ Primary abilities have been wired within our brains over the millennia, like speaking, walking, and running. In contrast, our brains have learned secondary skills through building neural connections. Reading is a secondary skill. *There is no one part of the brain wired to read.*

Oral language, a primary skill, is the foundation of written language. However, the segue from speech to print requires that the brain develop new

neural pathways. These connections are made as we discern the different sounds of language (phonemes) and link these to the letters or groups of letters representing these sounds (graphemes). This leads to decoding. Decoding leads to word recognition and eventually the ability to access the alphabetic code with automaticity.

This understanding of brain biology can inform teaching practice. For example, the phoneme-grapheme neural connection is a primary task for beginning readers. Strategies prompting early readers to look away from the letters toward other information divides attention, encourages guessing, and does not reinforce these neural pathways.

It is also important to know that, while the pathways required for literacy are similar across learners, the ease, effort, time, and explicit instruction required varies greatly. For some students, these connections occur with comparative ease. For others, it is an arduous process. This has huge instructional implications. *When it comes to instruction, one size does not fit all.*

A research-based university pre-teaching program should include an understanding of the science of reading, systemic and sequential approaches, and when and how to use direct and explicit teaching strategies. Given the differences in our students' abilities and needs, differentiation through a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) should also be discussed.

This leads to the issue of funding and teacher preparation. Differentiation is key. As Scarborough's rope illustrates, skilled reading requires many abilities, and we need to identify and target areas of challenge while also ensuring that all students thrive.

This is a huge job. It requires time, collaboration, professional development, in-

The Reading Rope: Key ideas behind the metaphor

The many strands that are woven into skilled reading

Language comprehension

Background knowledge
(facts, concepts, etc.)

Vocabulary
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)

Language structures
(syntax, semantics, etc.)

Verbal reasoning
(inference, metaphor, etc.)

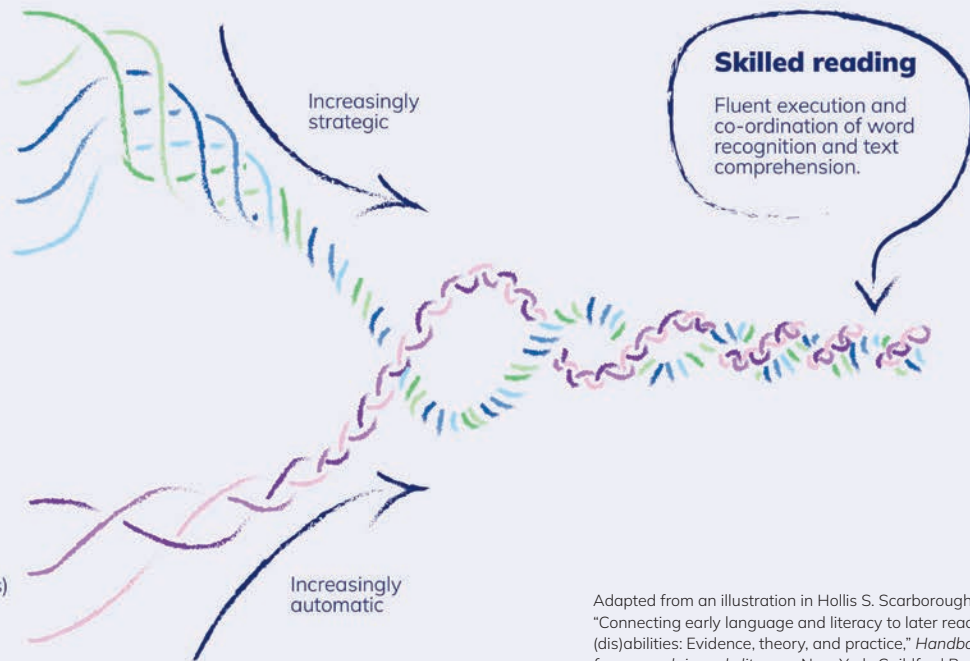
Literacy knowledge
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

Word recognition

Phonological awareness
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

Decoding
(alphabetical principle,
spelling-sound correspondences)

Sight recognition
(of familiar words)



Adapted from an illustration in Hollis S. Scarborough's "Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice," *Handbook for research in early literacy*, New York: Guilford Press.

service and systemic support! Teachers, and our entire education system, must be properly supported through monetary funding, preservice training, professional development, and access to research so that individual educators have the capacity to meet student needs and are provided with systemic support.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care has taken a step toward the MTSS model by providing funds to support evidence-based screening. Screeners identify children "at risk" of reading challenges. Those flagged as being "at risk" can then be given diagnostic assessments. These diagnostic tools serve to inform the intensity of intervention and identify skill deficits.

Through early identification, educators can capitalize on the neuroplasticity

of young brains. An older child can absolutely learn but the "dosage" or "intensity" of the required intervention will be greater.

Early literacy intervention is also important for decreasing behavioural challenges, which take a huge toll on individual educators and school systems. There is research to suggest connection and reciprocity between behaviour and literacy challenges, identifying the most effective interventions as those targeting both literacy and behaviour.⁶

Throughout the screening process, it must be recognized that time is precious for student and teacher. Screeners and diagnostic tools must be quick and *useful*. This is not about more data but helpful data. Data must inform intervention and differentiation.

BC educators have a wealth of experience, dedication, and the desire to empower and to be empowered. There are differing views around reading instruction, but they are greatly outnumbered by commonalities. We share a vision that all students will become competent independent readers. We value a rich oral language as the very foundation of literacy. We believe that literacy instruction can and should meet the needs of individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Most of all, we care. We know that reading is a vital skill. It is also an escape (no batteries required), a solace, a joy, and a window into other worlds. It inspires. It gives hope. It opens doors.

It changes lives. •

1 The following motion was brought to the BCTF 2024 AGM and referred to the Executive Committee for a report back at the Winter Representative Assembly: *That the Federation advocate to the Ministry of Education and Child Care to insist that all approved teacher education programs for elementary school teachers, middle school teachers, secondary English language arts teachers, English language learner teachers, and inclusive education teachers require a full-credit reading instruction course that teaches about how our brains acquire the ability to read, and about structured literacy, including systemic and sequential approaches to reading and spelling instruction that utilize direct and explicit teaching.*

2 BC New Teacher Survey 2021/2022, BC Teachers' Council, June 2023: www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/teacher-regulation/teacher-education-programs/bctc_survey_2021_report_results.pdf

3 The Reading League Announces New "Defining Movement" Coalition of Literacy Experts to Solidify the Science of Reading Definition, The Reading League: www.thereadingleague.org/2021/02/05/defining-movement-coalition-of-literacy-experts-to-solidify-the-science-of-reading-definition/

4 Hollis S. Scarborough, "Connecting Early Language and Literacy to Later Reading (Dis)Abilities: Evidence, Theory, and Practice," *Handbook for research in early literacy*, Guilford Press, New York, 2001: johnbald.typepad.com/files/handbookearlylit.pdf

5 Reid Lyon, "Ten Maxims: What We've Learned So Far About How Children Learn To Read," Reading League, 2023: www.thereadingleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Ten-Maxims_What-Weve-Learned-in-50-Years.pdf

6 Dr. Kerry Hempenstall, "Literacy and Behaviour," National Institute for Direct Instruction, 2012 (updated 2018): www.nifdi.org/news-latest-2/blog-hempenstall/405-literacy-and-behaviour#:~:text=Academic%20skills%20could%2C%20however%2C%20also,toward%20the%20teacher%20or%20classmates



BOOK CHALLENGES PROTECTING DIVERSITY IN OUR LLCs

By Serena Mohammed (she/her),
teacher and BCTLA Executive Committee member, Richmond

WHEN PEOPLE HEAR about book challenges and book bans, they often think of the United States where recent videos circulating on social media show empty shelves in classrooms and libraries. Even though book challenges in BC and other parts of Canada do not result in the removal of books from schools or public libraries as often as they do in some parts of the US, book challenges are becoming more prevalent in Canada, and the people that are challenging books are becoming more organized.

Book challenges are when one or more individuals or groups seek to have books either removed from the school learning library commons (LLC) or have access to the book be limited to certain audiences. For example, they may request a book at an elementary library be moved to a secondary library, or that a book only be available at public libraries and not school LLCs.

Book challenges (also referred to as library material reconsideration requests) are some of the most notable issues that have been affecting teacher-librarians and public librarians in recent years. The BC Teacher Librarians' Association (BCTLA) invited teacher-librarians from all over BC to participate in a working and learning conditions survey during the 2023–24 school year. About 16% of respondents said

they received a request for reconsideration of LLC material over the past year.

The Centre For Free Expression (CFE) has a database where teacher-librarians, teachers, public librarians, and individuals or groups of the general public can report incidences of book challenges.¹ This database includes items that have been challenged, a record of the review undertaken by the library, and the library's response. There have been over 751 cases of book challenges reported in Canada. The actual number of cases is likely higher than what is shown on the CFE website because not every case is reported.

Book challenges and book bans are not only barriers to equity, diversity, and inclusion, but also barriers to freedom to read, freedom of information, and human rights.

Students need books that represent their identities and experiences. This not only motivates them to read and write, but also helps students develop a positive self-image and provides validation and confirmation. Students also need books that represent people with experiences different than their own. This contributes to developing empathy, new world views, and new interests.

1 The Canadian Library Challenges Database (hosted by CFE):
cfe.torontomu.ca/databases/canadian-library-challenges-database

[iStock.com/GoodboyPictureCompany](https://www.istock.com/GoodboyPictureCompany)

“Book challenges and book bans are not only barriers to equity, diversity, and inclusion, but also barriers to freedom to read, freedom of information, and human rights.”

Anti-SOGI groups are some of the most organized when it comes to challenging books. Canadian-based anti-SOGI groups have created lists of SOGI-inclusive books, along with template letters, templates for conversations, and other information related to challenging these SOGI-inclusive books. Books by Indigenous authors, Black authors, or authors who identify as people of colour have also been challenged.

In 2022, the BCTLA invited David A. Robertson, an Indigenous author who has experience with having his book challenged, to speak at our annual conference. He encouraged all teachers to monitor news and information about books that are being challenged in Canada, as it is becoming a more serious issue. During the same conference Ivan Coyote, who is a well-known author and 2SLGBTQIA+ advocate, talked about the important roles that teachers, schools, teacher-librarians, and school LLCs play in advancing equity, inclusion, and safety for all students. Both authors encouraged teachers to continue to advocate to have voices of equity-seeking groups equitably represented in school LLCs and in classrooms, and to continue to advocate for freedom to read, freedom of information, and equitable representation of diverse voices in schools.

When teachers or teacher-librarians receive a complaint about a book, it is important to not remove the book without following the district’s book challenge procedures. Most school districts in BC have a formal policy in place to deal with book challenges.

The CFE database notes that most books are retained in libraries following a challenge or complaint; formal policies can be an important tool in ensuring books are not removed from libraries.

When books are removed due to complaints by individuals or groups, it demonstrates to students that the voices of some groups do not matter as much as the voices of other groups. It also affects students’ access to information and right to choose what they would like to read. Just because one family does not want their child(ren) reading certain books, does not mean that families and students who do want to read those books should not be able to access the books.

A good first step for teachers who experience a book complaint is to contact the teacher-librarian at

your school, your local teacher-librarian association, or your local union to ask them about your district’s book-selection and book-challenge policies for library books and classroom books.

In my district, the Richmond School District, the LLC selection policy requires LLCs to maintain a collection that reflects awareness and perspectives according to the *BC Human Rights Code*. The request for reconsideration of library materials requires the person submitting the request to show how the book does not meet the selection policy. As a result of having a selection and challenge policy that protects the *BC Human Rights Code*, teacher-librarians and teachers can feel safe and supported when selecting and keeping books that reflect different viewpoints and experiences.

BCTF members can advocate in their districts for stronger book-challenge and selection policies that not only support the inclusion of equity-seeking and traditionally marginalized voices, but also actually require that the identities protected under the *BC Human Rights Code* be equitably represented in LLC collections and classroom materials.

Another action BCTF members can take is to have discussions with students about book censorship and freedom to read, and to provide information to caregivers about why it is important to have a diverse selection of books.

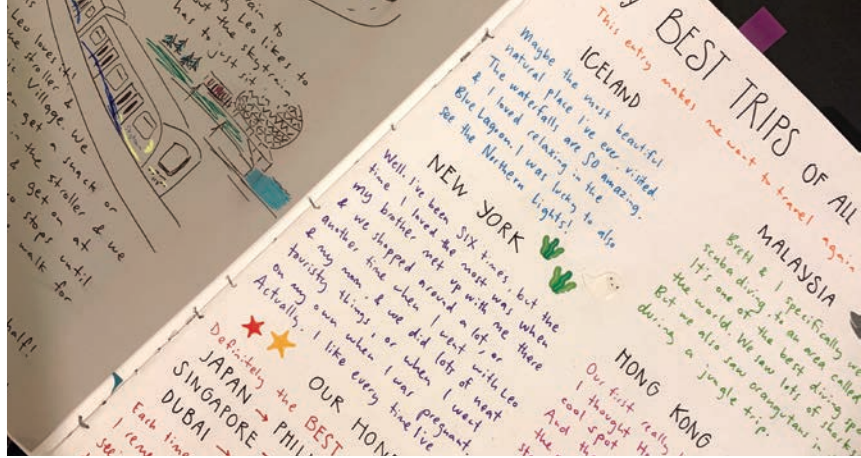
For more information and resources related to book challenges, please visit the BCTLA website at bctla.ca/member-services/book-challenges. •

FREEDOM TO READ EVENTS

Every year many teachers and teacher-librarians observe Freedom to Read week in February. Next year this event will be scheduled from February 23 to March 1, 2025. This is a special week to learn and discuss issues related to freedom of expression, intellectual freedom, and censorship. Please visit their website for more information about the event: www.freedomtoread.ca

Many teachers and teacher-librarians also observe Banned Books week in the fall; it is from September 22 to 28, 2024. More information is available at www.bannedbooksweek.org.

Jessica Deitcher. Photo by Trevor Brady.
Make up and hair by Maria Walton.



JOYOUS JOURNALING

How journaling changed my classroom ... and my life

By **Jessica Deitcher (she/her)**,
educator in New Westminster and
faculty associate at Simon Fraser University

You can follow Jessica on
Instagram @joyous_journaling.

ON THE EDGE of entering my 17th year as a teacher, I take stock of what I have taught over the years, a routine practice to figure out what is worth teaching again. There are certain projects I have done over and over with my students that are always successful. Model-making is a favourite, and papier-mâché is chaotic but definitely a highlight.

But above all, there is one project that takes the cake. It is a project that I have now done ten years in a row, and I don't foresee stopping anytime soon. It is something that has become so much bigger than what I intended it to be. It is now so intertwined with my own life that I can't imagine *not* doing it.

Ten years ago, I began a project called Homework Journal.

At that time in my career, I was moving out of a Grade 1 classroom into a Grades 4 and 5 classroom. I worried about all kinds of changes from primary to intermediate, but I was most nervous about the parents. I feared they would expect lots of tests, scrolls of percentages leading to letter grades—and homework! I thought I would have to give homework, even though I didn't really believe in it. What would I do?

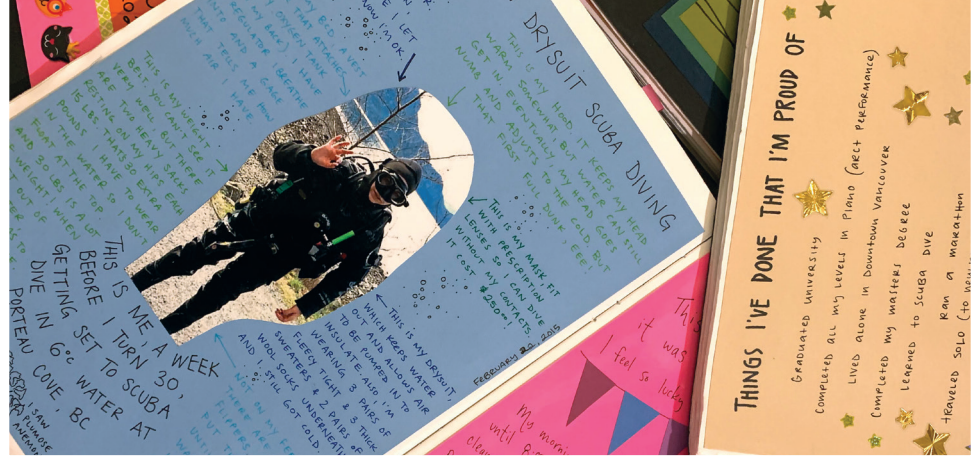
I devised a plan. Homework Journal would be something to appease the parents. It would be a personal journal students could take home every weekend and write about whatever they wanted. It would satisfy parents' desire for "homework" each week and it would, in fact, build the habit of doing work at home (which I did believe in).

However, I would let my students decide what to write. I would not correct their work, nor would I assess it based on grammar or spelling. Journal entries could take the format of any writing style: prose, bullet-points, lists, any way to get writing on the page. Journal entries could also be written about anything: playdates, hockey practices, movie reviews, family recipes, favourite Pokemon cards, made-up stories, the fly on the wall—*anything*. I hoped that Homework Journal would excite my students because they completely controlled their journal's content.

To make it more worthwhile, I included some non-negotiables.

“What was meant to be homework has now turned into the most meaningful, mindful, social-emotional practice of my life.”

L and R: Pages from Jessica's journals.



I, the teacher, would journal alongside my students to prove its worth. If they had homework, I did as well. Also, my students could read my journal to gather ideas for entries or just to see what happens in my life. Lastly, I would read every single one of their entries. After each weekend, when all journals were handed in, I would write a little Post-it note back to each student. I never skipped reading their journals.

My plan was set. With my new class that year, we began Homework Journal the very first week of school.

We started by giving titles to our journals and writing small introductions as to what “readers” might find inside. In mine, I wrote, “Inside you may find adventures, journeys, dreams, and ideas.” My students were ready for their first entry, as was I.

Monday rolled around, and I remember my students enthusiastically handing in their journals to me. I remember them eagerly waiting for me to read what they had written. I remember them reaching for mine throughout the week to browse my first entry. I remember their faces when they received their journals back, anxious to read my Post-it notes, smiling at the small messages. I remember some of my students striking up conversations regarding those messages. I also remember them being excited for entry number two.

Even after that very first week ten years ago, I understood that something special was happening.

With the continuation of Homework Journal over the year, I noticed shifts in our classroom. The sharing of sto-

ries between teacher and student was having an effect. Our classroom community grew closer. Students became more thoughtful with each other, and more tolerant. They would bring issues to my attention more often so that we could have class discussions regularly. Homework Journal was orchestrated so that I was the only one reading each student’s journal, but because students were consistently sharing life stories with me, they also began to feel more comfortable in the classroom space. I witnessed some incredible revelations in their journals, which translated into more confident, self-assured students. I noticed that sometimes students would write about things they could not say out loud and could only share in their journal. Certain students wrote about vulnerable parts of themselves in their journals, knowing their stories were safe. They were beginning to discover parts of their identity through journaling, growing into their Grades 4 and 5 selves more and more with every entry.

And the Post-its? They developed into little one-to-one conversations every week with each student. They became constant teacher-student communication, especially in a busy classroom. They became routine connections. Homework Journal was becoming so much more than journaling.

Unexpectedly, for myself, journaling was becoming an amazing self-care practice. I was learning to reflect on various experiences in my life and savour specific memories. Journaling has allowed me to understand my thoughts and feelings, and process certain life challenges. Journaling has literally been there for me for over a decade of my life. From documenting my wedding plans, to

writing about each country we visited on our honeymoon (all twelve); from to-do lists, to done lists; from mere doodles and random thoughts on a page, to capturing moments throughout my pregnancy, and then devoting an entire journal to my son’s first year of life (still continuing to do Homework Journal on maternity leave); from numerous travels, camping trips, and family events, to finding out I had cancer (and trying to journal about it in a way that was appropriate for elementary student readers): I have journaled about all parts of my life just as much as my students have. What was meant to be homework has now turned into the most meaningful, mindful, social-emotional practice of my life.

Someone asked me recently who I would be without my journals, and I know I would be someone completely different. Journaling has brought me to where I am today. Like my first Homework Journal introduction page, there have been countless adventures, journeys, dreams, and ideas documented over the years; it’s a body of work where I have collected data on what makes me *me*. It has allowed me to develop myself into the person (and teacher!) I have always wanted to be. I cannot imagine my life without journaling.

With my recent move to teach at Simon Fraser University, I found another layer to journaling. I learned that adults have as much to gain through journaling as elementary students. Stay tuned for the second part of my story in the next issue of *Teacher*, where I share my experience practising journaling with preservice teachers in SFU’s Faculty of Education. ●



FROM THE INSIDE ... OUT

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN BC'S PROVINCIAL CORRECTIONAL CENTRES

By **Jason Karpuk**, teacher, Kamloops, and **Kevin Heinze**, teacher, Maple Ridge

IT'S QUARTER TO EIGHT on a blustery November morning near Maple Ridge. The familiar smell of coffee and nearly burned toast punctuates the air as Kevin Heinze enters his "classroom"—Living Unit A at Alouette Correctional Centre for Women. He walks toward a massive circular desk where 15 people dressed in grey (not orange) are sitting, chatting, and finishing breakfast.

Heinze pulls up a chair, sits down, and class is in session. One student at a time, he works his way down the roster and attends to the needs of each student: that could be collecting homework, teaching a concept, or consoling a student who may have just had their mother die, their children taken away by social services, or found out they are going to spend the next 25 years of their life behind bars. It's another day in the life of a provincial jail teacher.

At about the same time, a few hours up the road, Jason Karpuk is clearing security at Kamloops Regional Corrections Centre. He hands his ID in at the front desk and picks up his corrections ID and pass card before signing out a personal alarm transmitter (PAT). After testing the PAT and grabbing the classroom keys from the control room, Karpuk passes through six secure doors before entering the teacher's office. Time to call for the first unit. These students are at all levels of learning, from Grade 1 up to graduates who are upgrading. You never know which student will come on a given day or what they will be working on, so you know your stuff and start the day.

Today is a busy day: eight inmates are dropped off by the prowl (a corrections officer who escorts inmates from one location to another within the facility). The inmates are talkative and relaxed, so it will be a good class. After 10 years of corrections teaching, Karpuk has learned to pay attention to body language and read how the students are interacting.

What do we mean by “jail”?

“Jail” is a catch-all word for the place people go after they break the law and get caught. It’s also quite an inaccurate term. In British Columbia, there are specific names for the place an inmate spends time. It depends on where they are in their sentencing process and the severity of the conviction. The place a person goes immediately after being apprehended by police is called a jail. Most offenders do not usually spend a lot of time in jail: less than one month according to 2014–15 federal study.

While waiting for trial, people are usually held at a pretrial centre. Once sentenced, the offender goes to a federal institution/penitentiary (if their sentence is longer than two years) or to a provincial correctional institution (if their sentence is less than two years). For the purposes of this article, the term “jail” refers to either pretrial centres or provincial correctional institutions.

How is teaching in jail different?

Teaching at a massive table, one student at a time, on a living unit or in a classroom, or communicating through a 5" by 18" window and passing the work under the door, are just a couple of the ways teaching on the “inside” is different. While in some locations in BC teachers work in a more traditional environment, there are numerous ways teaching in a correctional centre is unique.

If you were to become a jail teacher, one of the first things you would likely learn is just how far down the list of priorities educational programming is within the institution. The primary functions of a school are teaching and learning. A jail’s primary functions are to control and protect. Everything else takes a back seat to those functions.

The where, when, how, and if a school program is going to run on any given day is dependent on what is going on in the institution. For example, in an emergency a “code” is called (yellow for an altercation between inmates, blue for a medical incident, red for an escape) and the jail is locked down. "

“... you need to be prepared to teach any subject, at any level, in any given class. ... from teaching how to read a simple sentence, to teaching exponential regression in Math 12.”

For the teacher, a code can mean one of three things: not being able to see any students if the teacher is going door to door, not having students come to the classroom if they were on their way, or holding onto a group of students until the emergency has been dealt with and the code has been “cleared.” This can take anywhere from a few minutes to an hour or more.

In addition to codes, there are a lot of other things that prevent or delay inmates from attending class: going to work, legal or medical appointments, medication dispensation, family visits, staff breaks, mealtimes, and other programming that the inmates/students must attend as part of their sentencing.

When these scheduling conflicts inevitably arise, the teacher must adapt. How they adapt is based on the kind of disruption they are facing. In some cases, a teacher may simply delay the start of a class; in other cases the teacher may go from one living unit to the next and hold class at one of the tables (best case scenario), or in other instances the teacher must “teach” through the door of a cell.

Unlike most schools in BC, where teachers get a new group of students only once or twice a year, in jail there is continuous enrollment. Teachers are always registering new students into the program. Conversely, they are also always seeing students leave the program. Students leave because they get released, get transferred to another institution, get sent to segregation, or lose motivation. This chronic upheaval produces many challenges.



“Residents who complete an education and/or do coursework are much less likely to reoffend and are also more able to move on with their lives.”

– Eugene Boos,
provincial corrections teacher

One challenge is that you need to be prepared to teach any subject, at any level, in any given class. This is both exciting and exhausting. Simply moving from one student to the next could be going from teaching how to read a simple sentence, to teaching exponential regression in Math 12.

Another challenge is that paperwork is never-ending! You are constantly processing new registrations, course selections, course withdrawals, course completions, and claims required for adult education funding. There is no clerical support in the facility, so everything is either sent via email or physically dropped off with the school clerical staff.

For as many negative aspects as there are teaching in a jail as opposed to a regular school, there are plenty of positive aspects as well. One of these aspects is phones—or rather—no phones. Teachers don't have to contend with the distractions caused by TikTok or Snapchat, or the plagiarism spawned by ChatGPT.

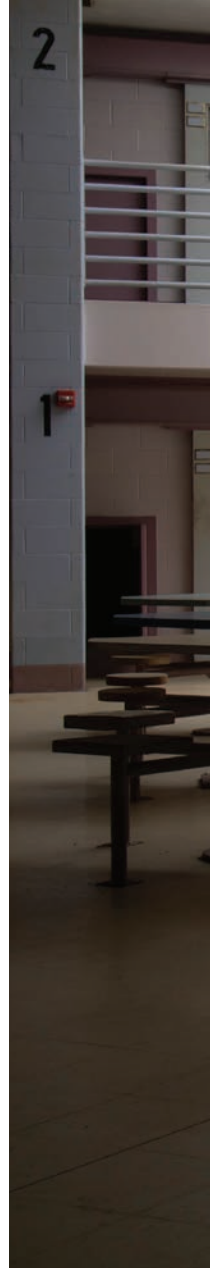
Furthermore, even though by its function a jail is a place for people who have done bad things, classroom discipline is usually not an issue. Most provincial jail teachers would tell you their students, dressed in grey or red, are more co-operative and respectful than yours, dressed in Levi's or Lululemon. The students tend to be motivated in two main ways: those who have figured out they need to do something to change their life once released, and/or those who are trying to do something to potentially reduce their sentence. Either way, they generally try to complete their assignments.

Part of the reason for good behaviour may be that participation is voluntary. Nobody is forced to sign up for school. Also, since classes are either all male or all female, there is less vying for attention. (In case you are wondering, yes, there are some transgendered students in both the men's and women's institutions.) Finally, since the students are between the ages of 18 and 70, they are usually more mature than the 14- to 18-year-old cohort.



PHOTOS

Jason Karpuk (far left) and Kevin Heinze (left). Photos provided by authors.





Why are these programs important?

Inmate education programs, including high school graduation, offer financial benefits for BC taxpayers. Studies conducted over the past 50 years generally show a 30% reduction in recidivism for prisoners engaged in education programs. Considering the costs of keeping individuals in provincial centres, which is about \$95,000/year, every person who avoids returning to the system results in savings for the provincial budget. Studies show the normal 80–85% recidivism rate drops to around 35% for inmates who graduate while incarcerated, which amounts to a substantial savings.¹

The students Karpuk, Heinze, and their counterparts teach across the province are more than one-dimensional inmates. A lot of them, when they get released, will be returning to their jobs as servers, welders, roofers, and office managers.

Furthermore, many of these students are mothers and fathers who want to improve their lives and their children's lives when they are released. They realize education can enhance their opportunities for a better life, whether it is by getting a better-paying job or by qualifying for a post-secondary program that can lead to a more stable and satisfying job than they previously held.

For inmates who have never held regular jobs, enrolling in the school program and earning a diploma provides a credential to get a first job. Their achievement proves to them (and those around them) that they can accomplish something worthwhile. They can begin to make the

life-changing transition from an offender to a contributing member of their community. Changing how inmates perceive themselves enhances their chance of success in making permanent changes, and that, of course, has a positive effect in communities across BC.

With almost half a century of behind-bars teaching experience between them, Karpuk and Heinze admit that their jobs seem every bit as “normal” as every other BCTF member, so they leave the last words to a teacher with a fresher perspective, Eugene Boos from Chilliwack, who works at Ford Mountain Correctional Centre:

What I most enjoy about provincial corrections teaching is that I can have a constructive impact on the lives of the inmates (known as residents). Residents who complete an education and/or do coursework are much less likely to reoffend and are also more able to move on with their lives. So many residents have learning difficulties and struggled in school as children and need one-on-one guidance. A prison, like a school, is an institutional environment, so in that respect it's not totally different than teaching in schools. Personally, I prefer corrections teaching, because I don't have to contend with difficult parents, cell phones, and endless interruptions. The job is still very much about being a teacher, since corrections teachers still mark, assist students, explain course content, prepare course content, deal with paperwork, and remind students (and ourselves) about various rules and procedures. •

¹ Statistics are based on data collected by retired adult educator Doug Fraser.

TEACHING FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

A conversation with Rowan Burdge,
BC Poverty Reduction Coalition

Interview by Chrisoula Poulos (she/her), teacher, traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sḵw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) nations, and **Tobias Lemay** (he/him), teacher, unceded Quw'utsun territory

OVER THE SUMMER we were grateful to have an opportunity to interview Rowan Burdge from the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition. As members of the Economic Justice Action Group, we wanted to hear about the work of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, and what role teachers can play in the poverty reduction movement. We had a great chat and were excited to hear from Rowan about poverty reduction efforts in the province. Here's some of our conversation.

Toby and Soula: How would you define economic justice?

Rowan: I think economic justice is more than income. We talk about it as a good life for everybody. For me, that includes universal basic services where people have access to things like adequate healthcare, adequate childcare, housing, a good living wage, and time for leisure. It extends into human rights as well. For example, for migrant workers economic justice includes having the right to see their families and being able to come in and out of the country. I think of poverty as an economic issue, but also an issue that ties into all parts of our lives.

Tell us more about the work of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition.

The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition is made up of around 85 member organizations that collectively advocate for public-policy solutions to end poverty in BC. We have a province-wide scope with three prongs to our current campaign work. The first prong is housing. We're advocating for the creation of legislation that would make housing a human right in BC. The second prong is raising the rates for income and social assistance. Right now, social assistance is far below the poverty line, so it doesn't meet basic needs like housing, access to food and nutrition, and medication. The third prong is around transit. Kids under

the age of 12 can access transit for free and we're advocating for this to be extended to include everyone under the age of 18, as well as people on any kind of social assistance. Transit gets people to the jobs they need, it gets them to recreation, to see their friends and engage in social activities, to appointments like counselling or other medical appointments. It's really important to have access to transit.

We have created a blueprint for justice that all the member organizations co-created and signed. It outlines the key areas that we work in, which are economic security, universal basic services, equity, and climate justice.

What issues has the coalition identified as key needs of school-aged children and youth living in poverty in BC?

One big one is access to food and food security for students. We know the number of people accessing food banks has increased, so we advocate for better food systems that provide culturally appropriate, nutritious food for people.

The housing crisis has also really impacted families, and many families are now what we call "inadequately housed." For example, we've heard of families living in cramped conditions or families who can't afford to heat their homes or cool their homes in extreme weather, which can be unsafe.

Digital access is also a really important piece for school-aged kids. There is a digital divide in BC; for example, internet access can be challenging and expensive in the North and in rural areas. Access to devices can also be hard for some families. Limited or no access to a device or internet at home puts people at a deep disadvantage in terms of school and opportunities.

“I think teaching kids about poverty, about compassion and collective care, is such an important intervention. ... **if people grow up believing that poor people have just made bad choices, they will continue to create the conditions under which people experiencing poverty are punished,** and this will not help reduce poverty.”

Can you speak to short-term, band-aid solutions compared to long-term, systemic solutions to poverty reduction?

There are a lot of band-aid solutions in place; food banks are a really good example. We need food banks right now and they are an important service, but giving people access to food through a food bank is very different than creating sustainable food systems or eliminating price-gouging that makes food unaffordable. There are many ways in which we, as a society, focus on short-term, band-aid solutions to intersecting and complicated problems.

Our focus is upstream solutions, meaning we don't want to be responding to something down the stream that's already happened, but looking at what is causing the conditions and thinking about how we can intervene at the upstream level to prevent the problem from happening.

What can teachers do to address poverty in the classroom?

There are a lot of structural and systemic changes that need to happen to reduce and eliminate poverty in BC. The Child Poverty Report Card noted that one in six children are experiencing poverty in BC. And what we hear from folks who are experiencing poverty is the impact of stigma.

I think teaching kids about poverty, about compassion and collective care, is such an important intervention. Kids grow into adults who hold onto what they learned in their childhood. So if people grow up believing that poor people have just made bad choices, they will continue to create the conditions under which people experiencing poverty are punished, and this will not help reduce poverty.

Educating kids about the abundant and beautiful society we want and shifting away from narratives of blame on people experiencing poverty are extremely important in intervening in cycles of poverty.

The other thing we talk about is universal supports and services. This means making sure everybody in the school has access to the supports and services and students are not singled out. There's so much anti-poverty stigma that many students will choose not to access a service if they're going to be singled out amongst their peers as somebody who needs the service.

Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge with us. The Economic Justice Action Group of the BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice is always actively involved in advocacy for poverty reduction and looking forward to using some insights you've shared to inspire our work in the new school year.

Labour unions have a key role in poverty reduction. They're collectives of workers designed to advocate for rights. The coalition relies on unions to support our work, whether that's through funding or mobilizing members and supporting our calls to action. Labour unions have power to support workers in creating policy changes that benefit everybody. •

The Economic Justice Action Group of the BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice is working on the following actions for poverty reduction:

- Advocating for a provincial (and national) school lunch program.
- Advocating for provincial student loan forgiveness for all teachers, with an emphasis on the importance of putting this in place for BIPOC and 2SLGBTQIA+ teachers.
- Researching the intersections of mental health and poverty in teens in BC.
- Researching the public funding of BC private schools.
- Advocating for the removal of “citizenship” requirements from all school districts registration documents, so that school districts are in line with the *Schools Act* and to create more access for families with precarious immigration status.
- Creating lesson plans that highlight upstream thinking regarding economic justice and poverty reduction.

Some actions you can take in your schools, classrooms, and communities:

- Recognize October 17 as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.
- Host a “free store” for students.



THE GREENHOUSE at Davis Bay Elementary School has thrived for five years, serving as a collaborative endeavour uniting educators, students, and the local community. It is our living laboratory. It is where children can experiment, explore, and try new things. The aim of our greenhouse project is, ultimately, to be an entirely self-sufficient enterprise, keeping regenerative plants inside the greenhouse, as well as in our outside garden beds. To be self-sufficient, we've embarked on a journey of learning about seed preservation. Grace Lewis is one of our inspiring community members leading the charge on our greenhouse. She is part of the Sunshine Coast Seed Saving Collective and has been teaching teachers and students how to save precious seeds from our school gardens.

We are keen teachers who have been taking advantage of local knowledge and learning about seed saving alongside students. We teachers are by no means the experts in this field! It is important to us that students understand that we are also students, who learn from others by listening, asking questions, observing, and experimenting. Gardening is a slow process, and we embrace teaching patience and delayed gratification; we believe these are important skills for the next generation in our fast-paced world.

Every week, we join forces with Grace and Davis Bay students to garden. When we begin our time together, we reiterate to students that seeds hold life, potential, and hope for feasts and for the future care of our planet.

Near the end of their life cycle, vegetable plants will shift their energy from growing edible parts to reproducing by spreading their seeds. Beginning in September, with the start of a new school year, students get to witness the beauty of the natural world in the garden. They see carrots go to seed; they keenly munch and save watermelon seeds and cucamelons.

PRESERVING OUR FUTURE

THE ART AND IMPORTANCE OF SEED SAVING

By **Kerry Underdown-Preto** (she/her), teacher, and **Correen Evans** (she/her), teacher, Sechelt

There is a lot to do in a greenhouse of this size! It facilitates learning throughout the entire school year. We gather every Thursday morning to learn together in our greenhouse.

In September and October we are still enjoying the produce. Students get to spend time using their senses to explore, taste, and water the plants. Some of our vegetables are left and encouraged to go to seed: radish, basil, kale, nasturtiums, peas, beans, sunflowers, and more.

In November we begin to winterize the garden beds: pulling the last of the plants and laying them on the bed for decomposition or planting fava beans to replenish the soil with nitrogen. Straw is often laid down on the soil to protect it from winter frost. Bean pods are left to dry on the plants and can be put into paper bags and stored in a dry location.

Anytime between November and February seed collection can begin. Carrots that have gone to seed can be separated using fine mesh sieves. Sunflower seeds can be taken out by hand. Poppy seeds are super fun to play with; the poppies dance whilst spreading their beautiful seeds naturally outside. Lettuces can be left to go to seed and the seeds can then be dried. They are stored in a cool, dry place and throughout the year we label, store, taste, and we learn about seed saving. When the seeds are completely dried, they can be stored in envelopes marked with the seed name and a date stamp.

As the weather becomes more favourable (mid-March) we begin the process of planting and transplanting seedlings. Just as we encourage pollinators in the garden, students are encouraged to explore their questions and curiosities.

The greenhouse allows us to organically teach students about the importance and extent of biodiversity that is needed to support the health of plants. Learning is naturally weaved into our gardening practices.

If we can get students to care enough to *plant* seeds, we can get them interested in eating a healthy diet and exploring a range of foods. If we can get students to care enough to *save* seeds, we are growing children that care about their future. They understand the interconnectedness of life and learn the tools of how to be self-sufficient in a dynamic and changing world. •



PHOTOS

Clockwise from top left: Grace showing carrot seeds to the students; student enjoying the greenhouse; students labelling seeds; potatoes left to go to flower; clean pots ready for spring.

Opposite: One student who is learning to grow food. Photos provided by authors.



CROSSROADS

PLANTING SEEDS FOR COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

A conversation with Angela Ma Brown (she/her), district mentoring support teacher, Vancouver; **Amanda Cantelon** (she/them), teacher, Vancouver; and **Stacey McEachern** (she/her), Indigenous curriculum consultant, Vancouver



Crossroads is a by-donation resource produced by Access to Media Education Society, a registered charity (est.1996) dedicated to supporting equity-deserving young people in personally and socially transformative storytelling practices through digital media, peer education, and creative facilitation.

What is Crossroads?

Angela: Crossroads is an innovative anti-oppression resource that builds awareness, understanding, and empathy through interactive story-based experiential learning.

Students build their capacities to navigate complex social landscapes at the intersections of race, class, sexual orientation, and gender as they walk alongside four teenagers in this choose-your-own-adventure style visual novel.

Stacey: In the Crossroads workshops, youth facilitators engage in a range of individual, small-group, and whole-class activities designed to foster dialogue, reflection, and personal and social responsibility and transformation.

Amanda: The resource helps high school students (Grades 8–12) cultivate the skills to notice, name, and respond to discriminatory situations with the support of pop-up definitions, a glossary, reflection tools, and open-ended debrief questions.

IMAGES: (Clockwise from top left) A small group of students in conversation during a Crossroads workshop; stills from the Crossroads “choose-your-own-adventure style visual novel”; Deblekha Guin, Access to Media Education Society (left), with youth facilitators (L to R) Nova, Uy, Neffy, and Alexandra. **Page 22:** Deblekha Guin with youth facilitators Neffy and Nova. **Page 23:** Amanda Cantelon (left) and Angela Ma Brown (right) share perspectives on Crossroads (top); Stacey McEachern (bottom). All images provided by Deblekha Guin.

What most stood out for you about Crossroads?

Stacey: The different storylines really bring these subjects to life in a way that's low risk. Watching the characters go through different scenarios gives students a chance to start thinking about the impacts of different approaches without the pressure of *having* to speak from their own personal experience, or even speak at all—especially if they're afraid of saying the wrong thing or seeming like they don't know enough (at least to start with). The workshops were so engaging and interactive that most of the students came into the fold of the discussion—even some of the ones who might otherwise try to avoid participating.

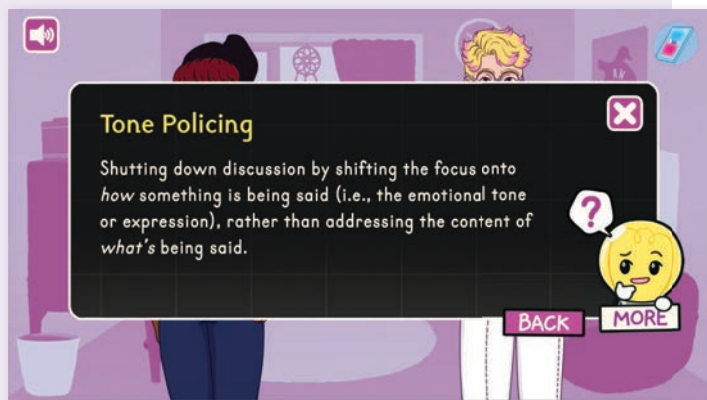
Angela: I find that the experiential learning component gives students relatable opportunities to reflect critically, creatively problem solve, and see the value of owning up to our mistakes and learning from them. It takes away the pressure of “perfectionism,” which often gets in the way of humility and learning.

As they observe, reflect upon, and discuss the scenarios in this interactive novel, they begin to develop active witnessing skills they can apply to real-life situations and learn how to safely intervene and respond to various forms of discrimination with appropriate words and actions.

A moment that really resonated was witnessing the debrief of a scene in which Jack's unacknowledged anti-Indigenous sentiments surfaced in a heated conversation with his Indigenous friend Allie. One of the students said, “If Allie's tone wasn't so aggressive and defensive, maybe Jack would be more open to hearing her.” Another student countered that Allie had the right to feel frustrated and upset, and that dismissing her because of her tone or emotional response wasn't fair or cool. Later, when “tone policing” popped up, the students made a connection to their earlier conversation and their own life experiences, with comments like, “Oh, that's happened to me,” and “I actually tone police myself, but I didn't have the language to name it.”

Amanda: The terms and vocabulary can be really validating for some of the students and really awakening for others.

Angela: I often say, “If we don't name it, we can't tame it.” The definitions and glossary are important aspects of the conceptual and social-emotional learning that the interactive novel supports.



MORE INFORMATION

Use the QR code or visit accesstomedia.org/programs/crossroads.





What was the impact of having youth facilitators leading the workshops?

Stacey: The peer-education aspect of the workshops really stood out for me. Seeing youth not only having difficult conversations, but also *leading them*, was really empowering.

Angela: It's so true. There's a unique dynamic with youth facilitators that puts students at ease and gets them more engaged. Students can see the potential in themselves when they see youth facilitating these courageous conversations. And when they witness equity-deserving peers openly and honestly sharing their lived experiences—of both being on the receiving end of various forms of discrimination, *and* the fumbles they have made in their own learning journeys—it mirrors how they can do the same.

There was a moment in a workshop when a youth facilitator shared her experiences of hearing the N-word at school. A student immediately commented on how frustratingly common it was for him to hear peers saying the N-word and justifying it by saying, "I'm just singing it in a song," or "I've been given an N-word pass." The student was surprised to see this ongoing occurrence addressed in a teacher resource. Both the surprise and relief he shared speaks to the importance of ensuring that curriculum reflects students' lived and felt experiences, particularly those who are pushed to the margins in school communities. You know a resource is really landing for students when they opt to share their own stories and experiences.

How does this resource support teachers in the classroom?

Amanda: With the new curriculum and graduation requirements, teachers are always looking for resources, support, and professional development. Crossroads is all three.

I know it can be really intimidating talking about these topics—whether that's about fear of pushback from parents or fear that we might not know enough, might "say the wrong thing," or might not have the capacity to do the subject justice.

Angela: That gentle self-interrogation and examination of our own biases, assumptions, and prejudices is essential. It's important to ask ourselves "What lenses are we bringing to the classroom each day? Are they responsive to students' individual needs?"

Stacey: As educators, it's part of our responsibility to *keep learning*, but it's equally important to have the humility to recognize—and transparently admit—that we don't know everything. We're on a learning journey, too. Bring your students along and learn together, and Crossroads can be a part of that process.

Also, courageous conversations should not be echo chambers. I want students to feel comfortable to say, "I didn't know that," or "What about this?" or "I disagree with you." I want that banter, because that's real life. Preparing them to have difficult conversations, and to express different opinions in ways that are honest and respectful are essential skills that they can take into the rest of their lives.

How does Crossroads connect to learning standards and core competencies?

Stacey: The themes Crossroads addresses align with the things we need to be talking about in classes like Social Justice 12 or any Indigenous-focused course.

Amanda: I agree, but it isn't just courses that are explicitly about social justice or Indigenous education. Crossroads supports the language arts, socials studies, career, and some ADST curriculum too.

Angela: The Crossroads Teacher Guide, and youth-facilitated workshops, directly link to curricular learning standards, as well as the core competencies: communication; collaboration; creative and critical thinking; personal and social awareness and responsibility; and positive personal and cultural identity.

Stacey: As for assessment, this resource invites and encourages students to self-reflect. It dovetails with “new” self-reflective assessment frameworks, which aren't really new at all. They are rooted in Indigenous pedagogy that brings forward holistic, community-focused ways of educating.

What can teachers expect from this resource and the workshops?

Amanda: Expect some introspection, lively conversations, and increased understanding of how power and privilege play out in everyday life.

Stacey: The workshops planted lots of seeds, sparked “aha moments,” and enhanced and expanded knowledge and awareness. But it's important to also understand that this work is vast and requires ongoing learning and unpacking beyond isolated workshops and courses. I couldn't possibly teach students everything about social justice or Indigeneity in a four-month course.

Angela: This resource is an invitation to notice the feelings and emotions that may be elicited during such courageous conversations and to ask ourselves, “What might these emotions be inviting me to *know* (learn a new concept), *do* (change a behaviour or take action), and/or *sit with* (unpack and process before engaging deeper)?”

This life-long, life-wide life work begins with self. The more we put into it, the more students will get out of it. Approaching it with openness, humility, and a willingness to do the inner work required to strengthen our knowledge bases as educators will enable us to hold space for critical and courageous conversations around discrimination, oppression, equity, and social justice.

Amanda: We are all affected by centuries of colonial and white-supremacist conditioning, and we are all at different stages in our learning, unlearning, and relearning. This resource aims to aerate the compacted soil of dominant culture for new seeds to grow. Specifically, it seeds courageous conversations about racism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia—and builds the kinds of critical thinking, social, emotional, and somatic skills that will help guide us in the process. As educators, we scatter the seeds and trust that some flowers will take root. •



THE NEW SOUND

Keeping music education in public schools

By **Michael Meroniuk** (he/him), music teacher and professional musician, Vancouver



I GREW UP in and around small-town BC, playing in the woods, exploring, building forts, and getting into trouble. Every few years, my family would pack up and move to the next town. I attended lots of schools in different communities, but it wasn't until my Grade 9 year that I started to receive what I deem today as quality music education. Music education was the only reason I stayed in school. In the second half of Grade 11, I was introduced to music production by a teacher who, today, I consider to be the most intelligent, talented, hardworking, and devoted educator I've ever met. This experience changed my life forever. My grades improved, I developed meaningful relationships with friends, and even decided to pursue music as a career.

I worked for many years as a professional guitar player and later became a music teacher in Vancouver's public schools. Throughout the process of being a music maker, I've met so many intelligent, welcoming, and compassionate people—contrary to the stereotypes of hotel-room-destroying rock stars.

It's my fundamental belief that students need access to music in schools, not to become professional musicians, but to have a creative outlet—a fortress of retreat they can return to when the world challenges them.

In 2018, I came across a CBC news story stating that schools all across BC were experiencing major staffing issues and many schools did not have enough qualified educators. I didn't dwell too much on it at the time, thinking it was more or less a hangover from the Supreme Court of Canada decision in 2016, which forced the provincial government to restore staffing to 2002 levels.

In 2019, as a teacher teaching on call, I started to notice the impact of teacher shortages on music education. Several schools I worked in had no qualified music teachers, which meant the music program was non-existent or a teacher who had no expertise in music education was doing their best with little or no support and resources. I was shocked and heartbroken to see a subject I hold so dearly be inaccessible to students because they didn't have access to a qualified music teacher at school. In 2022, I kept coming across more stories about the ongoing teacher shortages and realized I needed to do something. So, I decided to create The New Sound.

The New Sound is an education initiative created to ensure every student has access to quality music education regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or physical location. We develop tools and strategies to keep music in schools. Our mission revolves around simplifying recording technology for both experienced

or aspiring music educators, empowering them to inspire and engage students. We provide tools for educators to confidently lead students through the realms of music production, integrating seamlessly into existing programs. Our curriculum focuses on developing fundamental skills in recording, beat-making, and music creation using digital audio workstations, emphasizing a practical, hands-on approach. We simplify complex recording techniques into easily understandable concepts, making our courses accessible regardless of prior experience. Our goal is to foster creativity and confidence in students, encouraging them to create original music and progress steadily in their journeys, ensuring they feel a sense of achievement as their ideas come to life.

The only technology required to implement our music curriculum is a laptop with internet access.

If you, or your school, face challenges with implementing music programs, staffing, or if you have any questions about music technology, please don't hesitate to reach out to info@thenewsound.org. I will be giving two clinics at the 2024 BC Music Educators' Conference in October, so feel free to come by and say hello.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story. It is just one example of why music education is an important part of our public education system. Music education creates space for creativity, connection, exploration, and expression—all of which are integral for students' development in school. •

PHOTOS

Left: Students in The New Sound program.

Right: Michael Meroniuk. Photos provided by author.



THRIVING

A POWERFUL INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

By **Suzanne Hall** (she/her), retired teacher and BCTF staff, Maple Ridge



What is “thriving”?

LAST JUNE I bid goodbye to a 34-year career in education, during which my mission was “helping others learn and grow.” It guided my work with both students and colleagues regardless of my role: classroom teacher, teacher-librarian, helping teacher, or union leader. This paralleled my desire to improve myself both as an educator and as a person. Only recently did I make a powerful new connection: this combined experience of development and success is called “thriving,” and it is measured by assessing how well a person functions overall. This, I realized, was a field of study with a lot to teach teachers.

And, since I have found that nothing is so practical as a good theory, I am sharing some research regarding what enhances our ability to thrive.¹ It ties much of what we already know into a coherent, helpful framework that can help us in how we choose to see things and in how we take care of ourselves. The goal is to create a sustainable career in a demanding field while staying mentally and physically healthy. A career in education is not a sprint; it is an ultramarathon. The research on thriving is exciting because no matter where you are in your career—beginning to teach, firmly mid-career, or approaching retirement—it is relevant and helpful.

To thrive as a teacher is to live in balance between success and growth, to be accomplishing your goals while at the same time growing as a person and/or as an educator. This powerful paradigm allows you to “see” your difficulties and challenges in light of the growth they allow. It also helps you judge when the balance of challenge and success is seriously off kilter and to make appropriate adjustments, which is a powerful form of self-care.

“Three components come into play with regards to a **meaningful life**. One is **coherence**, which means making sense of your experiences. Another is **significance**, which is the feeling that you and your life matter. The last is **purpose**, which is having important goals to work toward.”

What enables us to thrive?

There are specific aspects to consider when crafting a life in which you thrive; the research calls them “psychosocial enablers.” The first category is “personal enablers.” These are the attitudes, cognitions, and behaviours that work together to support your ability to thrive. The second category is “contextual enablers.” These are the characteristics of an environment that supports task engagement,² which is essential for thriving.

PERSONAL ENABLERS

Knowledge and learning has two components: your professional knowledge and your understanding of yourself. To thrive, it is critical to want to learn information and skills relevant to the job; professional development gives you the autonomy to seek out those learning opportunities. Lots of information is available through your local union office and on the BCTF website. A good person to connect with is your local union’s PD chair to find out all the opportunities for professional learning and/or mentoring.

However, you don’t need to become expert in everything; your strengths as a teacher can be used to mitigate your weaknesses. Teach someone’s French if they’ll teach your art (this was my favorite trade!). Use your research skills to find science experiments that don’t overwhelm you. Ask your colleagues for resource suggestions. Draw on your love of Marvel comics to engage unenthusiastic students. Myriad possibilities exist!

It is also very helpful to take advantage of a good understanding of your personal strengths and challenges. Plan upcoming units in the evening if you are a night owl. Schedule mid-week outings with friends if you are an extrovert who runs out of energy by Wednesday. Devote time on the weekends to whatever activity brings you joy. Teaching is plenty challenging; strategies that prevent you from becoming overwhelmed and drained are fair game.

Having a **proactive personality** means being willing to challenge yourself. All teachers have this; to teach is at its very core a personal challenge. However, this can be a double-edged sword because taking on too much challenge can become overwhelming. Thoughtful management in this arena helps you keep that balance between development and success. To that end, a vision for your life and a mission statement can be very helpful. My go-to authors for this kind of work are Stephen Covey and Brené Brown.

Motivation is your desire to grow and succeed. It springs from your beliefs about the meaning of your life’s work and is energized by your talents and interests. Three components come into play with regards to a meaningful life. One is coherence, which means making sense of your experiences. Another is significance, which is the feeling that you and your life matter. The last is purpose, which is having important goals to work toward.

A mission statement—a sentence that encapsulates and articulates your purpose—can be a powerful tool. The process of developing a mission statement is itself a powerful exercise of introspection. It asks you to look deeply into what you value and what contributions you want to make.³ With that insight into what you truly want to be doing with your life, many decisions become easier. Opportunities arise all the time; I found my mission statement to be a powerful lens through which to consider opportunities. Be a mentor? Yes, I like to help people; that fits. Start a side-hustle selling cookware? No, I live to eat, not to sell; I’m best staying on the customer side of things.

Religion or spirituality can be important for some people. Fundamentally, this feeling of being meaningfully connected to the universe reflects a person’s moral and civic identities. These are deeply personal matters that typically don’t come up in a professional context. Nonetheless, research shows that when they are a part of a person’s life, they can support the ability to thrive by providing a supportive network and/or a source of motivation.



Suzanne Hall
photo by
Sunjum Jhaj

A **positive perspective** reflects your moral purpose and philosophical beliefs; they are the lenses through which you interpret life events, both big and small. Two well-known practices can be helpful to enhance a positive outlook. One is reframing, the conscious re-examination and shifting of how to interpret an event. This is one of the reasons that the model of thriving is so powerful; it allows us to see our challenges as a necessary condition for thriving. Another useful tool is to develop a gratitude practice. A gratitude journal is perhaps the most well-known strategy, but a quick search online gives a plethora from which to choose.⁴ Like visioning work, the trick is to find which of the many, many options work well for you.

The concept of **resilience** is well known in education. It is the strength to overcome (and possibly benefit from) your struggles. Inherent elements of resilience are being flexible and adaptable; along with the willingness to take on challenges, these are fundamental to effective teaching. An excellent tool for teachers to help nurture their own resilience is the book *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators* by Elena Aguilar. It is literally full of ideas—organized to follow the flow of a school year—to help you enhance your resilience, and therefore your ability to thrive. I once was part of a book study using Aguilar’s book. It was so much fun to meet monthly with a group of teachers and use the activities from the accompanying workbook! But more importantly, I adopted practices that serve me still today. For instance, I love my mental “not now” shelf; that is where I park ideas that intrigue me but that I can’t take on ... yet. Somehow, this lessens my anxiety about missing out on a good thing while keeping me from getting overwhelmed.

During those book club meetings, we were also using our **social competencies** to connect to others in a meaningful way. Social skills facilitate the interpersonal interactions that support learning, growth, and connection.⁵ As part of the core competencies and foundational elements of social-emotional learning, teachers are used to thinking about these in terms of our students. Research assures us that we benefit from putting them to use in our own lives as well.

CONTEXTUAL ENABLERS

Contextual enablers are the other category of elements to consider as you craft a sustainable life and career.

Attachment and trust are foundational to sustaining supportive relationships. These are the people who help you thrive by supporting you when you face challenges, as well as by recognizing and celebrating your successes. Interestingly, the people with whom we engage this way often change over time as we ourselves grow and change. As such, investing time and energy in established and developing relationships is not self-indulgent or frivolous; these relationships are foundational to our ability to learn and succeed, the core functions of thriving.

This final enabler—**challenge environment**—is the context in which your development and success play out. It has important implications for teachers. An environment that promotes thriving has an appropriate amount of challenge and difficulty

“One of the most powerful implications of this research is that **the time we take for personal development and self-care, to deepen our learning, and to connect with others** is in fact highly supportive of our professional work. The choice is not ‘either-or’ ... time spent in these pursuits **helps us to be our best in the classroom.**”

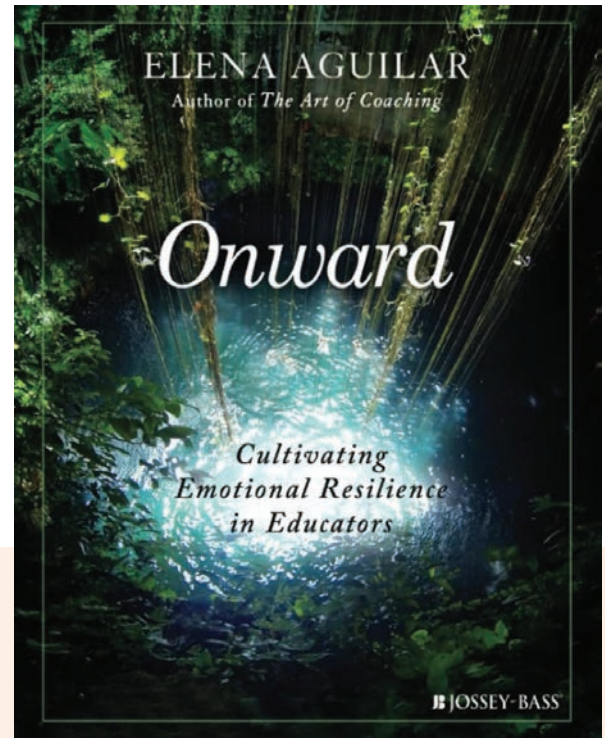
without overwhelming your skills and coping capacities. When overwhelmed, growth is curtailed and you feel unsuccessful; this hinders your ability to thrive. Sometimes you can use other enablers to moderate the level of challenge you experience in a classroom. For instance, experiences and activities that increase your sense of autonomy, competence, and belonging can help.

To some extent, contextual enablers may feel outside of our control. For example, relationships with colleagues and employers that support learning, recognize successes, and create an environment where you have the autonomy and safety to take risks can have a positive impact on work environment and thriving, but these relationships don’t exist in every school and district. Our classrooms are also increasingly difficult to manage, as is our workload, which can make challenges too difficult to be helpful. As a result, teacher burnout is probably at an all-time high.

Now what?

Many teachers feel guilty when taking time for “selfish” pursuits. One of the most powerful implications of this research is that the time we take for personal development and self-care, to deepen our learning, and to connect with others is in fact highly supportive of our professional work. The choice is not “either-or”; instead, we can rest assured that time spent in these pursuits helps us to be our best in the classroom.

The ability to assess your own situation and your role in it—knowing when you have done all that you can do—can facilitate your giving yourself some grace. Teachers on the whole are terribly hard on themselves. Knowing that you have done everything feasible to create a healthy work environment allows you to place the responsibility for the elements that are beyond your control and influence squarely back where they belong. For far too long, blaming teachers has been the systemic response to system-wide challenges. It is my hope that in learning about this research, we develop a better understanding of what we need in order to thrive, become more skilled in making adjustments to support ourselves, and speak more powerfully in support of students, teachers, and public education. •



RESOURCES

Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators by Elena Aguilar (pictured above)

Personal mission statement builder:

msb.franklincovey.com/missions/personal

Gratitude exercises:

positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning:

casel.org

1 Daniel J. Brown et al., “Human Thriving,” *European Psychologist*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (July 1, 2017), 67–79: doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000294

2 Task engagement refers to the degree to which individuals invest their physical, cognitive, and emotional energies into a specific task that is part of their work or learning role: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8827296

3 Online Franklin Covey Personal Mission Statement builder: msb.franklincovey.com/missions/personal

4 Gratitude exercises: positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises

5 Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning: casel.org



Sara Stone with her book *Lily and the Snow*.
Photo provided by author.

Sensory processing disorder in the classroom

By Sara Stone (she/her),
teacher-librarian, Nanaimo

ABOUT A DECADE AGO, I found myself on an unexpected journey. As a new parent to a young child, I was surprised and confused about her strong reactions to everyday activities. My daughter would scream and cry upon washing her hands at the sink or become very upset at putting on a sweater or a new coat. I wasn't sure what was going on for her, but I knew it was more than just a toddler acting out. After many years of questions, and consultations with medical professionals, we finally found out that our daughter had something called sensory processing disorder (SPD). This diagnosis changed so much for me, at home and at school with my students. I was able to see where sensitivities were driving behaviours.

What is sensory processing disorder?

"Children with sensory processing disorder have problems processing information from the senses. This makes it hard for them to respond to that information in the right way. The senses include touch, movement, smell, taste, vision, and hearing. In most cases, these children have one or more senses that either react too much or too little to stimulation. This disorder can cause problems with a child's development and behaviour."¹

The tricky part of SPD is that it is ever-changing; one day a reaction may be strong, and the next day it can be mild. A child may have a mixture of over- and under-sensitivity reactions. These moving parts make it very hard for families, teachers, and others to support and understand the condition.

Many experts have seen SPD present as a stand-alone condition, and it is commonly paired with other neurological issues such as autism, OCD, ADHD, PTSD and so on. The fact is that many of us, either as parents and/or teachers, will have children with SPD in our lives. What could SPD potentially look like at school? How could this condition be present for us in the classroom?

What are some signs to watch for in students who may have SPD?²

- Avoiding sensory experiences, such as messy activities, e.g., painting or playing in the sandpit.
- Seeking out sensory experiences, e.g., messy activities, fiddling, scratching, rough play.
- Showing heightened sensitivity to sound, touch, or movement.
- Appearing to be in their "own world," e.g., distracted, lethargic.
- Being impulsive, easily frustrated, or, on the flip side, overly compliant.
- Being easily distracted by the things going on around them.
- A love of movement, e.g., constant spinning, running, jumping, crashing into objects/people.
- Writing with too light or too hard pressure.
- Low muscle tone, e.g., slouching in chairs or on the carpet.
- Preferring to play alone.
- Having difficulty coping with changes in routine or transitioning between tasks.
- Fussy eating.

BOOKS ABOUT SPD

Raising A Sensory Smart Child by Lindsey Biel and Nancy Peske
Sensational Kids: Hope and Help for Children with Sensory Processing Disorder
by Lucy Jane Miller
The Out-of-Sync Child (Third Edition) by Carol Stock Kranowitz
Lily and the Snow and *Lily and the Pool* by Sara Stone



Many items on this list can occur if a child is having a bad day or experiencing a temper tantrum. Temper tantrums are strong emotional, often angry, reactions from a child who is not getting their way. Sensory meltdowns, although similar to temper tantrums, are fueled by external stimuli. When the brain becomes overstimulated by certain sounds, sights, tastes, or textures, it can struggle to process the information effectively. This sensory overload can lead to feelings of overwhelm, anxiety, or discomfort. This overload usually causes a reaction of fight, flight, or freeze.

If you, or parents of a student, suspect that a student in your class has SPD, you can support the diagnosis process by keeping detailed notes about behaviours and triggers you have observed. Your notes can help families seeking a diagnosis from other professionals.

The professionals that can help identify SPD for families include pediatricians, occupational therapists, psychiatrists, and pediatric neurologists. Sharing observations with families about their child's behaviour and potential sensory processing issues is an important step in ensuring that children receive the support they need.

How can we help students avoid sensory overwhelm or meltdowns?

Schools have so many variables that are out of our control: overhead fluorescent lights, seating options, bells and alarms, odors and smells, etc. Fortunately, there are many things we can control.

Creating a supportive classroom environment for students with sensory sensitivities is crucial for their well-being and academic success. Here are some strategies that teachers can implement to make the classroom more accommodating:

CLASSROOM LIGHTING

- **Stand-up floor lamps:** replace harsh fluorescent lights with floor lamps to create a warmer, more calming light.
- **Natural light:** use natural light as much as possible by opening blinds or curtains.

SENSORY CORNERS

- **Soft seating:** provide bean bags, cushions, or other soft seating options for students to relax.
- **Headphones:** offer noise-cancelling headphones to help students block out distracting noises.
- **Small tents or drapes:** create a small, enclosed space where students can retreat to when they need a break.

FIDGET TOOLS

- **Pop-its and glitter bottles:** simple and quiet fidget tools that can help students focus.
- **Stress balls:** tactile tools that can help manage stress and anxiety.

MINDFULNESS AND BREATHING TECHNIQUES

- **Class practices:** Incorporate regular mindfulness and breathing exercises into the classroom routine.
- **Resources:** use online resources such as YouTube videos to teach helpful breathing techniques like lion's breath or box breathing.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

- **Flexible seating options:** allow students to choose seating that is comfortable for them, such as standing desks, wobble stools, or floor seating.
- **Routine and structure:** maintain a consistent classroom routine to help students feel secure and know what to expect.
- **Visual schedules:** use visual schedules to help students understand the day's activities and transitions.
- **Odor control:** be mindful of strong smells in the classroom, such as cleaning products or perfumes; use unscented products when possible.
- **Quiet zones:** designate areas of the classroom as quiet zones where students can go to focus or take a sensory break.

MODELLING AND TEACHING

- **Model calm behavior:** demonstrate calm and mindful behaviour yourself, as students often mimic the actions of their teachers.
- **Teach emotional regulation:** incorporate lessons on emotional regulation and coping strategies into the curriculum.
- **Normalize sensory breaks:** make it clear that taking a sensory break is a normal and acceptable way to manage overwhelm.

Ultimately, by adopting a proactive and compassionate approach educators can help SPD students navigate their sensory experiences more successfully, enabling them to achieve their full potential. This not only benefits the students but also enriches the entire classroom community, promoting a culture of inclusivity and respect. •

1 "Sensory Processing Disorder," HealthLinkBC: www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/sensory-processing-disorder
2 "What is Sensory Processing Disorder? A Teacher's Guide to Supporting Students with SPD," TeachStarter: www.teachstarter.com/au/blog/sensory-processing-disorder-supporting-spd-students-in-the-classroom-2/

**We have described for
you a Mountain.**

**We have shown
you a path to the Top.**

**We call upon
you to do the Climbing.**

**– Justice Murray Sinclair,
Chair of the Truth
and Reconciliation
Commission of Canada**

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

Lessons on the TRC Calls to Action

By Janet Nicol, writer and retired teacher, Vancouver

A PATH TOWARD RECONCILIATION between Canadians and Indigenous Peoples has been clearly laid out in the 94 Calls to Action delivered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report in 2015. Yet nine years later, only 13 actions have been achieved. If Canada continues at this pace, observes the Toronto-based Yellowhead Institute, "...it will take another 58 years until the Calls to Action are completed, meaning that Indigenous Peoples will have to wait until 2081 for reconciliation."

Teachers have an opportunity to challenge students on this issue by asking essential questions, such as, "Why is progress on the Calls to Action slow?" and "What actions can we take to ensure these goals are reached?"

To begin, students need to know the TRC was formed in 2008 to address the impact of forced assimilation and abuse of Indigenous people in residential schools. The commission travelled the country over seven years and heard stories from thousands of residential school Survivors. Their report is based on the hearings and includes the Calls to Action, a tool to guide governments, communities, and faith groups toward reconciliation.

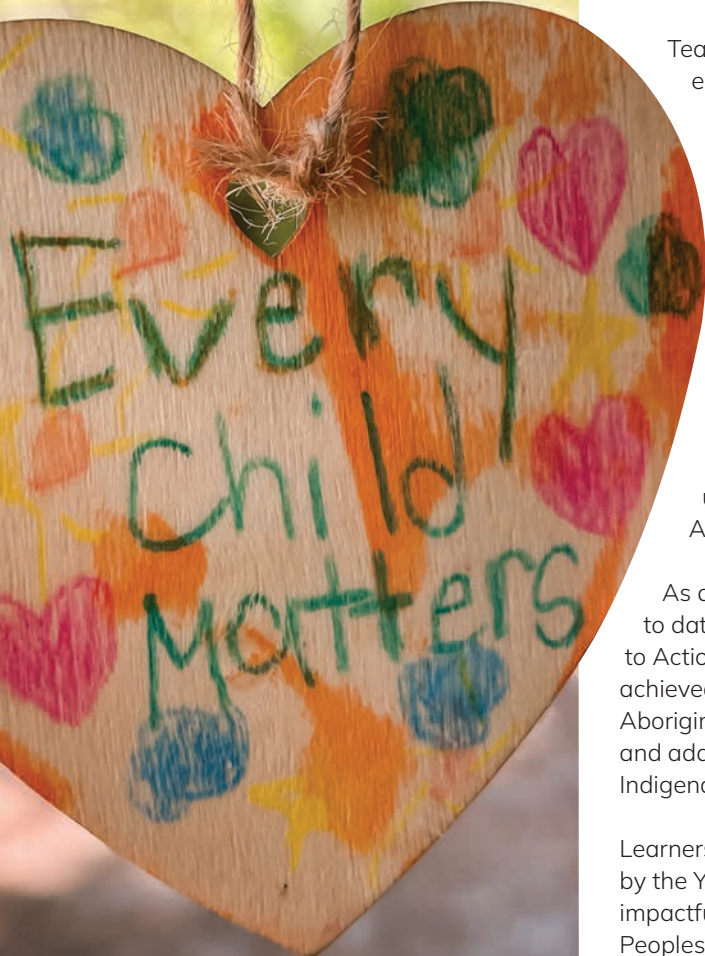
This writer was a social studies teacher in Vancouver at the time of the report's publication and developed a lesson about the Calls to Action using the "jigsaw" method of instruction. The lesson, called TRC Call to Action Lesson, is available on TeachBC (bctf.ca/classroom-resources).

As a follow-up, teachers could ask students to note the 13 achieved actions to date, available on page 10 of the Yellowhead Institute's online report *Calls to Action Accountability: A 2023 Status Update on Reconciliation*. Examples of achieved actions are Action 13, "...to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights..." and Action 94, to replace the Oath of Citizenship and add, "...I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada including Treaties with Indigenous Peoples..."

Learners could also break down the 94 actions into four categories, as suggested by the Yellowhead Institute: symbolic (efforts by Canadians), easy (quick wins), impactful (empowers Indigenous Peoples), and transformative (Indigenous Peoples' self-determination).

The Yellowhead Institute website (yellowheadinstitute.org) offers key reasons for the slow progress on the actions. These include Canadians' institutional paternalism and prejudice toward Indigenous people and insufficient funding, points which could form the basis of student group discussions.

"Beyond 94," a project by the CBC, also offers an instructive website for educators (cbc.ca/newsinteractives/beyond-94). The 94 actions are sorted into six categories: child welfare, education, language and culture, health, justice, and reconciliation. Teachers and students could click on each category to learn the status of the 81 "non-actions"—which range from "in progress" to "not started." •



MORE INFORMATION

For Indigenous-centred lesson aids, teacher workshops, and resources, see the BCTF Aboriginal Education site (bctf.ca under "Services and Information").

Visit teachermag.ca and see the online version of this article for links to the resources mentioned.

Lauren Hutchison photo

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION DAY

lesson plan

By **Nikitha Fester** (she/her), BCTF staff

ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2024, Canada will mark the third National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as well as Orange Shirt Day. Truth and Reconciliation Day acknowledges and honours the Indigenous children who never returned home from residential schools, those who survived, and the families and communities affected.

Orange Shirt Day is an Indigenous-led, grass-roots commemorative day with the focus of raising awareness around the intergenerational impacts of residential schools and promoting the concept that “Every Child Matters.”

The events that occur leading up to and on these days provide a powerful opportunity for all of us to be witnesses. In many Indigenous cultures, witnessing is an important way that knowledge is remembered and passed on. When we listen to stories from/about residential schools, we are witnessing a part of Canada’s history. This allows us to understand our relationship to Canadian history, colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples.

LESSON PLAN

Part 1

1. Explain to your students where Truth and Reconciliation Day and Orange Shirt Day come from.
 - You can read the history of Orange Shirt Day and Phyllis Webstad (orangeshirtday.org).
 - You can read about the genesis of Truth and Reconciliation Day.
2. Explain to students what witnessing means. If time allows, collaborate with the Aboriginal enhancement teacher (or similar role), to develop an age-appropriate lesson or explanation over this concept.
3. Share with your class that together you will participate in one/several events to honour Truth and Reconciliation Day.

Some online event options

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation has online programming, including a Youth Empowerment Gathering. (Visit trw-svr.nctr.ca and select the “Virtual Program” menu.)

Please note these events require preregistration and may only be available on certain days and specific times.

4. Encourage your students to attend events that are occurring in their communities and continue their learning.

Part 2

Determine how you would like your students to share back their learning: in journaling, drawing, discussion, or a combination.

Have students report back on the following:

1. What did you witness?
 - a. information (things you learned)
 - b. feelings (emotions you saw, felt)
2. Why is this learning important?
3. What are you curious about? Where will you get answers to your questions?

Part 3

As a class, determine how you will share what you’ve learned with your school community. Some options are:

- school display (library, hallways)
- posters
- minipresentations to other classes.

Extensions

Elementary

- Explain to students the significance of the eagle in Indigenous cultures.
- Then explain to students they will draw or write their hopes about reconciliation on a paper eagle feather.
- Have students share what they wrote and drew with the class and hang the feathers in the classroom.

Teacher tips

Check in with the Aboriginal enhancement teacher at your school or ask the librarian to pull sources if you’re not familiar with the importance of the eagle for Indigenous Peoples.

This activity can easily be done in French or other languages.

Materials needed

- feather template and photocopies
- art/colouring supplies
- string and tape for hanging.

Secondary

Listen to the poem “Thank You for the Real Estate” available in the BCTF anti-racism training course, From Awareness to Action (visit bctf.ca and search for the course title). Go through the discussion questions with students or in small groups.

Visit teachermag.ca and see the online version of this article for links to the resources mentioned. •

Get to know your BCTF Library

Did you know the BCTF Library has three unique offerings: a lending library, an eBook library, and classroom resources?

LENDING LIBRARY

The newest service offered by the BCTF Library is the book lending service. BCTF members can browse the catalogue and borrow up to three books at a time. The books will be mailed to you to enjoy for one month. Return postage is included. Check out the lending library catalogue by clicking the “Book Loans” tab at bctf.ca/library.

POPULAR TITLES IN THE LENDING LIBRARY

Classroom Assessment Essentials

This comprehensive book covers the foundational concepts and practical skills necessary for teachers to be successful with classroom assessment.

Classroom Management from the Ground Up

This guide combines sound research with practical wisdom so educators can have a classroom management resource written by teachers for teachers. Gain effective strategies for designing and improving your classroom management from the ground up.

Every Connection Matters: How to Build, Maintain, and Restore Relationships inside the Classroom and Out

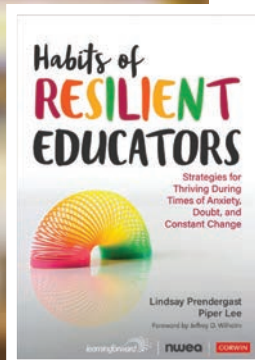
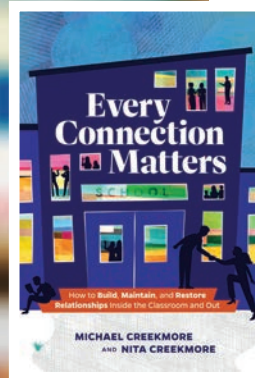
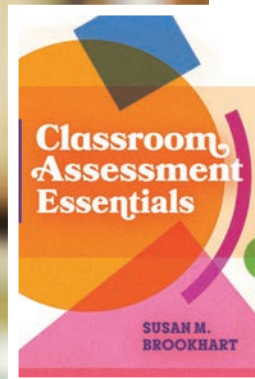
This book guides teachers through the ins and outs of building, maintaining, and restoring the six types of relationships they need to navigate in a school.

Habits of Resilient Educators: Strategies for Thriving During Times of Anxiety, Doubt, and Constant Change

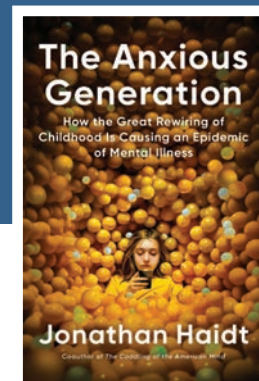
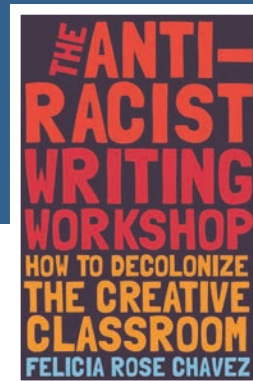
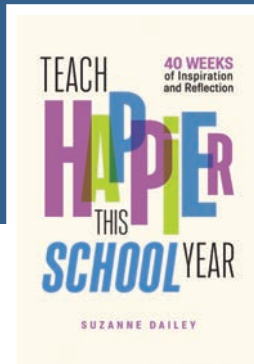
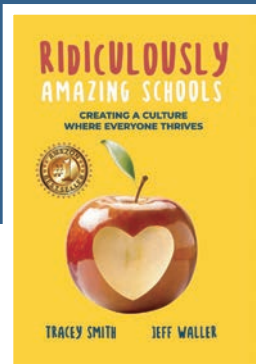
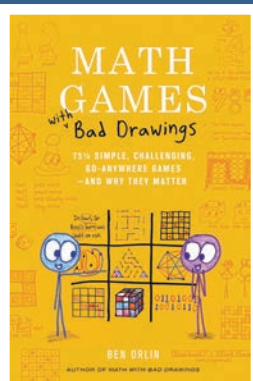
What are the habits we know that enable teachers to be effective no matter the environment? And how do we build and sustain professional and personal practices that help us rise to every challenge? This book answers these questions, providing teachers with the knowledge and tools necessary to develop habits that will create joyful, successful learning environments.

Kids' Books and Maker Activities: 150 Perfect Pairings

This book connects to the new American Association of School Librarians standards and provides simple directions for using a variety of books to create maker activities that deepen the reading experience.



iStock.com/Imaginima



Literacy Moves Outdoors:

Learning Approaches for Any Environment

Discover practical strategies and experiences for supporting literacy development outside of the traditional classroom environment, as well as varied entry points, logistics for implementation, literacy connections, resources, and relevant book lists.

Math Games with Bad Drawings: 74 1/2 Simple, Challenging, Go-Anywhere Games and Why They Matter

From beloved math popularizer Ben Orlin comes a masterfully compiled collection of dozens of playable mathematical games.

Ridiculously Amazing Schools:

Creating a Culture Where Everyone Thrives

Imagine a school with a culture so positive that everyone thrives—students and educators alike. Authors Smith and Waller explore the five key elements of what they call courageous schools: schools that understand it takes a “whole” teacher to teach the “whole” child.

Supporting the Wounded Educator:

A Trauma-Sensitive Approach to Self-Care

The tensions between an educator’s calling and the reality of the profession can create a growing sense of compassion fatigue, burnout, and job dissatisfaction. Packed with doable strategies and suggestions for personal and professional self-care, this book will help you discover a personal journey toward holistic health and job satisfaction.

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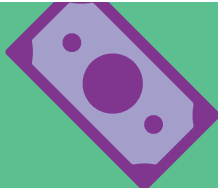
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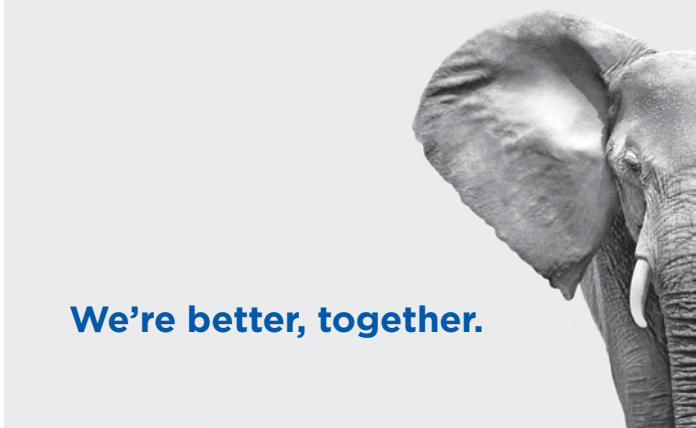
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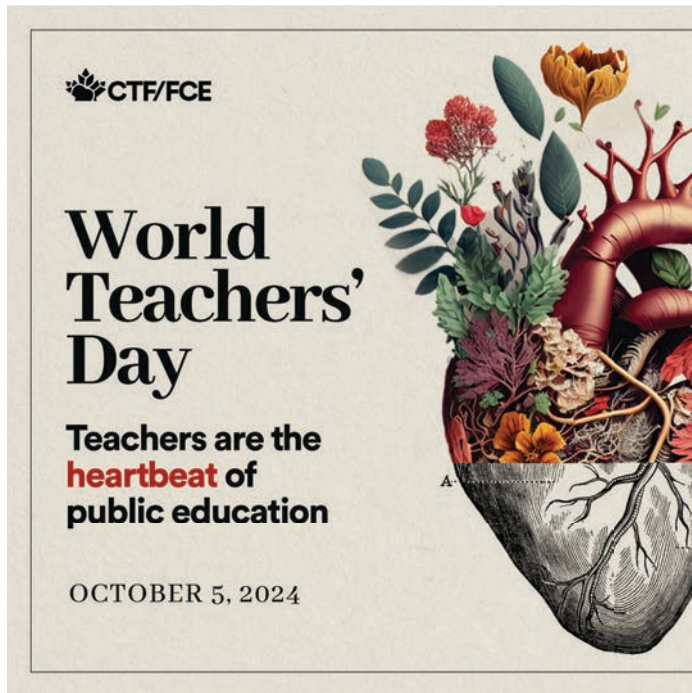
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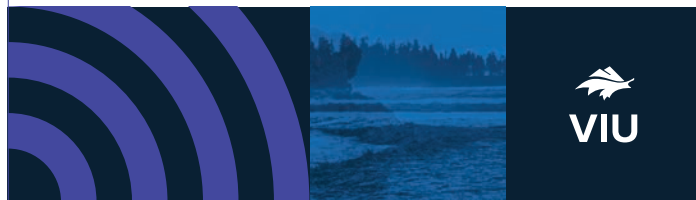
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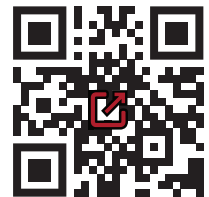


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