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## Teacher registries fall short of goal

Janet Steffenhagen. **The Vancouver Sun**. Vancouver, B.C.: Jan 19, 2009. pg. A.4

### Abstract (Summary)

The B.C. School Trustees' Association and the B.C. Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils had lobbied for years for a registry that would include full employment and discipline histories as a guard against job seekers who would fudge their resumes to hide past misconduct.

### Full Text (407 words)

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British Columbia has begun tracking the work histories of teachers and principals in response to a long-standing concern that school districts don't always know who they are hiring.

But the new employment registry falls far short of what was envisioned earlier by school trustees and parents as a way of improving student safety.

In this first year of operation, the registry contains work histories dating back only two years and makes no mention of discipline. Although new information will be collected each year, it does not have to be retained for more than 10 years.

The B.C. School Trustees' Association and the B.C. Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils had lobbied for years for a registry that would include full employment and discipline histories as a guard against job seekers who would fudge their resumes to hide past misconduct.

Trustees began calling for an employment registry in 2001 after teacher Tammy Ann Chibanoff was charged with setting fire to her Whalley school. It was only after her arrest that Surrey district discovered she had previously worked in neighbouring Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, where she had been let go for bizarre conduct.

The Liberal government responded to the trustee lobby last year with a law requiring the B.C. College of Teachers to create an employment registry. The law orders school districts to submit each year a list of the teachers and principals they have employed during the previous 12 months.

Despite the registry's limitations, the president of the trustees' association described it as a good beginning.

"Would it be better if it included (work histories) before 2007? Absolutely," Connie Denesiuk said in an interview. "But this is a start."

Ron Broda, president of the parent organization, also praised the registry as a positive first step.

Burnaby chair Diana Mumford said her board hasn't had a chance to discuss the employment registry either, but her personal view is that the data is inadequate. "I don't think two years gives us a broad enough picture," she said.

Last month, the college also introduced a public registry, intended to give parents information about whether teachers or principals have ever been punished for misconduct. But it too has serious limitations.

The public registry includes only information about members who held a teaching certificate on or after July 1, 2007, and doesn't mention teachers who admit to misconduct but avoid real discipline.

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