

June 22, 2007

Developing Leaders to Improve Student Learning

Several months ago, I wrote about the British Columbia Education Leadership Council (BCELC) and described the work of this organization to you. BCELC has really focussed on developing leadership among Principals and Vice-Principals but is now expanding its efforts to address leadership in broader ways. Two years after its formation, BCELC has left quite a footprint on our province. All Principals, Vice-Principals and leaders at all levels, from the classroom to the Board Chair, should be informed of this work.

BCELC was established in March of 2005 as a not-for-profit society incorporated under the Society Act. Government provided the council with a start-up grant and the mandate to develop leadership in the public education sector. This was mainly in response to the succession challenges posed by large scale retirement of Principals, Vice-Principals and district staff, but the leadership development mandate was outlined in broad strokes. What has the Council accomplished since its formation?

The Board: Upon incorporation, a Board of Directors was appointed to guide the formation and development of BCELC. The President of BCELC under the terms of incorporation is appointed by the Deputy Minister of Education. The Directors of the Board are representatives of the Education Partners. The current Board members are:

Rick Davis, President
(*Superintendent of Achievement, Ministry of Education*)

Sheila Rooney, Vice-President
(*Past President, BCSSA*)

Lyle Boyce, Secretary Treasurer
(*Secretary Treasurer, School District No. 72 (Campbell River)*)

Connie Denesiuk, Director
(*First Vice President, BCSTA*)

Les Dukowski, Director
(*President, BCPVPA*)

Ron Broda, Director
(*First Vice President, BCCPAC*)

Ruth Wittenberg, Assistant Deputy Minister
Ministry of Advanced Education

As you can see this is a "Blue Ribbon" Board that represents the interests of the education partners and guides the policies of BCELC. There is a provision for the appointment of additional directors within the BCELC constitution to ensure the organization is inclusive and representative.

Profile: BCELC has become widely known as a provider of quality leadership programs that represent new ways of thinking about leading and learning. During the first year of its existence, Dr. Lee Southern, current Executive Director, guided BCELC as its Acting Chief Executive Officer. Dr. Southern built coalitions among education partners, canvassed the state of leadership development programs across BC and brought many constituents together at a symposium to assess the state of leadership development and to plan for BCELC's role in the future.

Infrastructure: It was clear that infrastructure was needed to meet the expectations and needs that schools and school districts had of BCELC. In June 2006, Cathy Elliott previously from the BCPVPA and acting on a secondment to the Ministry of Education, was appointed Chief Executive Officer of BCELC. Ms. Elliott strategically developed a sound and sustainable infrastructure opening offices at the Harbour Center at 515 West Hastings in Vancouver. With her small administrative staff and some of the best consultants available in the sector, Ms. Elliott established programs and services that a year ago were quite unimaginable. This infrastructure will continue to serve the leadership development

needs of the education partners and school districts. Very recently, Yrsa Jensen, well known for her work in assessment for learning and supervision of learning has been hired as the Program Director to work with Cathy Elliott in the expansion of program delivery.

Programs: This is the most remarkable piece. It is hard to imagine that this organization is so young when you consider what it is delivering in our province.

- **Leadership Seminar Series (LSS).** This is the flagship program of BCELC. In 2005, the Ministry of Education, the University of Victoria and BCELC partnered to develop UVIC's Certificate in School Management and Leadership (CSML) program, a graduate certificate program leading into a Master's degree. This program proved to be highly successful for many teachers and principals able to make a long term commitment to their continuing education. By this August the program will have served over 70 educators – but the volume of need is far greater. The LSS was developed by boiling down the most critical learnings from CSML and from other leadership programs into 12 days of seminars presented in workshop style. The LSS was opened to newly appointed Principals and Vice-Principals. The seats filled quickly and by this coming September there will be over 240 principals from across the province in these programs. Consideration is being given to opening an additional 120 seats in January 2008. Participating principals cannot say enough about the value of LSS.
- **Interactive Innovations.** This unique conference, in which many reading this article will have participated, is organized by conference director Audrey Hobbs-Johnson out of the BCELC offices. The BCELC infrastructure supports and facilitates the conference. Many of the committee planning meetings occur at BCELC and involve BCELC staff and consultants.
- **Network of Performance Based Schools (NBPS).** BCELC provides administrative services to this highly effective program that promotes action research and school improvement. Dr. Judy Halbert and Dr. Linda Kaser pilot the network which is quite independent of other programs at BCELC but the council furnishes administrative support.

- **Parent Leadership Programs.** BCCPAC has turned to BCELC, Cathy Elliott and her staff to assist in designing parent leadership programs that model the architecture of the LSS. These parent programs will begin delivery in the fall.
- **Voluntary Teacher Leadership Certification Program (VTLCP).** This is the newest addition to the BCELC family of programs. Earlier this spring, government announced its intention to provide teachers the opportunity to engage in developing and honing their leadership skills, either to promote teacher leadership in schools or to consider moving into formal leadership positions. BCELC was provided a grant of \$1M to plan and deliver this program. It is hoped program delivery will begin early in 2008.
- **Workshops, Presentations and Resources.** Business is brisk at BCELC. The phone rings steadily with requests of Cathy Elliott to present on a wide range of leadership topics and issues. The capacity to deliver those services will expand as Yrsa Jensen assumes her role. Plans are forming with districts to deliver custom-made leadership seminars for administrative teams. The array of resources and programs available from BCELC can be customized to respect district priorities. These programs are delivered on a cost recovery basis – the BCELC infrastructure comes free!

Looking across Canada, BCELC stands out as being a unique structure to support and develop leaders at all levels in our public education system. Its website is developing (<http://www.bcelc.ca/>) and you may find a tour there of interest. Teachers, Principals and Vice-Principals, district staff and parents should consider the potential BCELC holds. Involve yourself with BCELC – either directly or through your school district or organization – you will find yourself involved with a community of learning leaders.



Emery Dossall, Ed D
Deputy Minister of Education