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Faithfully Relevant

by Ed Noot

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If you were to measure the success of your Christian school, what benchmark would you use? You could choose enrolment trends, reputation, program development, growth of donor base, or your results on provincial learning assessments like FSAs. Undoubtedly, your mission and vision statements along with your strategic plan would also be important benchmarks.

Measuring success is a challenging but useful activity for organizations. Any legitimate attempt to determine your organizational health is critical in allowing you to address challenges and adopt a culture of continuous improvement.

Measuring institutional success was not a priority for the founding generation of our school. Those folks worked tirelessly and sacrificed deeply to open schools with spartan but functional facilities, trained but not necessarily certified teachers, and limited classroom resources. For our founding generation, it was enough that our schools were Christian schools run by societies whose purpose it was to educate students in the way of the Lord, and staffed by people committed to that cause.

Today's generation, however, desires not only Christian education, but quality Christian education. Gone are the days of unquestioned loyalty to schools or to any other institution. Today, institutions need to gauge the satisfaction of their members and clients, and need to continuously seek ways to improve their reputation or service profile.

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Read The Link Online
newsletter.scsbc.net

In this context of seeking excellence, measuring your success is not only useful, but perhaps a critical activity. Once you decide to gauge member satisfaction, how likely would it be that you would use your school's relevance as a benchmark? I'd suspect that relevance would not be in the first number of criteria we would list, yet in their book *Race for Relevance*¹, Harrison Coerver and Mary Byers posit that relevance is a key factor in organizational success.

Coerver and Byers observe that most associations governed by volunteer boards are:

- tradition driven
- slow to change
- averse to risk
- dependent on face-to-face interaction
- reliant on print for publications, communications and information delivery

However, the authors submit, the client or membership base of associations has changed and the young, professional client of today:

- views membership as a value proposition (consumer mentality)
- places less inherent value on community
- is willing to shop around for services
- relies on technology for communication and information

Organizations and institutions, like SCSBC and our member schools, are vulnerable to the trends of the times. We rely heavily on member satisfaction, and perhaps more importantly, membership commitment. In our organizational infancy, member commitment might have overlooked mediocrity, but that is no more the case. Today we need to demonstrate high value, excellent service and organizational relevance.

Coerver and Byers write that to remain relevant, associations need to:

- overhaul the governance model and committee operations
- empower the CEO and enhance staff competence
- rigorously define the member market
- rationalize programs and services
- build a robust technology framework

SCSBC has certainly taken steps in these directions over the past number of years, and we will continue to do so. We also support our schools as they strive to meet the above objectives to remain relevant and vital in today's market.

As the title suggests, *Race for Relevance* implies that some associations and organizations are redundant, ineffective and irrelevant to our times. I would suggest that the mission and vision of our Christian schools remain as relevant and vital today as they were half a century ago, perhaps more so.

The challenge for school boards and leaders is to initiate and embrace organizational change that is firmly rooted in the foundational mission, and is viewed as vital, fresh and relevant today.

The challenge for school boards and leaders is to initiate and embrace organizational change that is firmly rooted in the foundational mission, and is viewed as vital, fresh and relevant today. As part of this process, it is critical that we pay attention to our governance model, leadership structure, market analysis, service and communication profile and technology infrastructure.

Some will despair, disappointed by changing commitments and daunted by challenges of change management. This work is not for the faint of heart. It is, however, vital work. As Andy Crouch reminded participants at the *Christian Schools Canada 2016* conference in Banff², our biblical call to impact culture is not an individual call. It is a collective call, and a multi-generational call. God calls Abraham and blesses him to be a blessing to the nations for generations to come.

Christian schools have been a blessing for decades. If we build on our foundational mission in creative and authentic ways we can remain faithfully relevant in today's culture and for generations to come, being salt and light, showing our culture a more excellent way, the way of shalom.

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References

- 1 Byers, M., American Society of Association Executives., Center for Association Leadership. and Coerver, H. (2011). *Race for Relevance: 5 Radical Changes for Associations*. American Society of Association Executives.
- 2 Conference 2016 | Christian Schools Canada. Available at: <http://christianschoolscanada.com/conference-2016>.



Firmly Rooted

by Marlene Bylenga

Coming to a new country, learning a new language, encountering a different school system and living in a new home environment are some of the challenges students from overseas experience. These changes and challenges can be both exciting and daunting for new students.

Schools with organized international student programs usually have staff to assist in English language instruction, help students as they adjust to a different education system and ensure that students are placed in caring home environments. However, enrolling international students is much more than having good homestay and ELL programs and providing opportunities for integration.

In addition to navigating the teen years, students need to navigate differing cultural values and behavioral expectations both at school and in their new families. In order to provide a safe environment, school staff need to be aware of these challenges. I believe it is prudent that in the interview process this topic is discussed. Parents desiring an overseas education for their children may not always be aware of the cultural differences and how they may affect their family. We need to be open and honest, sharing that a decision to send a family member overseas will deeply affect the family's cultural heritage.

International students who are separated from their parents during adolescence may not have the same opportunity to challenge and test parental values and cultural norms as others do.

David Pollock, in his book *Third Culture Kids*, discusses the effects of cross-cultural transition during the developmental years.

"If establishing a personal sense of identity is a major task of adolescence, how do we do it? One critical way is by taking the cultural rules learned during our childhood and testing them out during adolescence. Often this involves the type of direct challenges teenagers' parents around the world know only too well: Why do I have to be in by midnight? Who says I can't wear my hair like this? After the testing is a period of integrating the cultural practices and values we decide (often unconsciously) to keep. We then use these to make decisions about how we will live as autonomous adults rather than continuing to live as children guided by external, parental rules along.

When the cultural rules are always changing, however, what happens to this process? This is, again, why the issues of cultural balance and mobility – and the age or ages when they occur – become very important. Often, at the very time TCK's should be testing and internalizing the customs and values of whatever culture they've grown up in, that whole world, its family culture, and their relationship to it can change overnight with one plane ride. While peers in their new (and old) community are internalizing the rules of culture and beginning to move out with budding confidence, TCKs are still trying to figure out what the

rules are. They aren't free to explore their personal gifts and talents because they're still preoccupied with what is or isn't appropriate behavior. Children who have to learn to juggle many sets of cultural rules at the same time have a different developmental experience from children growing up in one basically permanent, dominant culture that they regard as their own." (Pollock, 2001)¹

Schools need to be intentional about including overseas parents as much as possible. This may involve International Student Program staff regularly sending updates through email or connecting with parents through social media sites. It is important to stress in the interview that even though they are many miles away, they are a vital part of the school community and are partners with the homestay families in raising their children.



In my experience, the students who make the best adjustment are those who are firmly rooted in both countries. These students generally have parents who are aware that their teens are being exposed to different cultural values and are willing to listen to and talk about the different perspectives. In addition, their parents are connected to the school community through the homestay family and have regular contact with International Program staff. This connectedness allows the student to grapple with the differences and become truly bicultural.

Perhaps a topic for discussion at a staff, board, or administration meeting could be how effective your program is at including parents and supporting international students as they navigate the challenges of transitioning into a new culture.

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References

- 1 Pollock, D. C. (2001). *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing up Among Worlds*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Inquiry: *Learning Is Not Passive*



I like to define learning as *a process where students' actions, thinking, and feelings are different than they were before a given engagement*. Learning is an intensely personal undertaking. It is a process shaped by the learner's prior knowledge and assumptions, the depth of thinking they engage in, and opportunities to refine, revisit and clarify understandings.

Educators understand the personal nature of learning and the need to create the conditions necessary for deep learning. We appreciate that students learn best when they first consider previous experiences and understandings¹, take ownership for and invest in their education. We acknowledge that a student's misconceptions and assumptions will adversely affect their ability to add new conceptual knowledge.² And, we recognize that merely delivering content does not ensure learning has taken place.

However, we need to ask whether the science and what we know about how kids learn, has adequately shaped what we believe and value. Does our philosophy of learning reveal itself in practice?

Every action conveys a belief. Consider the adage "What you do speaks so loudly I can't hear what you are telling me."³ It is easy to talk, but can we walk the talk? If we say we care, do we act in a caring way? If we say we believe in giving choices, do we provide options that students would want to have? If we say we know that learning is an active process, do we choose pedagogies that activate prior understanding then honour student questions and curiosities?

The Inquiry-based framework for teaching and learning is cited as one of the pillars of the modified BC curriculum because, when an inquiry process is appropriately activated, active student participation is required. Simply put, "inquiry is about being open to wonder and possibility. Inquiry is

accompanied by a mindset of optimism. It starts by asking a question and leads to the creation of a plan or set of actions with the hope of getting closer to the answer. Inquiry involves reflecting along the way about what seems to have worked or not, and figuring out where to go next."⁴ And while defining inquiry so that we can imagine engaging a practice of inquiry is essential, knowing how to lead and effectively implement inquiry-based learning techniques has proven to be very problematic for many educators.

One model I have found particularly helpful in constructing and planning learning inquiries is that of the **5 E's: Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend, and Evaluate**.

I created the diagram on page 5 to help clarify the 5E process as a framework for learning, and for lesson and unit planning. The following provides an overview, which is not exhaustive by any measure.

The model begins with a stage of **Engagement**. The teacher considers methods and activities to pique student curiosity and activate their prior knowledge and conceptual understandings, providing opportunities for the students to compare their ideas with those of their peers. During this stage, the teacher learns about what students already know, or think they do. Students are encouraged to articulate questions they have while bringing forward personal understandings (or misunderstandings). During this phase, the teacher is careful to **facilitate** by drawing out student thinking, ideas, and questions connected with the area of content engagement, not delivering content or some eloquent introduction to the new unit.

The **Explore** stage emerges naturally out of the cultivation of student questions and areas of knowledgeability. Now, the teacher provides time, resources, and **coaches** students as they work to investigate and seek out answers to their questions and queries. The teacher adopts an attitude of learning alongside students, teaching through prompting, asking refining questions and continued modelling of profound wonder and investigation. During this stage, students interact

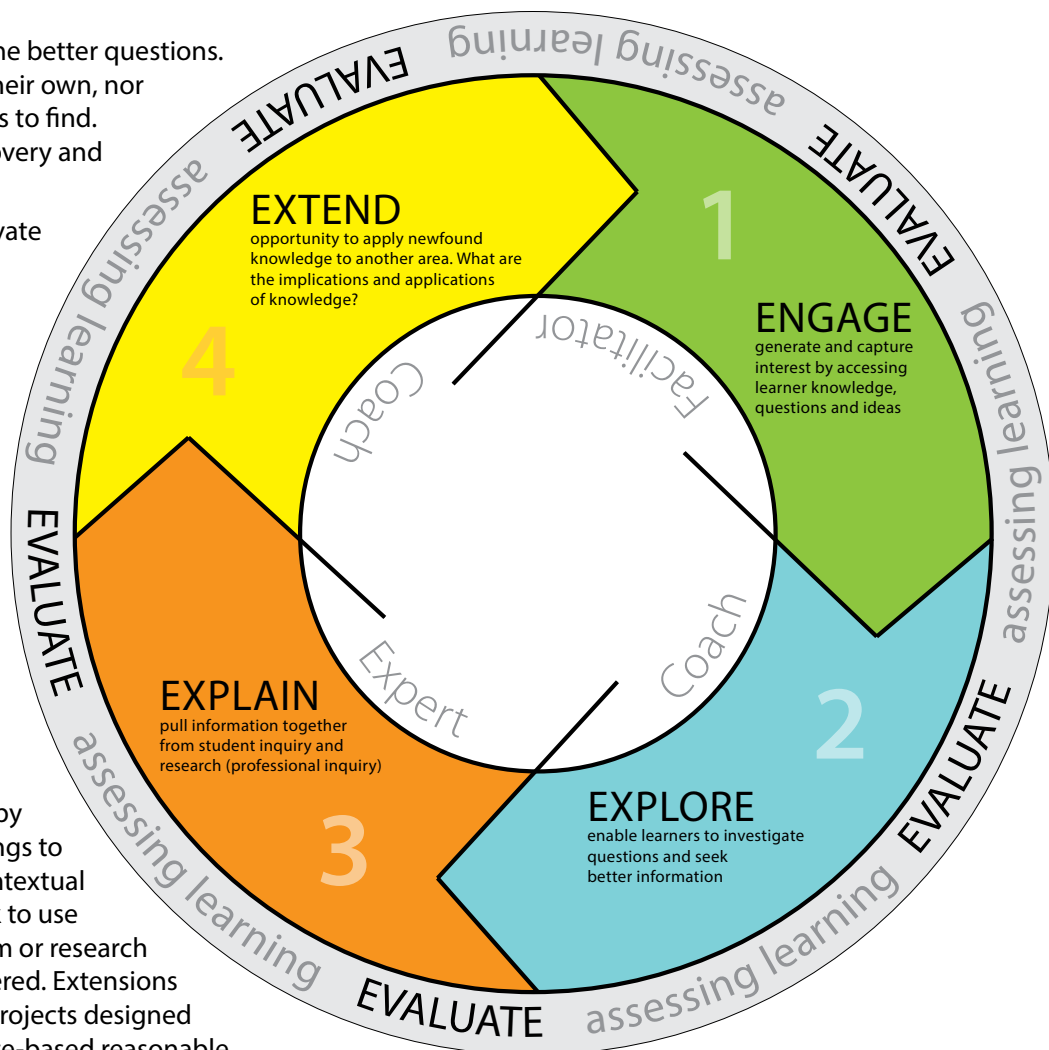
with each other to refine ideas and frame better questions. They seek answers but are not left on their own, nor are they expected to discover all there is to find. The teacher plays an active role in discovery and consideration of resources.

During the **Explain** stage, teachers activate their inner **expert** and help students weave together their discoveries while explicitly noticing and filling in any conceptual or knowledge gaps. Formal language, theories, rules, or protocols are introduced (if not already discovered by students) to provide a shared language which facilitates students' abilities to describe previous experiences, observations, and thinking. The Explain stage seeks to have student and teacher explanations further inform thinking and catalyze reflection on how thinking and understandings have grown or changed.

During the **Extend** stage, teachers aim to have students extend their learning by applying their conceptual understandings to new situations, across disciplines or contextual domains. In other words, students work to use their knowledge in a context or problem or research area they have not previously encountered. Extensions may take many forms, from engaging projects designed to deepen learning, to drawing evidence-based reasonable conclusions, to applying their learning to new contexts, or to integrate one concept with other concepts or other perspectives.

And finally, the **Evaluate** phase, preferably construed with the specific goal of encouraging and facilitating deeper learning throughout the inquiry cycle, sees assessment informing each one of the previous four stages of the 5 E's. Students assess prior understandings during their engagement with the content area then communicate their ideas and possible directions for finding answers with peers and the teacher to further refine thinking. As new information is found, student groups assess its validity and question the quality of their original inquiry questions. The teacher takes on the coaching role and adopts a functional attitude of journeying alongside the students while continually monitoring and assessing learning. Throughout the inquiry cycle, assessment encourages more in-depth investigation while also tracking student achievement.

Learning is not a passive process. Good luck as you engage pedagogies of inquiry!



A full-size poster of this diagram can be found at <http://teaching.scsbc.ca>

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- 1 National Research Council. (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/9853>.
- 2 Derry, S. (1996). *Cognitive schema theory in the constructivist debate*. *Educational Psychologist*, 31(3-4), 163-174. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00461520.1996.9653264>
- 3 Quote is loosely attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson based on a quote from his essay titled "Social Arms" in 1875. The original quote read "Don't say things. What you are stands over you the while, and thunders so that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary."
- 4 Healthy Families BC. (2013). *Healthy Schools BC Resource Guide for Teaching and Learning*. Victoria, BC: Ministry of Education

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Directors' Liability, Insurance and Risk

A Primer for Board Members

Risk management is one of those buzz phrases you hear a lot lately, particularly in the boardroom. For many of us, paying the annual insurance bill may seem like all we need to know about the subject of directors' liability and risk management, but putting our heads in the sand will not do us or our schools any good. A little bit of knowledge can help you rest assured that your school is doing everything it needs to do to protect its students, staff, and volunteers, as well as its physical and financial assets.

So what are the key things you need to know? Here are a few to start you off in the right direction.

Duties of Directors and Directors' Liability

There are three main legal duties of directors of non-profit organizations under Canadian law:

- **The Duty of Diligence:** Diligent directors act prudently and in the best interests of the organization. Directors are well-informed and act cautiously, foreseeing potential risks and taking reasonable steps to manage those risks.
- **The Duty of Loyalty:** Directors are required to put the organization's interests first, ahead of personal or other interests. Directors also have an obligation to keep organizational matters private and confidential.
- **The Duty of Obedience:** Directors must comply with the organization's governing documents, and ensure that its committees and staff do as well. Directors must also ensure the organization complies with external rules and laws, in particular with respect to statutory obligations to its employees such as paying salaries and government remittances, providing holidays, and ensuring a safe work environment.

When directors fail to uphold these practices, something can go wrong – a law may be broken, a contract may be breached, or an action (or inaction) may harm someone – and directors of the organization may be held responsible. Because of this risk, your school should have directors' and officers' insurance in place to indemnify (compensate) its directors for liabilities that may occur as they carry out their duties. This insurance should cover legal fees, fines, and financial settlements from any lawsuit. Don't be afraid to ask to review your school's policy to ensure you are comfortable with its coverage.

Risk Management

No one wants to get into a situation where you actually have to make an insurance claim, so there are policies and

procedures that your board and your school should have in place to limit the risk of this happening. This is what we call "risk management." We can't call it risk avoidance because inherently everything we do has some degree of risk. We just need to make sure we manage risks responsibly and think ahead to potential consequences.

Risk management involves three steps:

- Examine the situation and think about what could go wrong and what harm could result.
- Determine practical measures that can stop the harm from occurring.
- If harm does occur, determine practical measures that can limit the harm or pay for the harm.

Evaluating your school's various activities on a regular basis to assess risks and how they are managed is an important role of the board, although it is often delegated to a risk management committee or the finance committee. It is essential to look at all sides of your schools' operations, including educational practices but also areas such as building maintenance, computer security, and finance procedures.

Once you have a list of all the risks your school could potentially face, figure out what "practical measures" are needed to manage those risks. These might include the following:

- The school might decide to simply accept a small risk and make no changes to its practices.
- The school may also decide to find ways to reduce the risk by changing the way people behave.
- For a higher risk activity, the school may decide to eliminate the risk altogether by stopping the activity.
- The school can also decide to transfer the risk to someone else.

Every school will face different risks and will find different ways to manage those risks based on reasonable standards of care. It's common sense to screen and train your staff and volunteers well, to inspect your facilities regularly, to enforce rules consistently, to take proper minutes at board and committee meetings, and to make sure your T4s are filed on time. But sometimes things slip through the cracks, and it's the board's responsibility to make sure procedures are in place to reduce the likelihood of that happening.

Insurance

Insurance is one of the main ways your school transfers risks to others. I've mentioned directors' and officers' liability insurance already. The key is to review this policy's wording carefully. Most don't cover actions of directors outside of

their scope of duties, or anything criminal or fraudulent. Some policies also exclude breach of contract, including wrongful dismissal of employees, complaints under the human rights code such as discrimination or harassment, or fines and penalties under a legal statute, such as fines that may occur if payroll remittances are not made to Canada Revenue Agency. Try to find a policy with the most comprehensive coverage.

Other insurance policies your school should have in place:

- Property insurance covers the value of the school building and its contents should there be physical damage to the school, such as fire or earthquake or simply a failed boiler. Given recent increases in construction costs, it's a good idea to have a regular appraisal done to make sure the full replacement value of your property is covered.
- Business interruption insurance covers the costs which continue while the school is closed due one of the events described above. This ensures your staff can be paid until the building is repaired, so make sure it is enough to cover payroll for at least six months.
- General liability insurance covers claims that may occur during the course of regular operations, such as a parent being injured by slipping on an icy parking lot.
- Abuse coverage is often a separate policy from general liability.
- Cyber insurance is a relatively new type of insurance, which covers damages caused by loss of digital data.

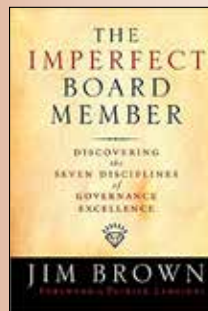
Your insurance underwriter may require a lot of information to provide these policies at their most favourable rates: property appraisals, disaster recovery plans, privacy policies, questionnaires about data security and back up procedures, and copies of discipline and abuse prevention policies. They may also wish to visit your property and meet with the school's facilities and administrative staff. If your insurance agent is not requesting this information, it may be time to call in someone new to review your policies and get market quotes. This will help ensure that the school is getting the insurance coverage it needs, and for the best rates.

Understanding your duties as a director around the issue of risk management and insurance is an important topic that every board should spend adequate time addressing. Hopefully this article has given you the information you need to jump start that conversation.

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RECOMMENDED

Check out these titles ...



The Imperfect Board Member

Discovering the Seven Disciplines of Governance Excellence by Jim Brown

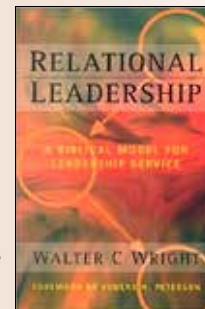
This easy-to-read book demonstrates that the big jobs of the board are to direct and protect, and they get this done by connecting, expecting, correcting, selecting and inspecting. This could be particularly helpful to a board thinking about building their board and organizational culture.

Relational Leadership

A Biblical Model for Leadership Service

by Walter C. Wright

This book will be valuable to anyone in leadership with a goal to empower others to help achieve the mission of their organization. Wright not only presents an ideal, but offers practical suggestions for handling thorny issues such as the management of volunteers and performance reviews.



Race for Relevance

5 Radical Changes for Associations

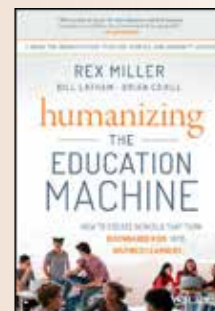
by Harrison Coerver and Mary Byers

A no-nonsense look at how organizations operate and what they need to do to remain relevant in the future, this book includes worksheets, checklists, and case studies geared towards helping leaders implement change.

Humanizing the Education Machine

by Rex Miller

Miller describes how the education system has become ineffective by not adapting to fit students' needs, learning styles and perspectives, and explains how schools can evolve to engage students and involve parents. This book serves to spread hope for reform, and to equip parents, educators, administrators, and communities to partner in the new human-centered learning revolution.

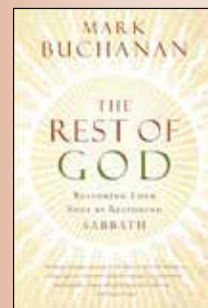


The Rest of God

Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath

by Mark Buchanan

Jesus practiced Sabbath among those who had turned it into a dismal thing, and He reminded them of the day's true purpose: liberation – to heal, to feed, to rescue, to celebrate, to lavish and relish life abundant. Buchanan urges us to revive the Sabbath as a refuge from our pervasive and spiritually destructive culture of busyness and gives practical advice for restoring the Sabbath in our lives.



NEWS AND EVENTS

Welcome New Members

SCSBC has had the privilege of welcoming three new member schools in 2017.

Lighthouse Christian Academy from Kindergarten through Grade 12.
1289 Parkdale Drive, Victoria

Partnering with parents, we aim for a daily walk with God, strong moral standards, and achieving our personal best. Dream. Believe. Learn. Achieve.

Kootenay Christian Academy from PreK through Grade 9
1200 Kootenay Street North, Cranbrook

The vision of Kootenay Christian Academy is to enable all students to achieve their maximum potential in a secure and respectful learning environment where students are challenged to explore God, His Creation, and their place in it. "Christ Above All"

Kamloops Christian School from PreK through Grade 12
750 Cottonwood Avenue, Kamloops

Christ-centred, Bible-based education that nurtures academic potential, moral character, a Christian worldview, and commitment to serving God and others.



For the Love of Your Child

SCSBC is producing a high-quality inspirational promotional video that our schools will be able to use to help prospective families understand the "why" of Christian education and allow them to see how God is shaping the hearts and lives of students through learning in a Christian context. Busy and exciting filming days have been hosted by several SCSBC schools.



Regional Principals Meetings 2017

Ed Noot, Greg Gerber and Darren Spysma were joined by newest SCSBC staff member Tracey Yan for this fall's round of regional principals meetings to provide administrators with updates on current educational, governance and finance issues, as well as opportunities to network. Host schools Unity Christian in Chilliwack (Upper Fraser Valley region), Nanaimo Christian (Vancouver Island region), Cloverdale Christian (Greater Vancouver region), Kelowna Christian (Okanagan region) and Houston Christian (Northern region) rolled out the red carpet with school tours, delicious food, and great facilities. SCSBC staff also took the opportunity to meet with learning leaders, board members, and business managers while on the road.



SAVE THE DATE

November 4, 2017

SCSBC Leadership Conference and Annual General Meeting at Surrey Christian School
Keynote Speaker: Zach Clark

March 6-7, 2018

SCSBC Business and Development Conference at Cedar Springs, Sumas
Keynote Speaker: Rod Wilson

September 26-28, 2018

Christian Schools Canada Conference 2018
hosted by OACS at the Ottawa Marriott
Keynote speakers: Jennifer Keesmaat, Sylvia Keesmaat



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