



Our Voice

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils

*The Parent Voice:
Connecting for the Future*



Inside this issue...

- Night of Family Science
- Anxiety in Children
- Post-Secondary Options
- Parent Communities
- Ethics in Parenting

April 2011

Who We Are

The B.C. Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) is recognized as the collective voice of parents regarding public school education in BC. Every public school Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) in the province is eligible for membership. BCCPAC is a charitable non-profit organization registered under the BC Society Act.

BCCPAC purposes are

To advance the public school education and well-being of children of the province of BC.

To carry on activities to promote and enhance meaningful parent participation in an advisory role at the school, school district and provincial level.

Our Voice

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DOES YOUR PAC OR DPAC HAVE A WEBSITE ?

PACs and DPACs have shared their website with BCCPAC and these are posted on the PAC/DPAC links section of the website. Click the link on the home page at www.bccpac.bc.ca

Posting websites from all over the province is a great way to share the collective wisdom of parent volunteers!

Email info@bccpac.bc.ca with your information

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Thank you to the BCCPAC News Magazine Committee for their hard work putting this edition of Our Voice together. Thanks to staff for their continued support of BCCPAC committees. Current committee members are Deborah Garrity, Ann Whiteaker and Susan Wilson.



President's Message

Spring is a time of renewal, where the days become longer and the weather warmer. It is also the time we approach the end of another school year. This often brings with it time and opportunity for reflecting on the past, on today and on the possibilities for the future. Just as our students grow from young children into young adults, parent involvement too has matured and changed. In the past, we were often unsure of our role in the education system. Through the years, with hard work, learning and experiences, today's parents are partners in education, engaged at all levels of the system in a variety of different ways.

The world around us changes daily, sometimes hourly. Global economies, technology and social media have created a world where the only constant we can predict for our future is – change. Our school system must be able to adapt to these changes, it is inevitable, if we are going to fulfill the needs of all students. It is more important than ever for parents to be engaged and have voice at all levels of the education system to ensure that as changes are made choices remain focussed on the needs of each individual student. Now, more than ever we should be nurturing and celebrating the concept of "It takes a village to raise a child." What does your village look like? What could it look like?

In this edition of Our Voice you will find articles that will inspire and help guide you in assisting, building and supporting your village – your community. It is filled with ideas – on such topics as ethics, anxiety, consultation and community involvement, to assist our children (and ourselves) to be better citizens. To be supported, safe, and included is a foundation we should all be striving for as we continue to define the 21st century village. What can each of us do to assist our community – to create a warm, caring and welcoming place where we can all thrive and experience success? At times this can be tough...just remember why we volunteer our time – to help the kids! When you remember this and help others remember, it makes our actions and choices easier to make.

We would love to hear your thoughts and ideas and what you would like to see in future editions of Our Voice. This is your voice.

In closing, a big thank you to each and every one of you for what you do to support your community – continue to believe, share, hope, trust, wish, but most of all continue to dream and imagine.

Ann Whiteaker,
BCCPAC President

BCCPAC Board of Directors

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The Challenge and Possibility of Parent Communities

By Deborah Dragon

If you ask one hundred people, "What is your definition of community?" you will likely get one hundred different answers. How would you answer that question? Would you define "community" in geographical terms to mean your city, town, or neighbourhood? Would you also include volunteer groups you work with, sports teams or other groups with whom you share a common interest? And have you noticed that your "communities" are likely not limited to physical groups? These days many of us seem to be connected to virtual communities through the internet and social media.

Now stop for a moment to think more closely about a common community that all families of school-age children share - the school community. Around the province, our school communities generally include teachers, support staff and principals who work in our schools. The children attending the school and their families are the other key group. In addition, we may have community agencies providing services onsite in our school, and in some cases we have participation from members of our surrounding neighborhood also sharing in the interests of our school.

Let's take a deeper look at the parent community within your own school. How would you describe your parent community? How many unique families – not just the number of students - are connected to your school? Do most families live close to the school, or do children have to travel distances or across the town or city to attend your school? Does your parent community include a lot of extended families, single-parent families, two-parent families? Do you have a high percentage of families that are new to Canada? What languages are spoken within the homes in your community? Beyond the demographics, what are the characteristics of the families in your community? What are they interested in? What skills and strengths do family members bring from their own experience?

Understanding the families in your school community is critical if you want to connect and build the relationships that bring a community together. A lot of

research has been done to prove that children are more successful when their parents are engaged and involved in the school community. Since parents want what is best for their children, how can you as a parent leader support and connect with families in your school community to share opportunities for them to be partners in their child's learning?

Parent involvement documentation often cites the challenges facing families that prevent them from getting involved – there are many reasons, some which include, time constraints, parent's previous experience in school settings, language or literacy

levels, and lack of understanding about roles parents can play in the parent community. One framework that has been used to develop strategies to improve parent involvement is Joyce Epstein's *Six Types of Involvement*. Epstein breaks these types down into: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. These themes support the theory that a child's learning happens in overlapping environments of school, family and community, and in particular, when these environments work together.

Epstein's *Six Types of Involvement* is a tool that is often used by school and

parent educators as a starting point to explore how to turn the challenges of integrating the school, family and community environments into a learning community for all.

Within your community, you could start by looking in depth at one of the involvement types that resonates with your group, and how you can turn ideas into action to achieve a different level of involvement by families in your community. You can begin to develop examples of practices to support this goal. What are some of the challenges you may face to reach this goal? Is there a need to redefine the goal to make it more explicit or more meaningful within your community? How would your community define the outcome for a child, a parent and the school? At some point every parent group seems to face the overwhelming question: "How do we get more families

"The essential challenge is to transform the isolation and self-interest within our communities into connectedness and caring of the whole. The key is to identify how this transformation occurs. We begin by shifting our attention from the problems of community to the possibility of community."

from "Community: The Structure of Belonging"
by Peter Block (2008)

Continued on Page 13

Stuck on how to support your child in French Immersion? Take a French class

By Gabriel Levesque

French Immersion is increasing in popularity in British Columbia. There are 45,324 students enrolled in the program from kindergarten to grade twelve in the 2010/11 school year, compared to 39,737 students just five years ago (BC Ministry of Education website, January 2011). Most parents of students in French Immersion are Anglophone. These parents understand that growing up and learning a new language has numerous benefits later in life. Canada is a bilingual country, and when students enter the workforce, being fluent in French can have significant advantages.

Homework is a reality for most students in French immersion, yet if parents are Anglophone with a limited knowledge of French, then some difficulties may arise when trying to support their sons or daughters at home. French that parents remember from high school is useful to an extent, but in the important adolescent school years of grades six, seven, and eight, parents can often feel helpless.

Numerous options exist for parents who want to refresh their knowledge of the French language in an effort to support their son or daughter's learning. Universities and colleges offer basic French courses, local recreation centres offer introductory French classes, and a French restaurant might offer a conversational French evening for its patrons. None of these however allow parents to get a real sense of what their child is up against in a truly authentic environment.

Recently in Victoria, a grade seven French Immersion teacher at Central Middle School offered a free French course for Anglophone parents directly from his own

classroom. The course ran for six weeks on Thursday evenings from seven to nine o'clock at night. The only course fee was a donation to the Mustard Seed Food Bank. Topics included phonetics, oral reading, dictionary usage, scope and sequencing of grammar, dictation, writing in French, and an informal presentation on the final evening. The course had a group of twelve to eighteen immersion participants as it was on a drop-in basis and no attendance was taken. Mothers and fathers alike attended, and their children were in both early and late French Immersion at Central Middle School, as well as other dual track schools in Greater Victoria. Specific lessons from the classroom during the day were repeated for the parents in the evening French course. The Grade 7 math textbook was used to give parents a true sense of both the language spoken as well as the level of French needed to understand the text. The French course for Anglophone parents had four immediate goals: to have Anglophone parents practice speaking French, to give Anglophone parents tools they can use at home, to have Anglophone parents interacting with other Anglophone parents, and to provide opportunities for Anglophone parents to support their children at home. In addition, getting parents into a school and improving parent-teacher relations were two indirect outcomes of the course. Based on the course evaluations, participants very much enjoyed the opportunity to refresh their French and to learn ways to help support their child in French.



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what we get, but we make
a life by what we give.*

~Winston Churchill

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Since 2000, about 33 million containers have been recycled, and Encorp has refunded more than \$2 million in deposit refunds to participating BC schools.

Education

Encorp's BC School Recycling Program provides elementary and high schools with the tools and resources to make recycling easy, convenient and profitable. Schools keep 100% of the deposit for each container collected and the program costs them nothing. Elementary and high schools from all parts of British Columbia are encouraged to participate.

The schools and the environment both benefit from this popular program. Schools find it's an easy way to fundraise for special projects like field trips. Keeping beverage containers out of landfills saves precious resources within our environment. The containers are recycled and used as raw material. For example, drink boxes are mashed into paper pulp which is used to make cardboard boxes and toilet paper. Thousands of tonnes of paper pulp are recovered in this process. And for every tonne of paper pulp recycled, approximately 17 trees are saved.

Since the program's inception in 2000, about 33 million containers have been recycled, and Encorp has refunded more than \$2 million in deposit refunds to participating BC schools. In the 2009/2010 school year alone, 365 schools (153,334 students)

who participated in Encorp's School Recycling Program raised over \$291,000 and they kept over 4.6 million beverage containers out of BC landfills.

Encorp's easy to use web application allows schools to keep a running total of their own returns and compare their totals to other schools. It also features a blogging page where they can share ideas about

RETURN-IT MAN SCHOOL TOUR

Return-It Man, along with his Super Sidekick, visits elementary schools across the province, educating students about recycling beverage containers and electronics. Their fun and entertaining presentation explains how containers are recycled and what they are recycled into. Kids get to actively participate in the presentation and even receive an activity book with a reusable lunch bag to take home with them.

LAST YEARS SCHOOL RECYCLING PROGRAM 1ST PLACE WINNERS

Elementary School: Rogers Elementary, Thetis Island Elementary, Upper Lynn Elementary, View Royal Elementary
High School: Chemainus Secondary, Prince Rupert Secondary, Robert Bateman Secondary, Sir Alexander Mackenzie Secondary, Yale Secondary

recycling at school. Throughout the year, registered schools are provided with newsletters to update them on the progress of the program. They're also eligible to receive free recycling bins and bags to help them collect containers.

Encorp has spiced things up by adding an extra incentive. Schools who collect the most containers per student are awarded bonus cash prizes. The contest is designed to allow similarly sized schools across the province to compete against each other in respective categories. Each year, a total of \$13,500 is split between the top three schools in each of the nine categories.

In addition to the collection contest each year, Encorp holds other draws and contests where students can get creative to win their schools even more cash prizes. What's more, award certificates are given to individual students and groups to recognize exceptional dedication to helping our environment.

Each year provides schools with a brand new opportunity to fundraise. Distributing flyers and collecting containers from surrounding areas is also a great way for schools to develop and foster relationships

within their communities. School spirit really pays off thanks to Encorp's BC School Recycling Program. So start fundraising the easy way! Register your school today at return-it.ca/youth.

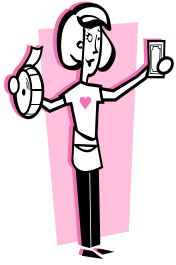
RECYCLING AT SCHOOL REALLY PAYS OFF

George Pringle Elementary (Westbank) began the 2009/10 school year with a 5 day bottle drive. It was such a success that they decided to collect containers on a monthly basis. One day in every month, parents dropped off their bags and boxes of containers at the school. The grade 6 students and Vice-Principal volunteered to collect juice boxes and other containers from classrooms. This year, the Parent Advisory Committee and teachers decided that the funds from deposit refunds would go towards a year end field trip to Vancouver. They've found that recycling is a great way to save the environment while raising money for things that are important to everyone at their school.



Register your school today at return-it.ca/youth or call 1-800-330-9767.

ADVERTORIAL



To Fundraise or Not to Fundraise

Many PACs are challenged with striking a balance between being seen as fundraisers and their role as advisors. A struggle exists within many PACs as to whether fundraising should be a role and responsibility of the PAC. Some parents

enjoy fundraising and appreciate the resulting benefits for their students and school community, while other parents see fundraising only as an inconvenient necessity and are more eager to focus on educational issues. Since the first public school was established, fundraising has been a necessary part of supporting education. For decades, parents and school communities have raised money for items such as library books, playground equipment, team uniforms and special trips.

Facing the reality of fiscal restraint, fundraising is increasingly the major focus of many PACs today. Funds raised pay for new technology, scientific calculators, microscopes, butterfly kits, art supplies, and guest speakers among other things. While PACs may receive funding from the Gaming Commission to assist with the costs of extracurricular activities and to assist in funding for larger capital items such as playgrounds and computers, without the addition of fundraising dollars, schools today would be lacking in many now basic supplies along with many opportunities to greatly enrich the educational experiences of students.

When we look at the School Act, the mandate of Parent Advisory Councils is *to advise the board, the principal and staff of the school in respect to any matter relating to the school*. This advisory role can be seen by the increase of parent involvement in:

- serving on school and district committees
- supporting drama and band productions
- advising on school based concerns such as overcrowding, upgrades and closures
- participating on School Planning Councils
- driving and chaperoning on field trips
- contributing to curriculum reviews
- Principal reviews
- Discussions on Neighborhood Learning Centers

PACs are also recognizing the value of investing in their own professional development to ensure parents are able to maintain a strong and educated advisory role within the system. PAC funds are supporting:

- guest speakers at PAC meetings
- parent education courses and conferences at district and provincial levels
- books and videos for parent resource libraries
- the creation of resources and guides for parents on educational topics

By participating in a wide variety of opportunities and by sharing what they have learned, parents and their PACs are even better equipped to work with staff and students to develop solutions for the varied challenges in their schools.

A PAC is most effective when all parents are encouraged to volunteer for those jobs that interest them. When considering fundraising many PACs create a Fundraising Committee whose mandate is to review ideas and make recommendations to the general membership regarding the viability and benefits of potential fundraisers. In addition, specific committees are often struck to administer and organize each fundraiser allowing each parent to choose where they wish to be involved. Utilizing committees to develop fundraising plans allows PAC meetings to focus on their advisory role rather than fundraising initiatives.

Many PACs and parents have expressed concern that schools have become too dependent on fundraising. They are concerned that the District and the Ministry of Education may cut or even discontinue funds to areas where the PAC has repeatedly contributed funds - essentially relying on fundraising dollars to support the annual school budget.

Some PACs feel that they are "pressured" by school staff to provide increasing amounts of financial support for school resources and activities requiring them to commit most or all their volunteer resources to fundraising. Other PACs have reported an expectation from administrators or teachers of the school to be the ones to determine how fundraised monies are spent.

Although it is important to work together with school staff and consider their requests and recommendations when making financial decisions, in the end it is the PAC members who decide what their priorities are. While the primary role of PACs is to advise the board, principal and staff on any matter regarding the school, individually they ultimately choose if they will fundraise or not fundraise and what that will look like for their school community.

Anxiety in Children: Strategies for Parents

By Michelle Srdanovic

Wemberly worried about everything - big things, little things and things in between. "You worry too much," said her mother. "When you worry, I worry," said her father. Soon, Wemberly had a new worry - school. Wemberly worried about school more than anything she had ever worried about before. By the time the first day arrived she had a long list of worries. What if no one else wears stripes? What if the teacher is mean? What if the room smells bad? What if I have to cry?

While this passage from a cherished children's book offers a lighthearted glimpse into the internal dialogue of a child with anxiety, it also underscores how it can interfere with a child's life. Anxiety can impact school performance, hinder the ability for children to interact socially and make friends, and can result in excessive stress on the family. If you are a parent of an anxious child, you are not alone. Anxiety disorders are one of the most prevalent types of mental health issues diagnosed in childhood with up to 17% of children meeting the criteria for a diagnosis.

What Does Anxiety in Children Look Like?

You might recognize the face of anxiety. It may be the child who clings to her parents and chokes back the tears when she is dropped off at school.

Or it could be the child who wakes several times in the night, worried that something bad has happened to his family. While these behaviours are signs that anxiety is running the show, there is also a multitude of activity going on behind the



scenes. Fear is experienced physically in the body. When we are afraid, our heart rate and perspiration rate increases, our muscles tense up, and we become overly focused on the feared stimulus in preparation to defend ourselves. Researchers commonly refer to this as the fight-or-flight response. It is a hard-wired, adaptive reaction and indeed, it will serve you well if you ever come face to face with a cougar.

Yet, while fear is a response to an *actual* threat, anxiety is a reaction to a *perceived* threat. These perceptions, or anxious thoughts, often center on the possibility of danger. What if I get hurt? What if I can't make friends? What if you never come back? Unfortunately, our brains make no distinction between actual and perceived danger. Children are catapulted into the same fight-or-flight state by anxious thoughts as they would if faced with that cougar. That is why when children are overwhelmed by anxiety, our attempts to calm them with a simple "don't worry about it" are usually futile.

Why is my Child Anxious?

Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to this question. Most psychological research supports the notion that children are born with a particular temperament that predisposes them to becoming anxious. One of the primary predictors studied in relation to childhood anxiety is known as behavioural inhibition.

Behavioural inhibition is marked by intense emotional reactivity and withdrawn behaviour in response to novel situations throughout infancy and toddlerhood. In other words, children with this temperament are more aware of their world and more easily distressed by it. Other researchers have emphasized an innate sensitivity inherent in this temperament. For example, a highly sensitive child might have a tantrum because he is uncomfortable with the stitched seams in his socks.



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So, if this discussion of predetermined temperament has left you feeling bleak, it would be an opportune time to highlight the good news. First, because of their innate sensitivity, anxious children are likely to be very caring, kind, honest and loving. Secondly, we know that this temperament interacts with the environment as a child grows up. This environment includes all life experiences as well as the influence of parenting. And that means that you can make a difference.

Strategies to Support Children with Anxiety

For some parents, the intensity or focus of a child's anxiety may seem silly. We may be tempted to dismiss the worries and force our child into an anxiety provoking situation. Using the fear of water as a simplistic metaphor - we might push a child into the water believing that he will eventually learn how to swim. The problem with this strategy is that we haven't given him the tools to learn.

Other parents may want to protect their anxious child, and consequently, decide to avoid the pool altogether. This situation can be tempting as we avoid undue distress. But when an anxious child is not challenged, she is unable to benefit from the sense of competence that comes from overcoming an anxiety provoking situation. Indeed, confidence can be an antidote for anxiety.

So, what to do when your child is anxious? The goal of the **T.E.A.M.** approach is to support your child with the understanding that you can't fix it. Instead, you can encourage strategies that will help your child better in managing his or her own experiences with anxiety.

T is for talk. Talking with our children about their anxiety communicates that we are willing to help them manage it. We can help children of all ages identify how they are feeling. Children who are able to name their emotions are actually less likely to act out their feelings because they have a means of expression.

The use of a worry scale can also assist with this task. You can ask your child to rate the intensity of a worry between 1 and 10. The added bonus of using this technique is that your child will be able to notice when the intensity of the anxiety decreases. This is exciting because it reinforces a sense of agency; that is, that a child is able to control his anxiety rather than be controlled by it.

E is for educate. The goal is not to eliminate anxiety, but rather, to reduce or prevent it. Parents can teach their children a range of skills to manage their anxiety, only some of which are briefly mentioned here.

Parents can use a fear ladder with an anxious child. In essence, this is a plan that breaks an anxiety provoking task into small, digestible steps that become

gradually more difficult. You can reward a child for trying to approach a feared situation. Rewards need not be monetary or materialistic. Instead, you can spend time with a child doing a favourite activity, or allow him to pick what the family will have for dinner. Parents can also teach their older children to become detectives and problem-solve. We can help children clearly define the problem, and brainstorm all possible solutions and consequences. Your child can then pick the best solution. Role-playing provides a kind of dress rehearsal for the situation. It can reduce anxiety by allowing a child to test out different strategies and practice overcoming the problem.

We already know that children feel anxiety in their bodies, and so learning relaxation techniques is important. Because teaching these techniques to younger children is often akin to teaching them a new language, it is important to make it fun! For example, deep breathing can be taught by blowing bubbles. Children's books on this topic can be helpful as well.

A is for apply limits. Anxious children cope better when there is a fairly predictable rhythm in their life. Yet when anxiety takes over, it can wreak havoc on routine. Indeed, it can be difficult to get out of the house on time when an anxious child refuses to go to school. We might be tempted to toss the rules out the window to appease a distressed child, especially if we can see a meltdown coming.

Limits are better received by anxious children when they feel understood. The good news is that we can maintain consistent boundaries and convey empathy at the same time. If a meltdown ensues, the best time to discuss consequences is after a child has calmed down.

M is for modeling. At times, it can be difficult dealing with an anxious child. Parents are often called upon to think outside of the box and this can be exhausting.

If parents are excessively stressed or feel their own anxiety is triggered, children can pick up on this. It may be time to bring in reinforcements.

**Continued on
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"We keep asking the parents and no one shows up!"

A Discussion on Consultation

By Paula Schmidt and Leigh-Anne Larsen

How often have you said "we keep asking the parents and no one shows up" (or heard a group, district employee, or principal say it)? Most people active in the public school system recognize that parents are an important part of a well-functioning system. But we continue to struggle with how to gather an informed parent voice on issues ranging from curriculum to public policy to budgets to social events.

Consulting the parent voice whether at the school level (e.g. acceptable behaviour at school dances), district level (e.g. changing a policy on use of cell phones in the classroom), or provincial level (e.g. implementing full-day kindergarten) requires an intentional process. The method used for consultation depends on the reason for consultation and the people involved. Below is a process with questions that will help clarify what type of consultation is appropriate and how best to approach it.

Determine the Scope

While we know that consultation is often beneficial, there are times we assume we must consult without actually defining what benefits will be gained. Determining the scope of the consultation answers the questions:

- Can anything change as a result of the consultation?
- Are the participants interested in being involved?
- Are the decision makers supportive of wider consultation?
- Are there enough resources to support the consultation?
- Is there previous (or parallel) consultation around this issue?

Identify the Purpose

It may seem odd to ask if you know "WHY" you are consulting but often the purpose is not clear and is open to multiple interpretations. A clear objective or purpose makes the process and the results easier and more effective. Questions to consider when determining the purpose of the consultation:

- What change are you trying to achieve by consulting? (Consider gathering opinions, creating shared vision, cultural change, building capacity, making a decision, overcoming conflict)
- What level of involvement do you want to achieve? (Will the input you get simply provide information or will it carry decision making

impact? See http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf for more information on levels of engagement.

Clarify the Participants

It is crucial to be clear about who the participants are and what roles they play within the system. Are they parents, teachers, principals, community members, students, etc? All are very different.

There are two general ways to select participants:

- Open – anyone who wants to participate
- Selective – number and type of participants are chosen as part of the process

Questions that might help determine the participants:

- What role do you want your participants to play (e.g. if a teacher is also a parent, what hat would you like them to wear)?
- How many people do you need to consult to make this worthwhile?
- Do you want to use an "open" approach or do you need to be "selective" by using a cross-section or making sure participants with a certain power or knowledge are included?
- Is there anyone who should be included because of legislation, bylaws, funding, etc?

Understand the Context

Understanding the context in which you are consulting is important in order to identify potential opportunities and obstacles. Questions that may help you understand the context:

- Does this consultation build on previous information without duplicating other activities?
- What is the decision-making environment and the history around this issue? Are there any policies/legislation that apply?
- What are the characteristics and abilities of the participants?
- What is the best method to access participants (e.g. web, face-to-face, paper, small groups, etc.)?





- Do the participants share the same context or do you need to take a step back to establish a shared context before proceeding?

Follow-Up

Often participants are left without any knowledge of how their input was used and what the larger results were. It is important to define in the development process how much the results will influence decisions and to communicate this clearly throughout the consultation process. As well, the internal process of evaluation is crucial. Planning in advance how you will measure the effectiveness of your consultation will help you improve throughout the process and for future consultations.

Answering the questions in the five categories above will help determine the best method to use for consultation. Various methods, from online surveys to small-group meetings to facilitated sessions (e.g. World Café and Open Space), are available depending on what you want to accomplish, with whom and within what timeframe and budget.

For a quick decision-making tool with recommendations for consultation tools, check out the Process Planner at: www.peopleandparticipation.net

Paula Schmidt is a management consultant based in Kamloops working within public education since 1996 as a parent, PAC Ed facilitator, PAC member, DPAC Chair, and BCCPAC consultant. Paula has a clear understanding of the importance of parental involvement in public education. She is committed to informed conversation and the development of parent capacity to engage in clear, meaningful dialogue for the success of all of our students.

Leigh-Anne Larsen is an independent Event Coordinator. A graduate of the Supporting Parent Leadership Seminar Series (SPLSS) in 2006, she has held various parent leadership roles and currently sits as co chair of the SD 73 Parent Leadership Task Force. She optimistically believes that by working respectfully together with all our education partners we build a brighter future for our children.



Dates to Note

June 28, last day for students

July 31, Early Bird deadline to renew BCCPAC memberships - get in on a draw for a free Fall Conference Registration

August 31, current BCCPAC membership expires

September 1, BCCPAC membership year begins

September 6, first day of school

November, BCCPAC Fall Conference



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Where Has the Laughter Gone?

Have you ever given thought to how seldom people laugh these days? And when they do, how short the laughter is for. We all know that life is busy, we have a lot to do to keep up, and that on a typical day providing instructions and directions makes up the majority of parent/child communication. But, it would seem that the time has come to start enjoying life more and teaching our children to do the same, and laughter is a great place to start.

Did you know that the average child laughs over 300 times per day, while the average adult laughs only 15 times a day? So where does this life skill get lost and how and why should we get it back?

Here are some great reasons to slow down, take a few deep breaths, and add some laughter to your life and communication:

- Laughing with your children creates special memories. When they are all grown up, the happy times will be recalled with great ease, due to laughter's imprint on the brain!
- Laughter releases tension. No explanation necessary — we all have many stresses to be released and enjoy relaxing!
- Laughter facilitates an atmosphere of trust. The effects of laughter last far longer than the actual minutes spent having fun together; the positive interaction increases the trust people feel in one another.
- Laughter releases endorphins, the 'feel good' hormones that boost your mood. Everyone is happier when the people around them are happier!
- Laughter is the best medicine!!
- Laughter relaxes the brain and a relaxed brain functions better – remembering more and forgetting less....

What can you do to add laughter to your life?

- ✓ Take time to share jokes with family and friends (and encourage them to do the same)
- ✓ Let others know about funny things that happen – we can all use a good laugh!
- ✓ Watch a comedy show or movie with family and/or friends
- ✓ Take a "Laughter Yoga" class
- ✓ Check out funny videos to share on youtube

Let's commit to increasing the laughter in our lives.



It's never been easier to become a
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Since the program's launch more than a decade ago, over 8000 teachers have learned to teach HeartSmart Kids™. Beginning this September, it's even easier to become one of them!

HeartSmart Kids' new FREE e-learning module makes it easy for educators to learn about the HeartSmart Kids™ program anytime and from anywhere. Teachers who complete the module will also receive FREE classroom resources such as lesson plans, a class set of student magazines and classroom posters.

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GOT ETHICS ?

By Wendy Herbert and Wendy Lee

The Challenge of Ethics in Parenting

It is a quiet Tuesday morning and you are beginning to gather clothes for the laundry when you hear a loud crash and the sound of breaking glass. Around the corner comes your four year old with her little two year old brother in tow and she tells you, "Sammy just broke your big glass flower jug." You know that the little fellow cannot even reach the jug on the shelf.

Recent research suggests that given a chance to fib their way out of tough spots, kids three and younger don't tend to lie – but those four and older do.

Rushworth Kidder, president of the Institute for Global Ethics (IGE), in his latest book, *Good Kids, Tough Choices: How Parents Can help Their Children Do the Right Thing* notes that there is a brief window during which children rapidly learn how to lie and when parents can most effectively intervene. What may seem like a simple fib at four, when left unaddressed, can erode our jobs as parents to raise fully skilled truth tellers.

As our children grow, research also shows that the typical 11 to 14 year old is much more influenced by media than by parents, soaking up to 12 hours of TV, computer, iPod and other media content every day; and in a unique study, that when college students knowingly wear counterfeit designer sunglasses, they're twice as apt to cheat on tests as those wearing the real thing.

So what do we do in an age where the challenges and choices facing our children are increasingly complex and the stakes seemingly higher? Nearly one-third of parents, when asked to identify the biggest challenge to parenting today, point to ethical and moral issues.

We all want to do the right thing but for many parents facing ethical issues with their children they don't know whether to come at their kids with moral sledgehammers or tiptoes past on eggshells.

If you're wondering whether it's worth all the effort to deal with that four year old, consider this: Half a century ago, Kidder says, researchers surveyed teachers about the major challenges they faced in educating kids. Based on the research and real-life stories and dilemmas in the book "Number one was chewing gum, number two was running in the halls – that kind of stuff," he said. Fast forward to today, where the adolescent minefield is dominated by gangs in schools, date rape, drug abuse . . .

"We're finally concluding that ethics is not an option. It's not an add-on. It's not something you can do or not do as you wish. It's not negotiable," Kidder said. "It's absolutely essential to our survival." The Institute for Global Ethics (IGE) has developed seminars, to give adults the tools to guide children through ethical dilemmas and engage them in sound, purposeful conversations without sounding preachy, irrelevant or old-fashioned. "Call it *character integrity, virtue, morality or ethics*," writes Rushworth Kidder, " – whatever term you use, it comes down to living a values-based life". And building stronger collaborations between parents and schools around one of the 21st century's most urgent topics can help good kids make tough choices.

Working with BCCPAC, districts, and schools, Wendy Herbert and Wendy Lee offer seminars and information on Ethics and Parenting, Ethical Fitness, Building School Culture and Cultures of Integrity. They can be contacted at whbertonsaltspring@telus.net or wendydorothylee@gmail.com And for further information on all of these programmes please go to www.globalethics.org

Parent Communities

Continued from Page 4

involved?" It's helpful to have an area to focus on to begin that discussion, and to open up the discussion beyond just the parent community and share ideas with your partners in the school system and the larger external community. We know building community does not happen overnight. And we also know families, schools and communities are dynamic and constantly changing, so flexibility, reflection, ongoing assessment and reprioritizing the needs of the community are critical to developing plans that will help our parent

communities grow and develop strategies to help all our children succeed. Often the actions that present themselves during these discussions emphasize that if children are at the centre of the school, family, community work, there is power in all groups working together and we can turn challenge into possibility.

Deborah is the mother of two children and lives with her husband and children in Burnaby. She is a Family Literacy Program Consultant.

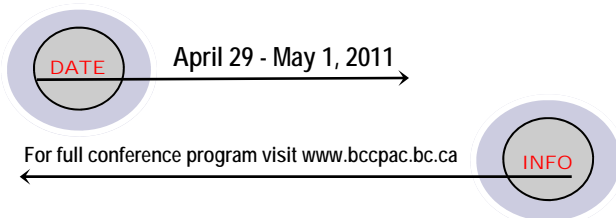
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2011 BCCPAC Spring Conference and AGM

- Join us for an exciting program full of inspiring speakers and workshops!
- Be an active voice in the organization, participate in the Annual General Meeting, Saturday April 30th.
- Don't miss the opportunity to hear the Honourable George Abbot, Ministry of Education speak on Sunday May 1st.



Anxiety in Children

Continued from Page 9

If you choose to get support from a professional, there is empirical evidence that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is effective in the treatment of anxiety. CBT focuses on altering unrealistic thought patterns and associated behaviours. Play therapy can also be highly successful with younger children as play is a child's means of expression.

Whatever strategies you do employ with your anxious child, remember that *happiness is not the absence of problems but the ability to deal with them.*

Michelle Srdanovic is a Registered Clinical Counsellor who has over ten years experience in the social services field. In addition to being the proud parent of a five year old, Michelle divides her time between counselling families, teaching in a post secondary institution and providing community education on the topic of anxiety.

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GET ALL THE ANSWERS, BEFORE YOU GET ALL THE ANSWERS.



YOUR GUIDE THROUGH POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION



Explore your Post-Secondary Options using Education Planner and the BC Transfer Guide

The BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) is responsible for the facilitation of admission, articulation and transfer arrangements among the colleges, university colleges, institutes, and universities in BC. BCCAT is a non-profit organization funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development and endorsed by the post-secondary institutions in BC.

If you ask a typical high school student what they plan to do after they graduate, a common response you will receive is "I'm not sure". Many students plan on attending a post-secondary institution however they may not be aware of all the options that are available to them. The BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) has developed two free web resources that can help students explore their post-secondary options in BC: EducationPlanner.ca and BCTransferGuide.ca.

EducationPlanner.ca is a free resource that provides program and admission information on programs offered at BC post-secondary institutions. BCCAT works collaboratively with all the institutions that are part of Education Planner to verify information for both currency and accuracy. The power of Education Planner comes from the fact that you can compare program requirements from multiple institutions all at the same website. For example, if you're a student interested in Engineering, a quick search through the program database will find all the available Engineering programs at multiple institutions, unlike if you were at an institution's website which would only provide information on that institution's available programs.

Education Planner offers straightforward easy-to-follow program information that allows users to see the wide range of opportunities available to students in all areas, including trades and technology. In doing so, students in these programs are able to look at a number of different pathways for reaching their goals. Old boundaries that limited educational access and career mobility are gone. For instance, did you know?

- Trades people with appropriate bridging courses are able to access a Bachelor of Technology in Construction Management Degree;
- Computer and Engineering Technology Diploma graduates can complete a bridging program to obtain a Bachelor of Engineering Degree;
- There are specialized programs to help women access trades and/or technology programs in the province;

- There are over 150 entry-level trades training programs that offer students credit towards apprenticeship training in a wide range of areas.
- Employers are working directly with post-secondary institutions to help student access and fund their education.

Education Planner also takes care of the details of planning your education. It offers comprehensive information about admission requirements, tuition and book fees, application deadline advice, campus locations, key educational planning points, and education building options for over 1900 programs at post-secondary institutions in the province.

For students who are already enrolled in a post-secondary institution, or for those who are contemplating starting at one institution before moving to another, BCTransferGuide.ca is your primary resource to discover your transfer options. Transfer is when one institution recognizes education completed at another. Each year thousands of students transfer seamlessly between post-secondary institutions in BC and receive full transfer credit for the work they have already completed. At BCTransferGuide.ca, students can search the BC Transfer Guide to find out what credit they will receive for courses they have already completed. For example, a student at Capilano University can find out what transfer credit they will receive should they transfer to UBC or SFU. If an agreement is published at BCTransferGuide.ca, the transfer credit is guaranteed to be awarded once the student is admitted to a receiving institution.

Transfer credit is not just limited to post-secondary courses. BCTransferGuide.ca also shows what credit students can receive for enriched secondary programs such as the International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement programs, or what sort of block transfer arrangements are available for completed certificates and diplomas.

Whether you are secondary student trying to figure out where your next steps will be, or you are a current post-secondary student looking to complete your degree at another institution, EducationPlanner.ca and BCTransferGuide.ca can help you to achieve your academic goals.



In the 2010/11 school year Science World has been presenting a “Night of Family Science” throughout British Columbia as part of the Year of Science initiative. They have been partnering with Parent Advisory Councils in these communities to maximize the success of these events.

Eight events in total will be happening during the 2010/2011 school year. So far the communities of Powell River, Kamloops, Victoria and Courtenay have received visits.

What happens at a Night of Family Science?

Each event will be unique but here are some of the activities planned for:

- Spectacular live science shows from Science World’s professional demonstration team.
- Make and take activity stations where visitors can create and take home a simple science project
- Science on the spot stations where visitors can experience some science phenomenon first hand (spinning like a figure skater, having their hair stand up by static electricity, etc)
- Displays from local colleges showcasing the science that takes place in their labs and classrooms
- Science Fair and/or BC Green Games project displays from local students
- An “Iron Science” competition, where visitors create an invention using a mystery “Secret Ingredient”

When and where will it take place?

- The Night of Family Science will take place on a Thursday evening from 6:00 – 9:00. The ideal venue is a large gymnasium such as at a middle or secondary school.

What will Science World be providing?

- All staff and equipment for the live shows
- All materials for the make and take activities and Iron Science competition
- Science World will be performing free shows in local schools in the week leading up to the event and promoting the event at all shows.

We need your PAC group

You know your community and your students far better than we could ever hope to. We will need your guidance to:

- Locate and secure an appropriate venue with the necessary infrastructure (tables, chairs, stage, etc)
- Recruit high school volunteers to help run the activities
- Spread the word about the event in your community

All the spaces have been booked and finalized for this year. If your school or PAC would be interested in helping bring a Night of Family Science to your town during the 2011/2012 school year, please get in touch with Brian Anderson ASAP and let him know. He will be able to provide all the details and let you know how costs can be worked out for this to happen. Funding has not yet been received for next year, so the actual cost is not yet known.

For more information about the Night of Family Science, contact Brian Anderson at 604-443-7493 or banderson@scienceworld.ca.

Upcoming dates and locations:

Thursday May 12—Vanderhoof

Nechako Valley Secondary, Vanderhoof

Thursday May 19—Smithers

Smithers Secondary, Smithers

Thursday June 2—Haida Gwaii

George M. Dawson Secondary, Masset Haida Gwaii

Thursday June 9—Dawson Creek

Ecole Frank Ross, 1000-92 Ave Dawson Creek

