


CASE STUDY

The State of Educators' Professional Learning in British Columbia

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BC Education Collaborative Contributors

BC Association of School Business Officials
British Columbia Ministry of Education
British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association
British Columbia School Superintendents Association
British Columbia School Trustees Association
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1 | Series Introduction

The State of Educators' Professional Learning in Canada

Globally, there is a focus on the importance of developing teachers as crucial for supporting students' learning and achievement. Canada has been recognized as a country with high educational performance and there is interest in knowing the approaches to educators' professional learning in Canada. However, there is limited Pan-Canadian data and research available. The *State of Educators' Professional Learning in Canada* study (Campbell et al., 2016; 2017) was funded by Learning Forward to address this gap in available research. There are differences in details between and within provinces and territories, between and among different professional groups, across locations and contexts, and for individual educator's needs and their students' needs. Nevertheless, there are commonalities within Canada linked to features of effective professional learning: the importance of combining evidence, inquiry and professional judgement to inform professional learning; the priority of developing teachers' knowledge and practices to support diverse learners' needs; the valuing of a broad range of student and professional learning outcomes; the need for relevant, practical and collaborative learning experiences within and beyond school walls differentiated to professionals' needs; and the role of system and school leaders in engaging in their own learning and supporting teacher and student learning. There are also common challenges: time for

professional learning integrated within the work day; inequities in access to, and funding, for professional learning; and contentions in the balance between system-directed and/or self-selected professional learning for teachers. Where there are persisting challenges, inequities and issues, further dialogue and action are required across Canada to raise these priorities and seek solutions. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that Canada's educators and students have access to, and engagement in, the highest quality learning opportunities and experiences. The British Columbia case study is an important contribution to the *State of Educators' Professional Learning in Canada* study. Thank you to all involved in contributing to the British Columbia case study. I hope this report will stimulate further dialogue and actions.

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2 | Introduction and Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

To learn more about the state of professional learning in British Columbia, including the experiences and values of educators, administrators, trustees, and school business officials, education organizations formed the British Columbia Education Collaborative (BCEC)—comprised of the Association of BC Deans of Education (ABCDE), BC Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO), BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA), BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF), BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA), BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA), the Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA), Learning Forward BC (LFBC), and the BC Ministry of Education (MOE). These organizations worked collaboratively to construct a comprehensive overview and analysis of BC's education system and the state of professional learning in the province. As a result of this multi-organizational effort, this case study includes the following components:

- Reporting and analysis of key BC education system indicators and statistics
- Review of systemic barriers and challenges to professional learning in British Columbia
- Detailed portrayal and discussion of individual and multi-organizational contributions and activities in professional learning from participants in the BC Education Collaborative
- Qualitative focus groups (seven groups, totalling 79 participants across the BC Education Collaborative)
- An online survey questionnaire, with participants from the BC Education Collaborative
- Analysis of qualitative feedback provided by teachers to the BCTF submitted to the Ministry of Education in response to redesigned curriculum change documentation.

This case study report, therefore, offers a comprehensive analysis of BC's education system, the experiences and values of educators, as well as the enabling conditions, opportunities, and challenges to professional learning in the province.

2.2 The Education System in British Columbia

Authority for primary and secondary education in Canada is a provincial responsibility under the division of powers found in Section 91 of the Canadian Constitution. Unique among OECD countries, Canada does not have a federal department or Ministry of Education. Other than in the areas of Aboriginal education and labour mobility, the federal government plays a very limited role in K-12 education.

In 2015–16, there were 635,037 K–12 students in British Columbia, the large majority of which (87%) were in public schools, with 81,659 students in independent (private) schools (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). A little over half (53%) of BC's total population (BC Stats, 2016) of 4.7 million people (BC Stats, 2016) resides in the Vancouver Census Metropolitan area. Total student enrolment has declined over the past 15 years (Schaefer, 2009; BC Ministry of Education, 2016); however, public school enrolment in the 2015–16 school year increased (BC Ministry of Education, 2016) and demographic trends project future annual enrolment increases (BC Stats, 2016; BC Stats, 2015).

The [British Columbia School Act](#) provides the provincial legislative framework for public education in British Columbia (Government of British Columbia, 1996). The School Act establishes provisions for, *inter alia*; student, parental, school personnel, and school trustees' rights and obligations; teachers' collective agreements; establishment and governance of school boards and the responsibilities and obligations of publicly-elected school trustees; and taxation and grants (Government of British Columbia, 1996). Funding for public and independent schools is comprised of residential, non-residential, and other school taxation revenue

collected at the provincial level and provided to school districts and independent schools based on an allocation formula. Funding of public schools is primarily provided from provincial government general revenues. The School Act prohibits local school districts from running deficits (Government of British Columbia, 1996, pp. Division 8, Section 156(12)) and allows local school districts access to additional residential taxation only by referendum. This method of funding was established in 1990. School districts have not accessed referendum revenue since 1990 but do raise additional local revenues (about 5 percent) from international student tuition, as well as rental and community use of space. Government funding is allocated on a per pupil basis. Other formulae generate additional funding in recognition of the diverse geography of the province and student characteristics (e.g., special needs, ELL, Aboriginal status).

Eligible independent (private) schools in British Columbia receive public funding, provided as per-student grants. The [Independent School Act](#) in British Columbia governs grant allocation for independent schools as well as requirements and oversight of independent schools operating in BC (Government of British Columbia, 1996). Independent schools receive grants according to their [group classification](#); Group 1 schools receive 50% and Group 2 schools receive 35% of the local district's per student grant (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). British Columbia is unique among Canadian provinces in that Catholic schools are part of the independent rather than the public system. A grant of 50% is allocated to independent schools when the per-student operating costs are equal to or less than the local district's per student operating costs. If the per student operating costs are higher than the local school district, the grant allocation is 35%.

Group 3 independent schools are not certified and therefore not funded. Group 4 independent schools enrol primarily international students and are also not funded. There is no capital funding for land, buildings, and equipment for independent schools in British Columbia. In 2015–16, grants awarded to independent schools totalled \$310.5 million. Total estimated public expenditures for K–12 education in 2015–16 totalled \$5.4 billion (Government of British Columbia, 2016).

Sixty (60) elected school boards govern the delivery of educational programs in public school districts. Fifty-nine (59) of these districts represent distinct geographic areas and the sixtieth encompasses all francophone schools throughout the province. Student enrolment in francophone schools numbered 5,333 in 2015-16 (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). School districts have specific areas of authority, including budget setting, hiring of personnel, and maintenance of district capital assets, but they have limited authority over the terms of conditions of the work of teachers, curriculum, assessment, and taxation (Government of British Columbia, 1996). While the provincial government has a dominant position both in legal authority and decision-making, the provincial government and school trustees are committed to a co-governance model. School Boards act on authority delegated by the Legislature, ensuring that the balance of power resides with the provincial government.

In addition to public and independent schools, there are 128 First Nations controlled schools in 67 First Nations communities throughout British Columbia (First Nations Education Steering Committee & First Nations Schools Association, 2015). The schools “are founded upon First Nations cultures and languages, and they strive to reflect the values and traditions of the communities they serve” (p. 10).

2.3 British Columbia's Educators

2.3.1 TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

The Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB) of the Ministry of Education (MOE) administratively supports regulatory decisions-makers in carrying out their **responsibilities under the *Teachers Act*** for licensure and discipline of persons holding teaching certificates. The TRB indicates that a little over 70,000 people currently hold valid teaching certificates (Teacher Regulation Branch, 2016). The certificate holder population includes teachers and administrators in both the public and independent systems. Non-practicing educators are able to maintain certification through payment of an annual fee. [The Teacher Qualification Service \(TQS\)](#) classifies teachers for salary purposes based on qualifications. The TQS is jointly funded and governed by the BC School Trustees' Association and the BC Teachers' Federation.

Most teachers in BC begin their careers with a baccalaureate degree and one year of teacher education, which places them on Category 5 on the salary scales. Teachers can upgrade their salary category by engaging in post-graduate education. Category 5+ requires 15 credits, or the equivalent, of courses recognized by the TQS, including diploma programs. An upgrade to Category 6 requires a Masters degree. An Ed.D. or Ph.D. is also recognized for Category 6 (Teacher Qualification Service, 2016). From 2010 to 2015, the average number of upgrades per year to categories 5+ and 6 was 1,639. Over that same six-year period, 9,000 teachers upgraded through further formal qualifications, out of the total (by headcount) teaching force (not including Teachers Teaching on Call (TTOCs)) of 33,008 (BC Ministry of Education, 2016; Teacher Qualification Service, 2007-2016).

A Masters' degree or a commitment to complete a Masters' degree is a requirement for entry into

school and district administration, providing further incentive for educators to engage in ongoing professional learning.

Overall, British Columbia's educators are academically and professionally trained and certified for the challenges of teaching. With the exception of fewer than 100 persons who are granted annual permission to teach for a limited period in specified teaching areas under Letters of Permission issued by the Teacher Regulation Branch, the province's teachers possess undergraduate degrees that align with curriculum content areas and have completed teacher education programs that meet certification requirements for work in the education sector.

2.3.2 PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

Teachers in BC's public schools are unionized and are provided with the right to negotiate terms and conditions of employment and to strike under the BC Labour Code. School and district administrators are not union members and the vast majority of independent school teachers are not members of a union.

There were 33,008 teachers (by headcount) in BC's public schools in 2015–16, with a full-time equivalent (FTE) of 30,139.8 (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). The public school teaching workforce (FTE) has declined by more than 1,038 (FTE) positions between 2007–08 and 2015–16 (BC Ministry of Education, 2016; White, 2008).

In 2015–16, while males represent 26.4% of the public school teaching workforce in BC, they are overrepresented in age categories over 45; the male teaching workforce, therefore, is predominantly older, while the female teaching workforce is overrepresented in younger (under 35) age categories (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). Women comprise 73% of the public school

teaching workforce, yet are overrepresented in part-time teaching positions and underrepresented in full-time teaching positions. Males represent 26.6% of the teaching workforce yet are underrepresented (13% in 2015–16) in part-time teaching positions and overrepresented in full-time teaching positions (31% in 2015–16) (BC Ministry of Education, 2016).

2.3.3 INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TEACHERS

Certified independent schools in BC are fully regulated by the Independent Schools Branch within the Ministry of Education. Certified independent schools are required to have all teachers certified by the Teacher Regulation Branch, operate from facilities that meet municipal code, participate in all provincial learning assessments as well as have their educational programs evaluated by an external evaluation team every six years, and monitored every two years to ensure that the educational program and operations meet regulatory requirements. The majority of independent school teachers and administrators hold Professional Teaching Certificates with the balance having [restricted independent school certificates](#) to address specific curricular requirements primarily in pedagogical and faith-based schools. A limited number of teachers are issued [Letters of Permission](#) in specified teaching areas. 7,032 certified teachers work in the independent school sector, representing approximately 10% of all active certificate holders in the province (Ministry of Education, email communication, August 15, 2016).

Independent school associations and individual schools provide professional learning opportunities that address curricular and regulatory requirements identified by independent school authorities or the Independent Schools Branch. However, there is a considerable amount of collaboration with public school districts where independent school teachers

and administrators are invited to participate in professional learning opportunities organized by public school districts. This collaboration leads to a strengthened appreciation for the quality of education being provided in British Columbia, and a greater understanding of the issues that impact teaching and learning.

2.3.4 OTHER EDUCATOR GROUPS

There were 2,485 principals and vice-principals in BC public schools, of which 53% are female (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). The percentage of female school administrators continues to increase. Both school leaders (principals and vice-principals) as well as system leaders (superintendents and senior managers) are heavily invested in their own professional learning. The British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association has created its own set of leadership standards that often provide the foundation for the professional learning of its members. *The BCPVPA Leadership Standards* consist of instructional leadership, relational leadership, organizational leadership, and moral stewardship. These standards provide a useful tool for school leaders to assess their current strengths and prioritize their approach to their professional learning. In addition, the BCPVPA provides a broad range of professional learning opportunities for principals and vice-principals around the province (see Section 2.1.2).

The British Columbia School Superintendents Association has created the *BCSSA Dimensions of Practise*—a framework for reflection and a tool for fostering continuous professional learning for system leaders. In addition, the BCSSA hosts three professional learning conferences per year for their members and school leaders around the province (see Section 2.1.3): a Summer Leadership Academy (primarily for members only), and Fall and Spring conferences open to all BC educators.

The British Columbia Association of School Business Officials' (BCASBO) 167 members have many professional educational backgrounds in

order to provide expertise to their districts (i.e. finance, human resources, facilities, information technology, and transportation). Of its membership, 111 members have post-secondary degrees. ASBO International provides a listing of the professional standards desired for a business official. BCASBO offers a leadership series for their members as well as two annual conferences and a mentorship program (see Section 2.1.1).

The Federation of Independent School Associations consists of five distinct independent school associations that each provide an annual conference for teachers, administrators, and board members. Numerous targeted sessions are also provided for administrators, teachers, and board members each year dealing with leadership, curriculum development, special needs support and board/administration liaison (see Section 2.1.6).

Learning Forward British Columbia, an affiliate of Learning Forward, is an active organization that focuses on professional learning. The 280 members, drawn from all roles in the BC education system, include teachers, school administrators, district staff and senior administrators. Learning Forward British Columbia builds and sustains networks of educators that model quality professional learning. It creates and builds support structures for educators who take a leadership role in planning for and providing professional learning. Strengthening relationships between and among BC's education partners is a key component of LFBC's work (see Section 2.1.7).

2.4 Professional Learning

2.4.1 CONCEPTUALIZING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The conceptual focus of this case study is on “professional learning” and the context in which it takes place. “Professional learning” is a broad term capable of expanding to embrace a wide variety of activities aimed at improving student growth and achievement, as well as their social development. Professional learning is seen as engagement in activities that are deep and rich learning experiences relevant to classroom practice, leadership, and the effective operation of schools and districts. Learning Forward views professional development as:

“...activities that are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging Provincial/State academic standards”

Source: <https://learningforward.org/>

Employing the term “professional learning” as a descriptor helps broaden the conceptual space and creates new ways of exploring how various actors in the education system understand the need for ongoing learning, but also how decision-making authority is allocated over the content and process of undertaking that learning. Professional learning can incorporate both *formal* and *informal* processes of learning. Formal

learning might include a course or a course of studies at a college or university, a workshop or conference, a formally defined school-based inquiry project, or a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) where one can earn a form of certification.

Informal learning can consist of wide range of activities including reflecting on one’s own teaching practice. Informal learning often occurs within a collaborative structure such as a Professional Learning Community or through a Community of Inquiry. In collaborative activities, teachers may observe the teaching of others and be involved in collegial conversations about their methods and effectiveness of instruction. When teachers collaborate, a shared sense of responsibility for student success is developed and the informal process of learning can bring new ideas that add to the collective wisdom of an educational group. Informal professional learning might include individual study or reading, participation in a professional reading book club, or attending a community meeting to understand the social context of the school. This broader definition allows for valuing all forms of learning that contribute in some way to educators’ evaluation and improvement of practice.

Ultimately, the BC Education Collaborative (BCEC) believes that exemplary professional learning is based on student learning needs, professional interests, personal growth, as well as district and system requirements. Professional learning best meets educators’ needs when it is varied, flexible, and accessible.

2.4.2 CULTIVATING SYSTEMIC COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Educators and others working in K-12 education in British Columbia make strong commitments to ongoing professional learning. This commitment reflects the complex and growing demands of teaching in and operating a dynamic and diverse school system, the desire to keep pace with new research and knowledge about teaching and learning, and the motivation to strengthen existing competencies while developing new ones. In addition, there is an ongoing need to respond to policy initiatives of schools, districts, and the province. Above all, BC educators are motivated by their commitment to the students for whom they are responsible in ensuring they meet their life goals.

The collective organizations of the BC Education Collaborative share the belief that professional collaboration and inter-professional opportunities that support the ongoing enhancement of professional practice may be both shared and individual. The BCEC believes educators, managers and leaders have an ongoing obligation to improving knowledge, skills and values in order to remain current and focused on improving personal and student success.

The following section represents a collaborative effort to authentically portray and critically examine the landscape of British Columbia's professional learning culture in all its geographical and philosophical diversity, through its organizational strengths and tensions, and by highlighting its promising practices and most pressing challenges.

3 | Professional Learning in British Columbia

3.1 Professional Learning Opportunities and Challenges

Educators in British Columbia avail themselves of a wide variety of professional learning opportunities. All teachers in public schools belong to the British Columbia Teachers' Federation—the largest provincial teachers' organization—as a condition of their employment. Independent school teachers, and school and district leaders, belong to their respective professional associations. While membership in these associations is voluntary, the vast majority of staff are affiliated with their respective organizations. Principals and vice-principals belong to the BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association; senior district educators belong to the BC School Superintendents' Association and senior staff working in the area of school finance and operations areas belong to the BC Association of School Business Officials. Each of these associations offer robust programs of professional learning targeted at the needs of their members.

Post-secondary institutions in British Columbia, Canada and the United States also are significant providers of professional learning for BC educators. Some senior employees, notably secretary-treasurers, undertake ongoing professional learning as conditions of their professional licensure and take courses offered by their regulatory bodies. Educators also avail themselves of learning opportunities provided by private providers and through a myriad of informal networks at the school, district, provincial, and international levels.

Education organizations in British Columbia have developed quality programs to meet the professional learning needs of their members

and to respond to professional and systemic challenges. In this section, organizational members of the BC Education Collaborative were invited to submit individual reports detailing opportunities and challenges in professional learning in BC, including reporting on exemplar professional learning projects and activities. This section consists of all reports received, and also provides information on the range of formal professional learning undertaken by many educators in post-graduate programs at universities both in BC and beyond.

3.1.1 BC ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS (BCASBO): OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The British Columbia Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO) is a non-profit association dedicated to the support of the highest professional standards of ethics, competence, and leadership in school district corporate and business administration in BC's public school system. Its members are the individuals who work in the operations support side of school districts (i.e., finance, human resources, facilities, information technology, and transportation). The association currently has 167 members.

The strategic plan of the association states that it will engage and support members in their professional learning and welfare, recognize the importance of contributing to the provincial transformation in education, and commit to ensuring BCASBO has a strong non-political voice in, and is affiliated with, this important work.

They work to provide high quality professional learning opportunities.

3.1.1.1 Leadership Development Series

BCASBO offers a successful leadership series to enhance leadership and management skills in the K–12 sector. Participants work in roles from all facets of the sector. A specific focus of this series is the relationship between the business leadership and the educational leadership.

The program was developed in recognition of the increasing complexity in the business operations of school districts and the aging of the current workforce. It cannot be assumed that leadership skills are a given competency. These skills must be identified and a learning environment must be established so that participants can continue to participate in shaping the future of public education in British Columbia.

The goals of the program include building a framework for leadership, expanding the understanding of education in BC, gaining the skills and strategies to build purposeful relationships, and using those strategies to enable evidence informed decision making.

BCASBO is now offering this leadership series for the fourth time. This fourth cohort is comprised of 26 individuals whose positions in the sector cover principals, secretary-treasurers, directors of finance, directors of human resources, energy managers, purchasing managers, payroll, and information technology managers. The participants range from early career to experienced staff.

The cohort meets for four two-day sessions in person and has district based activities to work on between. They are grouped into teams and work together on some assignments and the final presentations. The series covers an 18-month period.

3.1.1.2 Methods and processes for professional learning

The series is facilitated by three educational leaders and BCASBO experienced members. The BCASBO members are assigned a cohort team, facilitate the table discussion, and assist in the planning of the in-person sessions. The program is delivered with a theme in each of the four sessions and key speakers.

The series uses presentations by experienced individuals both from within and outside of public education in combination with reading materials and key homework questions. The homework activities normally involve working with others in their district, especially educational staff. Key readings in a recent session included Thomas Fleming’s book, *Worlds Apart, British Columbia Schools: Politics and Labour Relations Before and After 1972* and Rushworth Kidder’s *How Good People Make Tough Choices—Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living*.

This leadership program allows time for and encourages relationships to be developed between the participants and senior business officials where the exchange of knowledge can occur in both formal and informal environments. The speakers and resource persons are leaders in their fields and engage participants in discussions on leading-edge topics. Each resource person has been chosen to have maximum impact in two streams of learning—firstly, to explore new and emerging leadership theory and practice and, secondly, to provide ample time and opportunity to connect and apply this work in the school district context. The speaker is instructed to use a one-third formula, with each third being presentation, group discussion, and team table discussion.

3.1.1.3 Outcomes and experiences of professional learning

Participants engage in the activity to better understand the public education sector, create a network with others working in the sector, and obtain the knowledge and leadership skills needed to seek more senior job opportunities. Participant remarks about the series include:

“The program definitely developed my leadership skills.”

“I gained stronger relationship skills that I use in my district.”

“I am able to better understand the dynamics and culture of my school system.”

“Must continue with these sessions! They were invaluable to me.”

The challenge for this activity is ensuring that the costs are affordable to the school districts and that districts continue to support their staff participation in the program, not only financially but with the time to prepare and attend the program.

3.1.1.4 Professional Learning Challenges for School Business Officials (BCASBO)

The British Columbia Association of Business Officials maintains regular contact with its members to assist in meeting their professional development needs through surveys, evaluations of offered programs, conferences, and zone meetings. Business Operations professionals require a complex set of skills and experience to do their jobs and to be qualified, and come to the district with professional designations such as Certified Professional Accountant (CPA), lawyer, Human Resource Professional, Engineer, etc. These professional designations have professional

development standards that must be met on an ongoing basis. The guidelines for the CPA designation are:

“Continuing Professional Development is an ongoing program of learning which empowers members to engage in learning activities to enhance their professional capabilities and competencies. In order to maintain public trust, and to uphold the reputation of the CPA designation, all members must continually update their professional knowledge.”

In order to retain their designation and membership as a CPA, the member must undertake professional development and complete:

(a) a minimum of 20 qualifying hours of continuing professional development in each calendar year, including at least 10 verifiable qualifying hours, and

(b) a minimum of 120 qualifying hours of continuing professional development during each rolling three-calendar year period, including at least 60 verifiable qualifying hours, of which at least 4 are ethics hours.”

Districts are challenged both financially and in their ability to provide time to support their staff in meeting these requirements along with development of their leadership skills and understanding of the public education sector. Therefore, many of our members are paying for their own professional development and attending on their own time. School districts need business officials that are skilled, trusted, and dedicated. BCASBO is affiliated with ASBO International which outlines the job expectations and expertise required as financial resource management, interpersonal and human resource management, facilities and transportation maintenance and management, and information technology. It is

a considerable challenge to access professional learning in all the required areas. A significant challenge for both the mandatory requirements and job training is the lack of budgeted financial resourcing and available time to attend and implement professional learning.

One of the challenges facing public education in BC is attracting and retaining qualified, experienced staff with existing compensation levels, job demands, and budget constraints. When comparing 2011 to 2016, 34% of the positions have new staff and many have changed staff more than once. BCASBO is providing its membership with leadership development and professional learning opportunities. Notwithstanding the challenges of accessing professional learning in all skill areas, financial resourcing, time capacity to attend and implement, BCASBO members are committed to undertaking professional learning at all levels of the organization in order to provide better services in support of student learning.

3.1.1.5 Next steps in professional learning at BCASBO

BCASBO intends to continue with the series as it is well attended. It will work with other BC Associations and the Ministry of Education to ensure the content meets the needs of the sector and, where possible, to undertake joint offerings.

3.1.2 BC PRINCIPALS' AND VICE-PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA) was established in 1988 to represent public school principals and vice-principals in the 60 school districts in British Columbia. There are approximately 2,200 members. The mission statement of the association

is to serve members by supporting effective leadership in education through representation, advocacy, and leadership development.

The BCPVPA Professional Learning mandate is to support principals and vice-principals in the critical role they hold in education by continuing to research, develop, and implement professional learning opportunities designed to align with the [BCPVPA Leadership Standards](#) (British Columbia Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association, 2015), the needs of members as revealed in periodic needs ongoing program evaluations, and the goals and objectives of Association's strategic plan.

There are three feature programs that have been developed to support members in the field: 1) Supervision for Learning Program Level 1; 2) Leadership Standards; and 3) Short Course.

3.1.2.1 Supervision for Learning Program

The Supervision for Learning Program (SFL) Level 1 is a 5-day, 8-month program based on the Instructional Leadership Domain and Standard 3 of the [BC Leadership Standards for Principals and Vice-Principals](#). The Instructional Leadership domain of the Standards emphasizes the principal's and vice-principal's role in improving the quality of teaching and learning for students and adults. The belief statement of the Standard states: "The leader plays an integral role in creating and maintaining an environment that supports the intellectual, human and social, and career development of all students." The Supervision for Learning Program was developed around Standard 3: "Principals and vice-principals engage in effective supervision for learning that focuses on instructional and assessment practices that maximize student development, engagement, and learning." When the Standards were created, the Instructional Leadership domain was written to align with the following philosophy statement:

“The Instructional Leadership domain emphasizes improving the quality of teaching and learning for students. This domain highlights the principal’s and vice-principal’s role as the steward of learning who keeps the focus on assessment and instructional practices that maximizes student learning and achievement, and who promotes continuous, job-embedded learning opportunities for staff that are connected to student learning needs. As the leader of learning, the principal and vice-principal must develop a thorough understanding of the rapidly evolving body of research on learning and teaching that makes a difference for students. The principal and vice-principal demonstrate leadership for learning by “creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students, professionals and the system” and they “persistently and publicly focus their attention and that of others on learning and teaching.”

Hargreaves and Fink (2006)

In the summer of 2010, a provincial-wide BCPVPA member needs assessment revealed that a large number of principals and vice-principals identified supervision for learning as a priority for knowledge and skill development. In November 2010, a working group was formed to develop an interactive field guide that would focus on providing materials and activities which would encourage dialogue and discussion about *Supervision for Learning*. The field guide divided Standard 3: Supervision for Learning into four quadrants: 1) Clarifying Purpose; 2) Professional Relationships; 3) Learner Focused Dialogue; and 4) Structures and Support, as well as an Introduction section to Supervision for Learning. The activities and resources of each of the quadrants were intended to: 1) prioritize the learning; 2) foster inquiry; 3) facilitate the dissemination of sharing of knowledge; 4)

inspire engagement in Supervision for Learning; 5) encourage a partnership in learning; and 6) improve learning, teaching, and leading in school systems. Under each of the four quadrants, action statements were created with corresponding reflective questions and a place for principals and vice-principals to give examples of their practice. A series of videos was also created to support each of the quadrants. The work of this *Supervision for Learning* (SFL) work group established the foundation and framework for the creation of the SFL program that would be further developed and implemented in 2013 for provincial wide participation by principals and vice-principals.

The development of the SFL program was supported by a grant from the Ministry of Education. The grant funded a literature review to identify the critical elements of effective supervision for learning, and the development of a training module that would facilitate the advancement of a SFL pilot program. The design goals of the program were: 1) improve the practice of Supervision for Learning; 2) improve the quality of teaching and learning; 3) improve student learning and engagement; 4) build individual and organizational capacity in SFL (schools, districts, and provincially); 5) develop an understanding of the conditions that support and encourage improved student learning and engagement; 6) provide coaching and relational support that moves skill development forward; 7) create a framework that allows principals and vice-principals to participate in joint practice development or a triad; and 8) provide leaders access to a wide range of experienced learning with SFL to improve school leadership. The pilot program of SFL was implemented in the fall of the 2013–14 school year.

Throughout the school year, the Managers of Professional Learning delivered the 5-day Program to one cohort consisting of 171 principals and vice-principals from various school districts and school levels in Richmond, BC. The program was

open to principals, vice-principals, teachers, and district staff at any stage in their career. As the program was extremely successful, the BCPVPA Board and staff made the decision to make this a sustainable program offered by the BCPVPA on an annual basis. As a result, in 2014–15, the SFL Program, consisting of 181 participants across four cohorts, was delivered in four centres (Penticton, Prince Rupert, Prince George, and Richmond). In 2015–16, there were 167 participants from five cohorts across five centres (Vancouver, Surrey, Prince George, Kamloops, and Fort Nelson). In 2016–17, there are an anticipated five cohorts from five centres (Nanaimo, Surrey, Fort St. John, Merritt, and Metro Vancouver), and one cohort online designated for Distributed Learning Principals.

3.1.2.2 Methods and processes for professional learning with the BCPVPA

The program is based on the BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Leadership Standards and supports a peer coaching model, "where professional learning is a continuous pervasive process that builds knowledge rather than an occasional activity that is sharply distinguished in time and space" (Hargreaves, 2003). *Supervision for Learning* is an effective program to support instructional leadership. The program is based on Standard 3, Instructional Leadership and the Principles of Learning for students (i.e., learning requires the active participation of the student, is both an individual and a social process, takes place in different ways and at different rates for each student, is encouraged when students are involved in their own assessment and evaluation and reporting, when assessment and evaluation is ongoing, and when assessment and evaluation and reporting are clear and supportive).

The program is designed to increase the impact of school principals and vice-principals on teaching practices and student learning and achievement. The key outcomes are taking theory to action: 1) Establish shared purpose, vision, and values/beliefs that are focused on the learner; 2) Create structures that support the learner; 3) Shift the awareness of focus to the learner; 4) Learn and practice quality communication skills (curious questions, giving feedback, and having challenging conversations) and 5) Identify the focus and create organizational change. The program is collaborative by design and rather than the numerous single-time professional offerings, *SFL* is implemented over eight months in a calendar year. Over the eight-month program, participants gain skills, knowledge, and confidence in their ability to engage teachers in learner-focused dialogue with members of their teaching staff. Research confirms that a focus on student learning, rather than teachers' instructional practices, achieves results:

"For principals and other leaders, the direction is clear: schools that succeed are schools in which every participant is a learner. Although no principal can "do it all," the principal is the point of convergence for all that the school is and does. The principal sets the tenor in all facets of the school. Students, teachers, and staff reflect the direction and motivation demonstrated by the principal."

Zepeda (2008)

"Great school leaders create nurturing school environments in which accomplished teaching can flourish and grow."

Darling-Hammond (2003, p. 13)

Program elements include:

- Clarifying purpose
- Creating organizational change
- Developing professional relationships
- Engaging in learner-focused dialogue
- Exploring curious questions
- Providing effective feedback
- Engaging in challenging conversations
- Providing structures and support

The program begins with a two-day training session that focuses on listening skills, organizational change, learning walks, triad development, team collaboration, and creating individual Action Plans for the year. The third day of training focuses on effective feedback, curious questions, and learner-focused dialogue. Day four focuses on challenging conversations, and day five focuses on structures and support, sharing of individual action plans, setting personal SFL goals for the following year, and a celebration.

Participants engage in full day, inquiry-based interactive and lecture learning sessions that focus on the above concepts over a period of five days throughout the year. In these sessions, participants engage in multiple learning strategies using graphic organizers (e.g. SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), Last Word, article analysis), reflective dialogue sessions, ice breakers, listening skills activities, facilitated focused professional conversations, small and whole group conversations, reflective writing, feedback dialogue, and reading and discussing researched articles by professionals in the field on a variety of topics aligned with the learning outcomes of the day. All activities are designed to support the learning outcomes for participants for each of the sessions. Participants develop individual action plans for their SFL learning journey that focus on their own personal Supervision for Learning needs that fit the context of the school learning environment

in which they work. In addition, participants are involved in one-hour, bi-weekly triad check-in meetings with others in their cohort. These triads provide opportunity for participants to practise the skills they learn in their sessions through a triad protocol that allows individuals to take on various roles at times of the Reflector, Learner, and Clarifier. The confidential triad protocol process occurs either online, via Skype, telephone, or face to face. Program Managers check-in with all participants throughout the program to discuss the progress and challenges of their individual action plans.

At the end of the fifth session, all participants come together to celebrate and share their learning. Each person presents a learning map that reflects their goals for learning for the SFL program—the successes, challenges, and questions they experienced, as well as the next steps they will take after the completion of the program with respect to their own learning in the upcoming school year. A number of participants make decisions to keep participating in their learning triad. All participants receive a Level 1 Supervision for Learning certificate which allows them the future opportunity to participate in Supervision for Learning Level 2 (Next Steps). Participants are encouraged at all times throughout the program to share their learning with district staff and school staff.

3.1.2.3 Outcomes and experiences of professional learning for Supervision for Learning

The Learning Intentions for the Program (taking theory to action):

- Develop an understanding of Supervision for Learning and the role of the principal and vice-principal in supporting students' learning and achievement. The importance of establishing personal values, a change process that leads to action.

- Develop an understanding of the four quadrants of the SFL process and shifting awareness from teaching to student learning. Gain an understanding of a Learning Walk and how it shifts the focus from the teacher to the learner.
- Develop an understanding of how to use curious questions, learner-focused dialogue, and effective feedback.
- Develop an understanding of the conditions that encourage conversations about learning, learners, and assessment.
- Develop knowledge and skills of how to engage in difficult conversations around the learner and learning.
- Practice a few components of SFL with the focus on communication skills.

Viviane Robinson (2011) states that the five leadership domains that have led to significant improvements in student achievement include:

1. *Establishing goals and expectations*
2. *Resourcing strategically*
3. *Ensuring quality teaching*
4. *Leading teacher learning and development*
5. *Ensuring an orderly and safe environment*

In *The Principal*, Michael Fullan (2014) states:

“Robinson found that that the principal who makes the biggest impact on learning is the one who attends to other matters as well, but, most important ‘participates as a learner’ with teachers in helping move the school forward. Leading teacher learning means being proactively involved with teachers such that the principal and teachers are alike in learning.” (p. 58)

These are the purposes and objectives behind the SFL program and thus the elements of the program have been designed around these learning intentions.

3.1.2.4 Why might participants choose to engage in this activity?

The ultimate goal of the program is to support principals and vice-principals in further developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes in the area of instructional leadership with the focus being “Supervision for Learning.” The ultimate goal of the program focuses on encouraging principals and vice-principals, and allowing them the structures and supports for getting into classrooms and having conversations about learning with students and teachers. The program is aligned with the following philosophy that when professional learning is research-based, better learning outcomes occur:

“We are intending to follow a model that is less about attending conferences and courses and more about school based, peer-to-peer activities in which development is fused with practice. Professional learning becomes a continuous, pervasive process that builds craft knowledge, rather than an occasional activity that is sharply distinguished in time and space from routine work.”

Hargreaves (2012, p. 8)

An article published in *Adminfo* included the following feedback of participants’ experience with the program:

“I didn’t know what to expect. A lot of training is formal and academic but this was about specific needs in our schools. We talked on a weekly basis. That networking with others around the province and about real-life stuff—there is real value in that.”

“It’s a great program,” he said “Its biggest strength is the supportive team. There are many one-off offerings, but it’s rare that there’s an opportunity for ongoing conversations with administrators across the province and with different ideas. That’s what makes it work.”

“When you engage in a conversation with a teacher about their practice, it’s important not to be judgmental. You formulate questions that will help them reflect so they can work through it.”

Feedback from the field included these comments on the SFL Level 1 program:

“Overall value is the connection and relationships—excellent, valuable, practical, engaging, current.”

“Relationships—with each other and building with our staff. Collaborating with our students and their needs is the center.”

“Insight that I can do anything especially as part of a dynamic team focused on creating excellent learning opportunities for all students.”

3.1.2.5 Elements and evaluation of quality professional learning

Tom Guskey (2002) in his work on evaluating professional development describes five critical levels of evaluation: 1) participants’ reactions; 2) participants’ learning; 3) organizational support and change; 4) participants’ use of new knowledge and skills; and 5) student learning outcomes. Data for program evaluation of each of these elements was gathered through feedback forms, check-in calls, and direct observations in all sessions for Levels 1–4. The purpose of the program, ultimately, is focused on improving student learning outcomes for students (Level 5), and although many participants stated they had observed improved outcomes in their school context, due to the short-term nature of the program it was difficult for the BCPVPA Managers to reliably measure this outcome. It is, however, the BCPVPA’s belief and objective that the program positively affects improvement

in student learning and achievement in all the participants’ schools or places of learning.

Moreover, the program aims to adhere to the 2011 Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning, including learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results (Learning Forward, 2016). If the quality of professional learning this program exemplifies were to be measured according to the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning, the program reflects each of these standards while focusing more significantly on Learning Communities, Leadership, Resources, Learning Designs, Implementation and Outcomes, and less significantly on the data standard¹.

Through formative and summative evaluation processes, including telephone check-in sessions with Managers, participants provided Managers with information and evidence of where they were in their cycle of learning within the program. Every member came to the program with different knowledge, skills, background, administrative experiences, and school context. From the feedback forms and the individual check-in phone calls, there was enough evidence gathered to state that the program did have impact on their professional learning and growth throughout the year. As well, at the end of every session, the Managers of Professional Learning collected feedback from the participants to guide their own learning and to reflect on the value of content for each session. They subsequently adjusted session content to the feedback received. The following are comments from participants in the field:

¹ For a complete overview of the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning, consult: <https://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/facilitatorguide.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

“Thanks so much as I am inspired to continue (with purpose) on this journey.”

“Felt more inspired and supported in doing what I do—throughout this process than any other time in my AO career—keep doing what you are passionate about.”

“Making connections, stretching my thinking, setting goals around learner focused dialogue and how to put structures into place at our schools.”

“Feeling supported with additional knowledge to support staff and learners.”

“The in-depth look at the SFL Standard with valuable connection with colleagues.”

“Best ProD in years. Immediately relevant and practical. I am glad you guys provide this opportunity provincially—excellent modelling.”

“Thanks—each session was great, and only improved on the previous.”

“Good selection of articles—great collaboration in the groups.”

“Found the session to be very helpful and informative. Great reflection time.”

There is, consequently, a high level of confidence, based on multiple formative and summative program evaluation processes, that the program has yielded significantly improved learning outcomes for both administrators and students.

3.1.2.6 Challenges of the Program

Participation in the pilot program was limited due to the costs to send principals and vice-principals from northerly and remote parts of the province to training sessions in the metropolitan Vancouver area. In order to increase opportunities to participate in the program, the Association offered regional cohorts that greatly reduced

transportation costs and release time due to travel obligations.

Evaluations by pilot program participants revealed a second challenge—finding time to meet with triad colleagues. Some participants were very successful in meeting with their triad, while others felt constrained due to time, lack of technology and access, and other challenges. As well, setting aside five days for participants to engage in this professional learning activity was not unproblematic. Participants nevertheless commented that they enjoyed being involved in new learning and that it gave them opportunity to learn with few distractions

3.1.2.7 Professional Learning Challenges for Principals and Vice-Principals

Research confirms that great schools have great principals and vice-principals (Leithwood, Aitken, & Jantzi, 2006). The work of principals and vice-principals is second only to classroom teachers in its impact on student learning. Effective school administrators enhance the effectiveness of their school staffs. The British Columbia Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association surveys its membership every three years on an array of issues related to their work as school administrators. The survey instrument includes questions about how members address their own learning needs and how they meet their responsibilities as the lead learner in their schools.

School administrators are like teachers in that they engage in professional learning in a wide variety of ways, both formally and informally. The vast majority of school administrators possess Masters degrees prior to their obtaining an administrative position and the small number who do not make a commitment to complete their graduate program within a specified time. Principals engage in learning with their teaching colleagues and members of networks of administrators in their school districts, throughout the province, nationally, and internationally.

The BCPVPA developed Leadership Standards in 2007 and they were revised in 2015. The Standards are framed in four domains: Instructional Leadership, Organizational Leadership, Relational Leadership, and Moral Stewardship. The Standards include a self-assessment tool and are designed to stimulate systematic thinking about leadership in the school context and to plan professional growth. While they were not intended as a framework for conducting performance reviews, a growing number of school districts find the Standards a useful element for this purpose. The Standards provide a consistent framework for all professional learning programs provided for members by our Association. These include a one-week long Short Course held annually for newly appointed administrators and two levels of Supervision for Learning (SFL). SFL provides a five-day program over eight months and is intended to promote learner-focused dialogue with teachers. The Standards play a prominent role in the Association's annual conference, "Connecting Leaders," which is the Association's flagship professional learning conference. Held on the provincial non-instructional day each October, Connecting Leaders features internationally renowned keynote speakers and workshops by innovative members on an array of cutting edge leadership theme².

The greatest challenges principals and vice-principals face in advancing their professional learning arise from the growing volume and complexity of the role. The demands placed on members are growing in both organizational management and educational leadership domains and members report that is too little time to adequately address the demands of the role. Principals and vice-principals report a trend of downloading of responsibilities from district staff to school leaders because of fiscal pressures at the district level. The pressures are amplified by the expectations, both self and externally-imposed, that school administrators will provide effective leadership in implementing the ambitious current

provincial agenda for educational transformation that is detailed elsewhere in this study.

Principals and vice-principals struggle to find time for their individual professional learning. During the six non-instructional days that are provided in the school calendar, principals and vice-principals are working to lead and support the learning of their school staffs. Most of their personal learning is undertaken in the evenings, on weekends, over the summer break, or on release days provided by the district to attend conferences or attend workshops. Many districts provide learning opportunities for school-based administrators. Like their teaching counterparts, principals and vice-principals express concerns about the limited resources available to support their professional learning goals. Personal services contracts differ from district to district and sometimes within districts with respect to the financial commitment from school districts. Some districts maintain robust programs to support leadership development while others provide little.

As leaders who have responsibilities for carrying out provincial and school initiatives and for supporting the professional learning activities of members of their school staff, principals and vice-principals are challenged to find the proper balance between individual and system needs. BCPVPA members report that system priorities take precedence over personal learning needs.

The BCPVPA is encouraged by the creation of a "Leadership Development Working Group" by the Ministry of Education. The working group has undertaken an inventory of leadership programs offered by the management partners' associations and performed a gap analysis to identify areas for future program development. Based on survey responses, the BCPVPA identified a need to provide mentorship for new administrators and to advance skills and knowledge of how to manage in a unionized workplace.

2 See: <http://bcvpva.bc.ca/professional-learning/>

While teachers and administrators have a shared commitment to professional learning, there are some tensions in their view of how the learning should take place. As expressed elsewhere in this document, teachers highly value the right for teachers, individually and collectively, to determine their professional learning activities. Principals and vice-principals are expected to advance school, district, and provincial goals and seek to balance the learning needs of individual teachers with the goals of the systems in which they manage. Teacher collective agreements provide much of the framework for the delivery of professional learning at the school and district level. The contract language has not changed in more than two decades and principals and vice-principals are concerned that the contracts make it difficult to address system-wide goals and initiatives or to promote the collaboration that makes professional learning fruitful.

Notwithstanding the challenges listed above, BC principals and vice-principals are positive and purposeful leaders who view professional learning as an essential professional obligation and always find the time to learn. They fundamentally understand that the way in which they embrace learning serves as a model for their teaching and non-teaching staff, and for students.

3.1.2.8 Next steps in professional learning at the BCPVPA

In 2015-16, the BCPVPA developed a Level 2 pilot program for *Supervision for Learning*. The focus of the program was structured as in-depth Learning Walks. Participants employed a University of Washington Centre of Educational Leadership model of instruction for their work together. Participants practiced skills in feedback, analysis, and support for teaching and learning in each of the five dimensions of the framework.

In an initiative intended to address a strategic goal of increasing learning opportunities for principals and vice-principals working in remote areas of the province, the BCPVPA introduced a series of webinars. Six webinars were held with a focus on the BCPVPA Leadership Standards. The program was well-received with 50 to 100 members participating in weekly 30-minute sessions, and the Association will continue the program in 2016-17.

The Association's member surveys reveal that mentorship is not provided in most districts for new school administrators. The challenges of recruiting able candidates into administration and the trend toward teachers entering into administration after fewer years of teaching than their predecessors has made the establishment of mentorship programs a high priority. This goal is being pursued through the Association's participation in the Ministry of Education's Leadership Development Working Group.

3.1.3 BC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

3.1.3.1 Introduction

BCSSA members are the sector leaders in the BC education field. They advise Boards of Education on leading learning in BC while working with the Ministry of Education to help determine the best directions for education using quality research.

As the school districts' CEOs and senior management teams, BCSSA members manage complex organizations to facilitate policy development and ensure that Ministry legislation and regulations are enacted while budgets are developed and delivered effectively so that the system runs smoothly and, most importantly, while ensuring student learning is kept at the center of all decision-making.

3.1.3.2 Context

One of the BCSSA's strategic goals is to enhance public confidence in education. In the face of trying times, BCSSA has been a voice of reason and confidence while continuing to focus on student learning and success. BCSSA members provide the connections that bring together all education partners while maintaining the focus on student learning. The high level of leadership and management skills that BCSSA members bring to their roles has helped create one of the highest performing educational jurisdictions in world.

BCSSA members, seconded by the Ministry, have been and are leading the education transformation that is now under way in British Columbia. BCSSA believes it is all of our work and that we do it collaboratively. Superintendents, with senior and school staff, have ensured that there is momentum and change in practice within their districts that reflect this ongoing transformation.

BCSSA members support and open doors to innovation to help BC lead education in the world. Our members currently build leadership capacity throughout the education system using a variety of structures focused on mentorship, coaching, professional growth, and professional development/learning.

3.1.3.3 Challenges

Building the knowledge and skill set to take on a senior educational leadership role takes time and resources. Practice in the field—from the role of teacher, to VP to Principal to district staff leadership—is important, blended with specialized training and supports such as those described above. Some districts have the resources and ability to provide 'in-house' training and programs while others do not. This creates a broken front. Districts in the Metro Vancouver region can perhaps better support each other in doing this than smaller, rural districts.

There is a gap in leadership development system-wide. Ideally, the work needs to have educational leaders leading in collaboration with districts/schools and the province. Therefore, finding quality people for leadership/management is becoming more challenging, and helping them learn the dynamics of their role is critical as many new district leaders have not had the same longevity of field experience as in the past. Supporting these senior leaders once they are in their role is important but the gap exists in identifying potential leaders with the knowledge and skill set to be effective in leading the learning at the highest institutional levels.

3.1.3.4 Methods and Processes

Utilizing its [Dimensions of Practice](#) framework, the BCSSA is identifying leadership learning needs/gaps which may then be acted on in consultation with the BCSSA and other educational partners. The BCSSA, using our Dimensions of Practice, is also working with ABCDE to identify specific areas/modules which could be developed for specific roles (Directors, for example) to facilitate both large and small districts in their leadership work. The Modules would then be tied to leadership professional growth plans ensuring participation and a common capacity building across the sector.

3.1.3.5 Exemplar: Island Leadership Coalition

For the past 10 years, BCSSA members on Vancouver Island have organized and participated in a co-operative learning platform that has advanced the leadership knowledge of teachers, principals, vice principals, directors of instruction, assistant superintendents, and superintendents. Pooling limited financial resources, Island districts have worked together to organize themed professional development topics in a series of workshop sessions which have included both face to face working activities and action research

projects. Over the years, the learning models have spanned over 6-10 sessions on an individual topic (e.g., Aboriginal learning, diversity in classroom teaching, Assessment for Learning, 21st Century Leadership Skills), have sometimes been connected to university programs (e.g. Vancouver Island University), or have been venues for districts to create district teams who come together to focus on a particular problem or leadership skill need.

In all years, the Island Leadership Coalition has used the experience and skills of current system and district leaders to present and facilitate to over 200 participants. Most often this cohort-based work developed strong network connections with participating district colleagues, which led to cross island sharing of capacity and skills on a variety of topics. Participants were expected to return from the workshop sessions with the responsibility to share, implement, and report back to the Island group on the effectiveness and motivation of the work presented.

Increasingly (and anecdotally) there is a marked connection between the teacher leaders, principals and vice principal participants in the Island Leadership Coalition and their future paths to district leadership. Many districts were able to use the experiences of the coalition work to support professional growth for the team members who were part of the coalition network.

By working together to foster leadership in education, Vancouver Island districts are able to offer quality professional learning for educators at many levels, building a local professional learning community which shares the strengths and passion of a broad range of new and experienced people who can enhance student learning on Vancouver Island.

3.1.3.6 Next Steps

Provincial support for leadership development and professional learning is critical to the success of all education partners' work. It is important to note that this support should be flexible to allow for local context and effective program development as solutions in one district won't necessarily work in others due to size, resources, and demographic needs.

Together, BCSSA and all BC education partners can create an effective professional learning continuum which will enhance the knowledge and skills of all those who work together to support student learning in BC.

3.1.4 BC SCHOOL TRUSTEES ASSOCIATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

3.1.4.1 Introduction

The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) recognizes the importance of professional development across the various sectors and partner organizations which make up BC's public education system. Likewise, we acknowledge the responsibility of both individuals and partner organizations to support and participate in professional development in support of the ongoing evolution and transformation of our education system. It is our belief that professional development, at both the personal and organization level, is a significant responsibility held by everyone who is part of our public education system. This includes school trustees and boards of education. We all must remain committed to developing our own knowledge and skills in support of the identified direction for K-12 education in this province as well as expanding and refining our own professional practices.

3.1.4.2 Context

The BCSTA has provided member professional development opportunities since our inception more than 100 years ago. Our organization remains committed to building the capacity of both boards of education and individual school trustees in support of their role as the governors of BC's 60 school districts. It is our belief that the students and general public are best served by school boards made up of members committed to ongoing professional learning and the continual improvement of both skills and related knowledge. By ensuring we individually and collectively maintain high standards of preparation for our work, we are best able to serve the communities we represent, our employees, and ultimately the students for whom we want to provide the best opportunities possible.

In order for this to happen, we first accept the responsibility to shape our professional development programs and offerings to meet the current needs of the education system. It is our belief that every partner group within public education should develop and support professional development that supports the identified provincial direction for K-12 programs, addresses current learning deficits, and enables individuals and groups to meet the emerging needs of all learners. While we acknowledge the importance of personalized professional learning to meet self-directed goals and ambitions, we see this balanced by the responsibility to support the collective direction established by individual schools, school districts, and the province.

3.1.4.3 Methods and Processes

BCSTA has a long established education program directed at meeting these needs. Over the past century, BC school trustees have come together on a regular basis to undertake professional learning opportunities. At present, the association runs two major conferences per year with participation by

several hundred of our members from throughout the province. Over the course of up to four days, individual trustees and boards of education come together to participate in a great variety of forums, lectures, workshops, and discussions. While the variety and form of the offerings varies widely, they are all aimed at meeting the individual and collective learning needs of our membership. There is recognition that while we may have common interests driven by articulated evolution of K-12 education, we also have a great diversity of learning styles, requirements, interests and backgrounds which must be considered in establishing our professional development offerings.

Beyond large conference type professional development opportunities, BCSTA also offers a number of regional, local and personal learning programs. Our professional development offerings include:

- Presentations and workshops at a large number and variety of regional meetings.
- Individual board evaluation processes supplemented by responsive follow-up learning opportunities.
- Coordinated workshops and conference offerings with the Ministry of Education and other partner groups.
- Peer-sharing and specialized learning opportunities for board chairs or other identified individual trustee groups.
- Online learning modules (currently under redevelopment) for individual trustees and boards covering a number of key areas of responsibility or system change.
- Tele-conference and one day mini-conferences focusing on specialized topics of interest to members or items of an emergent nature.

Professional learning resources and materials provided to members in support of their identified needs or personal goals.

BCSTA is committed to providing a large variety of learning opportunities for member boards and individual trustees throughout the province. Toward this end, we have maintained both a dedicated education committee and a senior staff position as well as a significant budget allocation to address this need. While additional time and resources could always be utilized, we are proud of the programs and services currently being provided to our members, and believe the citizens of our province are ultimately well served by this ongoing commitment to professional learning and skills development.

3.1.4.4 Next Steps

The BCSTA remains committed to the continual review and revision of our learning programs to best meet the needs of members, and to effectively and efficiently meet our responsibilities to the public who have invested, both financially and socially, in maintaining the best public education system possible. At present, BCSTA is reviewing its professional development programs to ensure they are meeting the needs of members as identified by both internal (member surveys, event evaluations, formal program reviews) and external review reports (by the Auditor General, audit committees, and provincial committees).

Our vision for the future of professional development across the broad K-12 sector recognizes a number of common needs, goals, and responsibilities between partner organizations. These include:

- The need for all educators, ministry staff, business officials, support staff, and school trustees to work more closely together in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of professional learning opportunities. The establishment of this collaborative is an important step

in establishing a system-wide, integrated approach to professional learning and skills development.

- The acknowledgement and acceptance of personal and organizational responsibility to support the established direction for the evolution and refinement of K-12 education in this province. While professional development programs should meet the personal needs of individuals, we must also ensure they address the established direction set by our ministry of education, school districts, schools, and departments.
- Remaining committed to the ongoing evaluation and revision of professional development programs to ensure they are meeting the needs of individuals as well as the public school system as a whole. The significant investment of time, focus and money in professional learning programs must provide quantifiable benefits for the K-12 education system at the classroom, district and provincial levels.
- Investments in professional development should be considered investments in leadership and currency. A failure to commit the necessary resources and time, as individuals, organizations, and levels of government, will undermine our ability to maintain one of the best public education systems in the world.

The state of professional development within the K-12 public education in B.C. remains strong. There remains a firm commitment from individuals, organizations, school districts, and the Ministry of Education to continual improvement and sector evolution to best meet the needs of students in our changing world. We cannot, however, become complacent and rest on our current accomplishments. As a sector, we

must remain committed to ongoing professional learning that meets our responsibility to ensure the best K-12 school system possible meets the needs of ALL learners. BCSTA accepts this challenge, as do our members, on behalf of the children of this province.

The work of this collaborative in bringing all of the provincial organizations to work together to meet the needs of our students is certainly important and valued. Understanding our collective strengths and weaknesses is a vital first step in meeting this responsibility. For boards of education, this includes stewardship over the public funds committed to this purpose. BCSTA will continue to review the findings of this research, explore options for improvement in both our internal and shared learning programs, and work to meet our shared responsibility to ensure we are individually and collectively advancing our K-12 public education system toward a common vision for the future.

3.1.5 BC TEACHERS' FEDERATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

From its founding in 1917, the BC Teachers' Federation has had a commitment to what now might be described as professional learning. One of the three objectives adopted by the union at its first Annual General Meeting was "to raise the status of the teaching profession in BC" (Saunders, 1916). As the BCTF describes itself as a "Union of Professionals" and a social justice organization, the provision of teacher-led learning opportunities is both a professional and an ethical commitment. In 1985, the BCTF adopted a statement of principles that continue to frame its professional learning policies and activities (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1985):

"These principles reflect understandings of professional development and the core values of teachers which are:

- *The primacy of continuing career-long professional development.*
- *The necessity of teacher autonomy.*
- *The importance of teaching-centered and teacher-directed professional development.*
- *The diversity of effective professional development needs and practices.*
- *The value of teachers teaching teachers.*
- *Recognition that teachers are learners."*

(British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1985, p. 28: (Section 30.A.09)

The BCTF has long recognized that the nature and organization of professional learning needs and opportunities cannot be abstracted from the critical political and economic contexts that fundamentally shape BC's education system. Systemic challenges in BC's education system and our province's broad political and economic context have profound effects on teaching and learning needs. BCTF members' needs and engagement in professional learning are significantly driven by systemic challenges, and therefore it is critical, in the BCTF's view, to discuss these as embedded and reflected in the nature and organization of professional learning in British Columbia. Following a discussion of seven key systemic challenges in BC's education system, this section details how BCTF is attempting to understand and address these challenges through quality professional learning programs under its auspices.

3.1.5.1 Challenges for Professional Learning

3.1.5.1.1 Curriculum reform and pedagogical change

The provincial government, under the School Act, is vested with authority over the definition

of curriculum, assessment, and reporting on student achievement. Educators, however, have a major influence on current curriculum changes as well as over pedagogical practices in teaching the curriculum and providing assessments and reporting to parents.

In 2011, a process of education change was initiated and outlined in the *BC Education Plan*³. Initially, the reform plan demonstrated a high level of generality, drawing extensively from the ideas of “21st Century learning,” articulated as a part of what Sahlberg describes as the “Global Education Reform Movement” (Sahlberg, 2006). These ideas have also been promoted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the group that conducts the influential Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) exams (OECD, 2015). One of the central ideas of this movement is to refocus education on “competencies” rather than content. An underlying assumption of these reform efforts is that information and communications technology has changed the context of education and provided a basis for “personalization” over more traditional standard and collective forms of organized learning. These broadly-articulated ideas have taken on concrete meaning as they have gone through the extensive process of definition in consultation with BC teachers, and other educational stakeholders.

The competencies have been defined under three categories: 1) creative thinking, 2) critical thinking, and 3) positive personal and cultural identity, which also includes personal awareness, personal responsibility, and social responsibility. These competencies are not intended as concrete areas for formal reporting, but as guides for teachers in thinking about how to organize learning activities. Competency descriptions and guidelines⁴ are intended to provide a framework for teachers, students, and parents to think about the development of competencies by the students.

³ See <http://www.bcedplan.ca/> for detailed information.

⁴ See <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies> for more information.

Although many elements of the competencies have been implicit in the curriculum and in teaching practice, the ways in which these have been newly formulated requires that teachers require opportunities to individually and collectively explore and understand the concepts—which are obviously important forms of professional learning.

To assess members’ perspectives on curriculum redesign and implementation, the BCTF asked its members to submit their written feedback between January 27 and May 15, 2016; members ultimately supplied over 150 pages (37,500 words) of feedback. This feedback was subsequently coded and analyzed using Atlas.ti software. Many of the responses dealt with professional learning in relation to the curriculum changes. While member feedback addressed many themes, a key theme emerging from the data revolved around the intersection of professional learning and curriculum redesign and implementation. In particular, members viewed professional learning as central to implementation processes. Many members, however, were concerned about implementation timelines, and highlighted the need for necessary professional learning as part of the implementation process:

Many members expressed concern that the implementation process has been rushed, allowing inadequate time for consultation, necessary professional development, and collaboration with colleagues to make implementation a success.

BCTF (2016), pp. 8-9

Members also noted that while professional learning is a critical part of the implementation process, they also required sufficient funding and resources for professional learning, including technology networks, supports, tools, and funding for ongoing professional learning needs and activities. Members value professional learning opportunities as well as collaboration opportunities with other teachers, and indicate that these opportunities are necessary and central

to successful curriculum change implementation. The implementation of the new K-12 curriculum and related processes will be a major challenge and area of focus for professional learning in BC. Successful implementation of curriculum changes depends upon the extent to which teachers will be able to explore different options, take risks to try new approaches and, critically, have the time and space to reflect on their practice. In the current context, navigating those changes will involve significant formal and informal learning by teachers, administrators, and other actors and participants in the education system.

3.1.5.1.2 Incorporating Aboriginal content and ways of knowing

For two decades, systemic efforts for improving opportunities and successes for Aboriginal students have been underway in British Columbia. In the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), partners in the education system have been endeavouring to embed many of the recommendations of the TRC throughout the education system. Their focus is not just on improving the success of Aboriginal students, but also on incorporating Aboriginal content and perspectives throughout the curriculum and for the benefit of all students.

Because of the historical marginalization of Aboriginal students and Aboriginal content, many teachers do not have the background of knowledge and experience to feel confident in incorporating this into their teaching. Implementation of policies for Aboriginal education and integration of Aboriginal content into the K–12 curriculum presents significant issues and needs for professional learning for BC's teachers.

3.1.5.1.3 Student diversity, demographics, and socio-economic equity

The ethnic and cultural makeup of students in BC schools is diverse (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). In some urban districts, a large proportion of students come from immigrant families and English is not the primary language spoken in the home (Statistics Canada, 2012). There are 62,792 students in the public schools who self-identify as Aboriginal, comprising 11.3% of public school students in British Columbia (BC Ministry of Education, 2016), despite the total Aboriginal population being 5.4% of the provincial total (Statistics Canada, 2012). Many of the smaller school districts outside the urban areas have a high percentage of Aboriginal students, but less ethnic diversity among non-Aboriginal students.

Teachers in the province, however, are much less diverse than the student population. Efforts have been made particularly to increase the number of teachers with Aboriginal ancestry to better address the needs of diverse learners. A joint agreement of the bargaining agents for teachers and employers—the BCTF and the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA)—includes an employment equity policy to increase the number of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry, but this has had limited success to date.

Over the past eight years, total student enrolment (by headcount) has declined 2.7% from 652,549 (2007) to 635,037 (2015–16) (BC Ministry of Education, 2016); however, the impact has varied substantially among districts and within districts—including changes to the number and location of schools. The combination of enrolment declines and changes to funding formula policies⁵ has resulted in the closure of 240 schools since 2002 (British Columbia

⁵ For a detailed analysis, see White, M. (2009). *More shortfalls than ever*—Growing evidence that the funding formula does not cover the costs of public education. Retrieved from www.bctf.ca: http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Publications/Research_reports/2009EF01.pdf

Teachers' Federation, 2016; British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2016).

In some urban areas, established neighbourhoods have experienced declines in the number of school-aged children as the population ages. However, with consistent population growth in other communities, new housing developments are attracting young families with immediate need for school spaces. This has meant that some neighborhood schools must rely on the use of portables to meet enrolment demand, while elsewhere schools that are the social centre of the community face potential closure (Britten, 2016; CBC News, 2016; Sheppard, 2016; Daybreak North, 2016).

British Columbia also has a high proportion—approximately 1 in 5—of children living in poverty (First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, 2015). In 2013, BC recorded the fifth-highest child poverty rate in Canada with 167,810 children living in poverty (ibid). The impact of low income is accentuated by high housing costs, particularly in Metro Vancouver Regional District⁶ (BC Stats, 2016; First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, 2015). In Metro Vancouver, 50% of the 453 census tracts recorded child poverty rates of at least 20%, the worst affected tracts being Vancouver's downtown eastside (70% child poverty rate), Chinatown (59%), and South Surrey (50%). Child poverty, however, affects all regions, with more than three in five (62%) of all regional districts in BC reporting rates higher than the provincial average of 20% (First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, 2015).

Teachers see the impact of these conditions in concrete ways in the classroom (BCTF Research, 2013). Adequate and proper nutrition is an important component in preparing students for learning. In some schools, nutritious

⁶ The average residential house price in British Columbia increased from \$232,758 in 2002 to \$636,627 in 2015; an increase of 173%. In the Greater Vancouver area, the average residential price increased from \$301,473 in 2002 to \$902,801 in 2015; an increase of 199% (BC Stats, 2016).

food is supplied through provincial funding⁷ (BC Ministry of Education, 2006) or local fundraising, and often by the teachers themselves (BCTF Research, 2013). Furthermore, the School Act contains provisions⁸ that mandate that School Boards must enact financial hardship policies to ensure that students not be excluded from school programs or activities (Government of British Columbia, 1996) on the basis of their family's ability to pay the attendant fees. However, many families may be unaware of or unwilling to partake of this policy, and educators make local adaptations to facilitate inclusion.

In a 2012 BCTF survey of its members on the impact of poverty on students, technology was identified as one area of increasing concern with respect to equity in the classroom (White, 2013). As society moves toward ubiquity in digital technology, the impact of exclusion becomes more pronounced for those who lack access. Unless the technology is provided to those who do not have private access, this will be a growing area of inequity, and will affect students' ability to engage equitably in 21st century instructional approaches (White, 2013).

Diversity, shifting populations, funding policy reforms, and child poverty all present significant challenges to the BC education system that affect the daily work and professional learning challenges of those offering educational service. While one cannot expect professional learning alone to overcome these systemic challenges, one hopes it can assist in helping cope with and better understand their implications, and support educators in providing quality education to all students.

⁷ For more information, review the CommunityLINK policy and program statement at: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/communitylink&title=CommunityLINK>. Funding for CommunityLINK programs in 2015–16 totaled \$63,250,991 http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/community-partnerships/communitylink/communitylink_vss_funding.pdf.

⁸ See Division 2, sections 82 and 82(4) of the BC School Act.

3.1.5.1.4 Addressing complex educational needs

The diversity of BC's schools and student population is quite complex. Compounding this complexity for teachers, however, is what the BCTF argues is systemic shortfalls in funding and services needed to adequately meet these diverse and growing needs. Class composition in particular has been a primary concern for teachers. A pending Supreme Court of Canada case will be heard in November 2016 regarding class size and composition, and specialist teacher ratios.⁹ The concept of class composition includes challenges associated with teaching a diverse group of students, including students with special needs. Professional learning is clearly critical in addressing the needs of teachers who have diverse and/or special needs students in their classrooms. This may include, but not be limited to, working with experienced special education specialists, or acquiring additional targeted skills and training. As the complexity of learner needs has increased, learning specialist teaching positions have declined over the past 10 years (BC Ministry of Education, 2015). These declines have generated several unintended consequences, including the downshifting of multiple learning specialist roles (including English Language Learner (ELL), teacher-librarian, and behavioural support) to the mainstream classroom. It is often teachers with limited experience who have been hired for vacant specialist positions, increasing the need for professional learning both for classroom teachers and for specialist teachers lacking the range of background to be effective in supporting students.

⁹ For further details: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/supreme-court-will-hear-bc-teachers-over-provincial-legislation/article28181176/>; BCTF News Release: <http://bctf.ca/NewsReleases.aspx?id=38992>; Ministry of Education News Release: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016EDUC0002-000035>; Case Summary: <http://www.scc-csc.ca/case-dossier/info/sum-som-eng.aspx?cas=36500>.

3.1.5.1.5 Funding and resources

Given these significant classroom challenges, there is a need for enhanced funding for professional learning; however, escalating operational costs have, in many cases, left schools boards with fewer budgetary and staffing resources for sustained and comprehensive professional learning. Some collective agreements provide for funding, but most were last negotiated 20 years ago and do not reflect current needs (Naylor, 2014). A modest increase in preparation time for elementary teachers was incorporated into the 2014 collective agreement. While some school districts generate additional revenues through fee-paying programs such as international education, such options are not feasible across all provincial regions.¹⁰

The scarcity of funding for professional learning, coupled with diverse and complex teaching and learning environments, is reflected in the results of the Learning Forward focus group (see Section 3.2), where participants identified funding and resources as the second highest need (after time-related needs) for obtaining and engaging in quality professional learning.

¹⁰ In 2014–15, approximately \$189.2 million in international student fees were collected by school districts (BC Ministry of Education, 2016; BC Ministry of Education, 2015; BC Ministry of Education, 2014/15). Those funds are primarily generated by urban districts in the Lower Mainland and Lower Vancouver Island. West Vancouver (District No. 45 has the highest international student headcount (8.6%) and received approximately \$9.2 million in funding from international student tuition in 2014–15—funding that is over and above grants transferred from the province. In West Vancouver, these fees represented 14% of the total district budgeted revenues in 2014–15 (BC Ministry of Education, 2014/15). By comparison, the School District of Prince Rupert—ranked as the third lowest region in BC on the 2012 Socio-Economic Index (BC Stats, 2012)—received \$50,000 in offshore fees in 2014–15, representing 0.19% of its total budgeted revenues (BC Ministry of Education, 2014/15).

3.1.5.1.6 Appropriate adoption of digital technology into the learning process

Digital technology is pervasive in society and schools, but many questions remain as to how to appropriately and effectively integrate technology into curriculum and classroom learning. Rapid changes in technology mean that approaches that work one year may be outmoded the next. Effective professional learning must emphasize both the “how to” aspects of technology applications as well as a critical analysis of the value and impact of technology on student learning, and social and emotional development.

One element of the new BC curriculum is [Applied Design, Skills, and Technology \(ADST\)](#), with curriculum competencies extending through K–12. This framework includes coding and “computational thinking,” and is designed to be implemented in multiple curricular areas, rather than as a distinct subject area. As outlined in 2.1.8.4.1, Premier Clark announced to a #BCTECH Summit in January 2016 that the course will be “mandatory for every child from Kindergarten to Grade 12 to learn what coding is and how it works” (Shaw & Shaw, 2016). After the announcement, the Ministry surveyed district superintendents to determine readiness of teachers, hardware, and networks for the ADST curriculum. Of the 27 superintendents who responded, 22 said that half or fewer of K–5 educators are “ready to integrate computational thinking into teaching practice.” Results for Grade 6–9 teachers were similar (Chan, 2016). The Ministry summary of the response was that “a large majority of the responding districts feel that their student and teacher resources are not suitable to meet the requirements of the new ADST curriculum” (ibid.).

Subsequently, in June 2016 the Ministry announced \$6 million in new funding to support coding (Government of British Columbia, 2016), with the parameters of this funding largely

aligned to the content requirements and learning objectives of the Applied Design, Skills, and Technology curriculum. School district officials and teachers are currently familiarizing themselves with the MOE’s implementation and learning plans for technology-based curriculum in BC schools—as well as the professional learning opportunities that will be made available to classroom teachers to explore how to introduce the effective and pedagogically appropriate use of information and communication technology across all elements and subject areas of the new K-12 curriculum.

3.1.5.1.7 Distributed leadership and professional learning

Leadership of professional learning takes a variety of forms. Given the need for effective leadership in the context of the education change taking place in BC, it is important to identify approaches most likely to provide the support needed to successfully make those changes. Implementation of policy, according to a recent (2016) study:

“is a continuous process. It may be of short duration... [b]ut for most policy change, particularly complex policies that involve fundamental alterations in the core mission and procedures of an agency, implementation takes much longer.”

McDonnell & Weatherford (2016), p. 236.

Certainly, the scope of change in K–12 curriculum fits the definition of “complexity” and requires leadership with a long-term view of the process. The Learning Forward focus groups (Section 3.2) identified distinct differences in perspectives between the teachers and the other educational groups regarding how to organize professional learning initiatives. One way of achieving a workable and successful balance between group interests is to conceptualize leadership in professional learning as “distributed.” Within a

distributed leadership framework, all groups—and individual educators—have a legitimate voice in determining and organizing professional learning. Mutual respect and a willingness to share responsibility is the minimum acceptable requirement to make distributed leadership approaches work.

Initially, a historical and political reservoir of mistrust must be overcome within BC's various educational stakeholders. One step in the process has been the agreement struck between the Ministry of Education and the BCTF which outlines plans for the two curriculum-implementation days held in 2015–16 as agreed to by the superintendent and the local union president in each school district. As discussed in this case study (Section 2.2.1) on the design and participation of these professional days, teachers saw the dual approval as a clear indicator that teachers' voices would be listened to in this consultative process.

The BC Collaborative group facilitated by Learning Forward BC in preparation for the Learning Forward annual conference in December 2016 in Vancouver has also provided a venue for the kinds of discussions that need to take place if distributed leadership is truly desired.

Within distributed leadership frameworks, explicit definitions and protocols would be negotiated by the parties through statements of principles and process. Each of the organizations should undertake to engage their members in discussions of distributed leadership and of the appropriate role of each group.

As the diverse challenges faced within BC's education system means that ongoing professional learning is crucial, a distributed leadership models offers a promising means of collectively facing these challenges.

3.1.5.2 BCTF and Professional Learning

In British Columbia, the BC Teachers' Federation has made a distinction between "professional development" and "in-service training." "Professional development" is defined as learning chosen by the individual professional to meet professional growth, while "in-service training" is seen as activities defined by the school district or school administrator. The following section will provide an overview of five areas of BCTF professional learning activity, including: professional development programs, Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs), Program for Quality Teaching (PQT), Teach BC, as well as collective bargaining and advocacy.

3.1.5.2.1 BCTF Professional Development Programs

More than 60 different BCTF workshops are available for local professional development days on a district or school basis. Each workshop is facilitated by a teacher who has attended the facilitator training offered each summer by the BCTF. The facilitator consults with those booking a workshop to ensure that it will be responsive to the particular context of its participants. These workshops are provided without charge to the local or the school.

Programs and workshop topics fall within three categories:

- **Aboriginal Education**, including Aboriginal History and Culture and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Exploring Historical Relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples; The BC Blanket Exercise.
- **School and Classroom issues**, including Assessment for Learning, Developing the School Leadership Team, Inclusion for Special Education Students, Classroom

Practice and Self-Regulation, and Teacher Inquiry as Professional Development.

- **Social Justice and Global Education**, including Understanding and Acting on LGBTQ Issues in Schools, Creating Racism-free Schools for Aboriginal Students, Creating a Gender-Inclusive School Culture, and Bringing Global Education into Your Classroom.

A **Professional Issues Advisory Committee** has representatives from around British Columbia and advises the BCTF Executive Committee on professional issues. An **Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee** has nine members and works with local Aboriginal Education Contacts in union locals as well as providing advice to the BCTF Executive Committee on issues related to Aboriginal Education. A **Committee for Action on Social Justice**, made up of six four-person action groups, provides similar organizational and program input. Current action groups are Anti-poverty; Antiracism; Environmental Justice; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ); Peace and Global Education; and Status of Women. The purpose of the action groups is to provide information, lesson ideas, and professional support for classroom teachers. Each action group creates discrete web pages covering the areas for which they are responsible. A description of the full range of workshops can be found [here](#).

3.1.5.2.2 Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs)

Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs) are self-organized groups with voluntary membership that focus on a specific aspect of teaching. PSAs span the subject, grade, interest, and learning specialist areas relevant to public education in the province. They are organizations of the BCTF, with formal

linkages and operating with grants from the BCTF as well as PSA membership dues. BC teachers and supporters of public education in BC have the option of joining one or more of the 33 distinctive Provincial Specialist Associations. PSAs thrive as a result of the commitment of those individuals who choose to become PSA members and subscribers, and the extensive voluntary contributions of each of the individual PSA Executives.

Since at least the 1930s, teachers have been holding meetings on curriculum and pedagogy in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting of the BCTF (Daly, 2011). These subject groups began to form as PSAs in 1958, holding formal organizational status within the structure of the BCTF, but with a significant amount of autonomy in their operations. A PSA Council was created in 1971 to facilitate the PSAs working together as a group and advise the BCTF Executive Committee on education policy and professional development, as well on operational issues (Daly, 2011). The PSAs play an important role in advising the BCTF Executive Committee on appointments to Ministry committees, such as the many curriculum committees currently involved in the writing of the new curriculum for British Columbia. On occasion, PSAs may issue recommendations to the Ministry of Education via the BCTF Executive Committee.

Although each PSA has its own focus and is incorporated under its own Constitution, all PSAs share the same central purpose: to foster and provide professional development through such activities as organization and hosting of conferences, institutes, workshops, and development of curriculum projects and position statements; communicating and liaising with other groups; and championing appropriate standards and working and learning conditions (Daly, 2011). Each PSA

also holds conferences, publishes journals and/or maintains a website [available through the BCTF website](#), and many also have a social media presence. Some PSAs have Local Specialist Associations (LSAs) that organize ongoing professional learning within a school district.

PSAs generally fit within four categories: 1) subject area, 2) teaching level, 3) pedagogy, and 4) cross-curricular themes. Subject PSAs include such areas as Social Studies, Mathematics, and French Immersion and French First Language (Association Provinciale des Professeurs d'Immersion et du Programme Francophone), while pedagogy-oriented PSAs include Cooperative Learning, Montessori Teachers, and Distributed Learning Teachers. Cross-curricular PSAs encompass themes and groups such as Aboriginal Education, Teacher-Librarians, Inclusive Education (formerly Special Education), and Rural and Multi-grade teachers. A complete list of PSAs is available [here](#).

The history of the two most-recently organized PSAs—Public Montessori Teachers of British Columbia (PMTBC) and the BC Early Career Teachers' Association (BCECTA)—provides insights into the continuing importance of these organizations in the professional life of teachers.

The Montessori education program has a particular pedagogy at its centre. In BC, some Montessori programs operate within the public system, while others are situated in independent (private) schools. Teachers employing the Montessori pedagogy share information and resources with colleagues across the public and private systems. The BCTF enables teachers who are not in the public system to join the PSA and to take an active part in its professional development activities, but preserves the holding of PSA executive positions to BCTF members.

While Montessori teachers share pedagogy, early career teachers share a set of common challenges. As a result of employment and contractual factors, many BC teachers begin their careers as a Teacher Teaching on Call (TTOC). The nature of TTOC work is such that the teacher is not a part of a stable school community as they move from school to school and work in a range of different assignments. Even when they obtain an initial contract, it is often on a limited term basis with the expectation that they are likely to end up back on the TTOC list or assigned to a position at another school. Because of their precarious employment situation, opportunities for professional learning are limited.

The BCTF has focused on improving the working conditions of TTOCs, including the negotiation of improved pay and provisions, creation of a TTOC provincial committee, and encouraging local unions to include a TTOC representative on their local executive. However, despite such provincial efforts, provisions for TTOC professional learning are still largely determined locally. Such challenges facing TTOCs, and a large contingent of early career teachers, galvanized a group of a minimum of 100 BCTF members¹¹ to form the BC Early Career Teachers' Association. The mission statement of the BC Early Career Teachers' Association makes clear the rationale for the organization:

We believe that high quality, beginning teacher professional learning should be:

- *Pragmatic and classroom-oriented*
- *Accessible in terms of proximity and cost*
- *Easy to implement*
- *Relevant to the teacher, school, and classroom environment*

¹¹ There are approximately 6,000 teachers who have worked at least one day per year as a TTOC which qualifies them for membership in the BC Teachers' Federation.

- *Proven effective based on research, best practices, and program evaluation*
- *Based on students' and teachers' needs*
- *Continuously based in a growth mindset*

The origins of the Montessori and Early Career Teachers associations are reflective of the purpose of all the PSAs: to provide teacher-driven professional learning and networking opportunities. There have been historically high levels of engagement and participation in PSA activity. Hundreds of teachers are engaged every year in the process of sharing concerns about their professional and student needs and organizing to make a difference within BC's public education system. Further, thousands of teachers take part in at least one activity every year, at provincial or local levels. As a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the BCTF, the PSA Council is organizing a Super Conference in October 2017 that will highlight the diverse areas of professional learning reflected in the PSAs.

3.1.5.2.3 BCTF Program for Quality Teaching (PQT)

The BCTF has a long-standing history of incorporating teacher inquiry and evidence-based facilitation approaches to cultivate teacher knowledge and practice. While the BCTF's first teacher inquiry initiatives originated in the early 1990s, the current framework dates to 2007, when the BCTF received a three-year Ministry of Education grant to support teacher researchers through the Program for Quality Teaching (PQT) in seven school districts and three Provincial Specialist Associations (Naylor & Hinds, 2010). Since 2007, the PQT teacher inquiry program has engaged over 1,000 BC teachers across many provincial regions, and across a broad range of educational roles, subject disciplines, and pedagogical interests. In 2015–16, 13 PQT inquiry projects were approved and funded with

supporting grants from local teachers' associations and school districts (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2016).

Application to, and organization of, PQT teacher inquiry projects is carried out by the BCTF's Professional and Social Issues Division (PSID), while inquiry meetings take place in school district venues. An annual call for proposals asks union locals to submit topics of their own choosing, while committing to a cost-sharing arrangement. The BCTF provides facilitators (and facilitator training), resources, research, and IT support (e.g., the PQT program Wiki, maintained by the BCTF Information Services department, which serves as an online communications hub and houses project reports and resources). In turn, school districts agree to provide funds to cover release time and on-site expenses.

Drawing on Campbell, Osmond-Johnson, & Faubert's (2016) characterization of quality professional learning, the PQT model exemplifies:

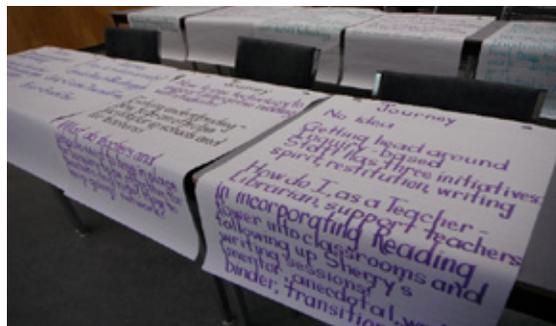
1. sustained inquiry processes over a long-term period.
2. subject/interest specific themes derived from teachers' lived practice, professional contexts and challenges, and interests for further learning.
3. a balance of 'system coherence' and 'teacher voice' through the use of a common inquiry model that accommodates teachers' unique and diverse range of learning intentions.

Almost a third of the \$1.18 million dedicated to BCTF teacher inquiry initiatives since 2010 has been allocated for the professional training of inquiry facilitators—a crucial element of effective professional learning experiences (Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Facilitators work alongside teachers in a year-long inquiry cycle

that includes: establishing group protocols and collaborative learning conditions; generating and honing inquiry questions; gathering data and information from the inquiry setting (most often a classroom or school); reviewing and analyzing data to inform the inquiry question and future practice; and sharing, celebrating, and reflecting on professional discoveries and growth within a broader community (Moore, 2008). Facilitated stages most commonly evolve over six sessions involving release time in participants' home school district, or at central locations when inquiries are undertaken by multi-jurisdictional groups (e.g., Provincial Specialist Associations).

In addition to the action research model, PQT participants have used other inquiry methodologies including book study, case study, and focused professional conversation (Hinds & Naylor, 2010). A diverse body of facilitation and collaborative learning strategies are used in inquiry sessions, including small group and whole group conversation, reflective writing and journaling, concept mapping and graphic organizers, and visual representations (e.g., using photographs to develop metaphorical thinking).

Besides a final report submitted to the BCTF at the end of their inquiry project, participants are encouraged to celebrate and share their learnings within their professional community. These share-outs have taken the form of project-end celebration gatherings, the creation of videos, PowerPoints and "gallery" displays, and presentations to school-based administrators, school board trustees, and local union groups.



"Inquiry Journeys," North Okanagan School District (SD83)

Outcomes and Experiences of Professional Learning

In contrast to conceptualizations of professional learning invoked in "standards driven" educational discourse, the relationship between teachers' professional learning endeavours and improved "student achievement" is not necessarily a primary driver of all PQT teacher inquiries. A qualitative review of PQT participants' inquiry questions between 2008–2016 found that while many inquiries focus on investigating instructional, assessment, and communications approaches explicitly undertaken to improve students' academic achievement and engagement (e.g., "Will focusing on descriptive feedback orally and in writing improve students' ability to read for information using the Provincial Performance Standards?"), a significant number of inquiry themes address other aspects of students' learning experiences (e.g., "What effects does exploring the multi-generational backgrounds of my students have on their understanding of history and themselves?"), as well as teachers' professional development ("How can we empower teachers in promoting emotional wellness in their classrooms and seeing this as part of the curriculum?"). In other words, the PQT's practitioner-driven orientation acknowledges that enhancing teachers'

knowledge, instructional, professional, and collaborative capacities are as central a motivation for professional learning as attaining specific improvements in student achievement.

Further, when teachers' inquiries do explicitly include student-centred outcomes as an aim of their action research efforts, a multi-layered conceptualization of "student achievement" emerges—including enhanced student engagement, social and emotional learning factors, and navigating technological and intercultural contexts. A decade's worth of PQT teacher inquiries expresses a collective acknowledgment of the diversity and complexity that characterizes teacher work and student learning—the diversity of BC's youth population, and the complexity and shifting qualities of the learning process from primary to secondary graduation—factors which affect student performance and learning outcomes, and are not simple to measure in academic terms.

Another benefit of a long-term inquiry model is the space created for deep understandings and shifts to take root in practice and thinking. Many participants, for example, find that their focus or question changes as they progress through the inquiry process, engage in collegial dialogue, and gather and analyze data and information. As one participant reflects:

"This was the only group I was having conversations with about my practice, so I found the sounding board and experience from the group very supportive to the inquiry process. They would challenge me in how I was thinking about the teaching/ learning process. Sometimes it was uncomfortable and sometimes the suggestions were way beyond my comfort zone, but in every case the ideas gave me new perspectives to consider that I would not have considered otherwise."

Action research brings an inquirer's lens to teachers' perspectives on their students, work site, and teaching practices: "I didn't expect

a personal transformation. I became more intentional about the learning process being a two-way dialogue with my students and creating opportunities for an exchange of ideas" (PQT participant, 2013).

Despite many evident benefits, however, engaging in sustained practitioner inquiry is not without its challenges. Making a significant time commitment to professional learning in the face of demanding classroom workloads is problematic. In addition, the geographical particularities of certain regions of BC, where inclement weather and long travel distances complicate inquiry session attendance, are concerns in rural districts. These two challenges—time pressures and geographical limitations—are the two most commonly cited reasons for the minority of participants who are not able to complete the inquiry year.

A significant body of educational research and localized evidence bears out the validity of embedding teacher inquiry initiatives as a rich form of professional learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Hinds & Naylor, 2010; Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Grimmert, 1996; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Webster-Wright, 2009). However, the PQT model of sustainable and expertly facilitated professional learning is costlier than the "one-time" workshop models teachers too often experience. Rhetorical acknowledgment of the evidence-based value of teacher-directed professional development and action research must be accompanied by a tangible investment of financial and human resources if teacher inquiry is to remain a foundational element of quality teaching and systems improvement in BC. Moving forward, securing stable funding for the Program for Quality Teaching remains a key challenge for maintaining equitable access and participation, high quality facilitation, and meaningful teacher inquiry experiences for BC public school teachers.

3.1.5.2.4 Teach BC

For over 50 years, the BCTF ran a Lesson Aids Service that was created to allow teachers to share classroom resources they had developed with fellow teachers. These were hard copies, printed at the BCTF and distributed by mail. In the digital age, this service became redundant. In its place, *Teach BC* was created. [TeachBC](#) is an online database where teachers are encouraged to contribute and download electronic teaching resources. Resources are posted on the basis of a Creative Commons licence.

Teachers are also encouraged to post their own research on *Teach BC*. With many BC teachers carrying out post-secondary and classroom-based action research through post-secondary studies, professional network and inquiry initiatives, such as the BCTF's PQT program, much scholarly information specific to BC classrooms is a product of teacher-generated research. The generation and dissemination of this significant body of research provides a basis for further professional learning.

3.1.5.2.5 Collective bargaining and advocacy

While professional learning may not appear to be central to collective bargaining, it is explicit and implicit in many elements of collective agreements and the bargaining process. A quality professional learning culture is difficult to sustain in an austerity climate, where teachers may feel their professional learning is not adequately supported through policy or funding decision-making. Such lack of support can be explicit—such as through the introduction of provincial legislation that governs professional learning provisions (e.g., [Bill 11 Part 4.1 Section 36.02](#)), or implicit, such as when sufficient resources are not provided to enable teachers to meet ministerial, public, and their own professional expectations.

BC's recent education history, including labour disruptions in 2005, 2012, and 2014, highlights

several points of tension regarding teacher autonomy and the regulation and conditions of teachers' professional learning. Despite this, the BCTF and the Ministry of Education have found ways to work together, perhaps most significantly in the professionally challenging task of initiating a major revision of the entire K–12 provincial curriculum. The proposed reforms not only impact the specific content of the curriculum, but also the pedagogical approaches embedded in its framework. The BCTF and Ministry of Education successfully negotiated release time for representative teachers to co-design curricular implementation sessions with the district administration, and for additional time within the school year for all teachers to have an opportunity to explore the curriculum with colleagues (for a more detailed discussion of this collaborative process, see 2.2.1).

This collaborative initiative seems to signal a decision on the part of both the provincial government and the BCTF that achieving successful changes to curriculum and related teaching practice requires both attitudes and structures of co-operation. While this co-operation has led to progress in framing a new curriculum, there are still several challenges to be addressed. One challenge is the provision of adequate resources. This concern has been expressed by educators in many forms, including surveys that are described in other sections of this case study (See Sections 3.2 and 3.3). Reductions in professional learning and specialist teacher staffing has resulted from the removal of staffing formulas from the collective agreement by legislation in 2002 (White, 2013). One result, for example, is that district and school-level teacher-librarians should be playing a major role in sourcing, acquiring, and distributing both professional and classroom resources; yet with reduced teacher-librarian staffing, both student and teacher access to resource materials, whether print or digital, are impacted in terms of timeliness, availability, and ease of use.

In the past, curriculum change has generally been implemented in discrete subject areas and over an extended period of time. The current reform effort is targeted for full implementation by 2018. Given the large scale nature of this reform effort—where every grade level and course is undergoing significant conceptual and content changes—leveraging existing and new professional learning provisions will be vital to implementation success within this timeframe.

Provisions of funds for professional development exist in the collective agreements in school districts. While the structure of bargaining is now on a provincial basis, a carryover from local bargaining is professional development clauses that existed when the bargaining system was changed in the mid-1990s. While some districts had provisions for percentage increases as salaries grew, many did not and were left with funds that were not adequate for professional development even before implementation of new curriculum. In the context of a complete change of curriculum, and budgets with little room for discretionary funding, districts will require additional resources for the professional learning required to successfully address the scope of systemic change being mandated.

Securing sustained and prudently allocated funding to address the full scope of curriculum change will require extensive cross-organizational consultation and policy development. The BCTF continues to serve as an advocate on behalf of its members for the professional learning resources required to carry out the work of ongoing system-wide curriculum change, in the service of BC's youth, families, and communities.

3.1.6 FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

3.1.6.1 Introduction

FISA BC is a non-profit society registered with the Corporate and Personal Property Registries Office, Ministry of Finance of BC, and Victoria, BC. Its primary role is to represent independent schools to government and the public on issues of legislation and policy. Approximately 300 of the 350 independent schools in BC, representing 81,659 students or 93% of the total independent school enrolment in the province, are voluntary members of FISA BC (2015/16). FISA consists of five separate independent school associations that work collaboratively, yet operate independently. These include Association of Christian Schools International (ACSIBC), Catholic Independent Schools (CISBC), Independent Schools Association (ISABC), Society of Christian Schools (SCSBC), and Associated Member Group (AMG) representing individual independent schools or associated groups that are too small to form their own association within FISA. FISA BC's mission is to enable parents to exercise the right to choose the kind of education that will be given to their children and to promote the rightful place and responsibility of independent schools within a democratic and pluralistic society.

According to a June 2016 study by the Barbara Mitchell Centre on independent schools in Canada, there were 1,935 independent schools in Canada, representing 368,717 students in 2013/14 (Allison, Hasan, & Van Pelt, 2016). Of this number, one fifth, or 20.4% were located in British Columbia. Catholic schools are part of the public system in Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec but in British Columbia, Catholic schools are part of the independent school sector. In addition to Catholic schools, British Columbia independent

schools include Christian non-Catholic schools such as Evangelical, Christian Reform, Seventh Day Adventist, Mennonite schools, as well as Jewish, Sikh, and Islamic schools. Approximately 60% of BC independent schools are faith-based. There are numerous pedagogical schools such as Montessori and Waldorf independent schools. University preparatory schools are well represented on Vancouver Island and in Metro Vancouver, and represent 17% of BC's independent school enrolment.

Independent schools range in size from 20-30 students to over 3,000 students. There are 16 independent Distributed Learning schools that represent 13% of the independent school enrolment, the largest enrolling over 3,000 students.

FISA BC has been in existence for 50 years and is governed by a Board consisting of three members from each of the independent associations, with an additional three non-voting members from the AMG group to ensure that all viewpoints are adequately heard and considered. Board decisions are generally made by consensus, which sometimes requires a significant passage of time, the establishment of ad hoc study groups, and frequent iterations of a particular issue at the monthly meetings. The ultimate goal is that every disparate viewpoint be heard and considered, and a workable solution found.

Professional learning and development is the responsibility of each association for its memberships, with the exception of the recent province-wide FISA BC convention at the Vancouver Convention Centre in February 2016 to celebrate FISA's 50th anniversary attended by 5,100 registrants. Each of the associations employs a small "district" staff that takes responsibility for the professional development of its members. In addition to the educators in each association meeting annually for professional development activities, leadership personnel (administrators and board members) meet several times a year for

vision and direction setting purposes. FISA BC is regularly invited to present at these meetings. In addition, the FISA BC Executive Director engages in an annual Regional Tour to ten locations around the province together with Ministry staff to engage independent school educators in person about regulatory requirements, curriculum development, political issues that may impact independent schools, and to answer questions and offer clarifications regarding operational issues. FISA also publishes a quarterly newsletter that reports on Ministry news, FISA initiatives, and innovative activities in independent schools, as well as provides links to both provincially and internationally available professional development seminars and courses.

The Professional Learning Activity described below is an example from SCSBC, one of the associations in FISA BC, whose goal is to create professional development that meets the key objectives of providing active learning experiences, job relevance, collaboration, extended duration, and ongoing follow-up. Professional learning activities take place in each of the other four associations of FISA BC.

3.1.6.2 Exemplar: Focusing on Pedagogy to Work with the New BC Education Plan

3.1.6.2.1 Context of Professional Learning Activity

Three administrators were given the task of designing a professional development experience focusing on the impact of pedagogy on learning. It was felt that as teachers adjust to the direction of the BC Ed Plan, emphasis on "how" we teach was appropriate. This professional development activity was co-facilitated by two assistant principals and the Director of Learning for SCSBC.

The study spanned a period of 11 months and included 20 participants from a variety of

SCSBC elementary and middle schools across the province. Participants registered for the course in order to fulfill contractual obligations for professional development, and the 19 registrants who completed the course received credit from their schools for the Pro-D hours. Two participants had completed a Master's degree; the other 18 had B.Ed. degrees.

The majority of the learning took place on site at the SCSBC school in Nanaimo, with ongoing cohort meetings and online touchpoints.

3.1.6.2.2 Methods and Processes for Professional Learning

Initially, participants engaged in a number of learning activities that they completed in a collaborative classroom environment structured to support the development of Core Competencies in both content and pedagogical style. Data was collected through self-assessment.

Four heterogeneous cohorts of 5 people were established. These cohorts met initially on campus during the first week of the study, and then bi-weekly throughout the year. Notes from the bi-weekly meetings guided facilitator support and interactions.

Participants engaged in four different course structures throughout the year: weekly email surveys, weekly reflective journals shared through Google Classroom, bi-weekly electronic cohort meetings, and four Touchpoint sessions (two in person and two electronically). The February Touchpoint session included individual interviews with one of the facilitators.

During a final week on campus, participants wrote a reflective paper, completed a post-course self-assessment, and filled out an online Final Course Evaluation and Reflection survey.

3.1.6.2.3 Outcomes and Experiences of Professional Learning

This professional learning activity had two intended outcomes. The first was for teachers to develop a deeper awareness of the lessons students are learning through the structures and pedagogies employed in the classroom. The second was that teachers understand and become competent with selecting pedagogical practices that effectively promote competency development in the BC Ed Plan. The teachers who chose to be involved in this activity either needed to meet contractual obligations, or found the study of the impact of pedagogy on learning to be of personal interest.

This professional development activity was of high quality design in that it engaged active learning experiences, provided job relevance, was undertaken in context and with collaboration, and provided ongoing follow-up for an extended period of time.

Results of this experimental study will be published and made available to the participants when available. Early results show 100% implementation of professional development structures, activities, and ideas. The local school authority is encouraged by the growth represented in the collected data, and is planning to replicate this professional development activity in another context.

3.1.6.2.4 Next Steps

The goals set by the teachers who have completed this study are part of their ongoing professional growth plans. SCSBC expects to replicate this activity with a different host school, in order to fulfill the mission of supporting community and learning in association member schools.

3.1.7 LEARNING FORWARD BC: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

3.1.7.1 Introduction

Learning Forward British Columbia (LFBC) is an affiliate of the parent organization Learning Forward. Formerly the Staff Development Council of BC, it has been active in the province since 1990. A not-for-profit volunteer organization, LFBC is supported by a hard-working board that consists of seven to twelve individuals who provide input representing cross role, cross-district perspectives. During the past two and a half years, LFBC has been part of the BC Research Collaborative. This group has worked toward collegial planning for [Learning Forward Conference 2016](#) in Vancouver BC, and has been involved in a research project examining the state of professional learning in Canada, with a focus on the BC Case study.

The mission of Learning Forward British Columbia is to provide opportunities for all educators to engage in quality professional learning that focuses on improving student engagement, learning, and achievement in the province of British Columbia. The purpose of Learning Forward British Columbia is to:

- (a) provide province-wide leadership for the enhancement of professional learning,
- (b) develop a reciprocal relationship with Learning Forward, the parent organization,
- (c) promote processes for effective professional learning,
- (d) provide support and resources for members and other educators, and
- (e) provide the opportunity to learn from and to share with others.

There are currently have 280 members on the LFBC mailing list. Membership includes teachers, school administrators, helping teachers, district staff, and senior administrators. It is currently free, and open to any educator who is interested in professional learning. Members benefit from shared experiences, resources, and our commitment to building support for educators who take a leadership role in professional learning. Membership numbers vary according to who attends the sessions, or sign up through visiting the [website](#).

Learning Forward British Columbia exists to build a network of educators committed to quality professional learning. Historically it shifted from holding large conferences of 1000 participants to running 'boutique conferences' with an audience of 100 to 150 participants. These smaller gatherings had a structure whereby guest speakers presented ideas and involved participants in learning focused conversations. LFBC also provide follow up sessions for districts that bring a group of ten plus to a session featuring a guest presenter. The intent of touchback sessions is to review core aspects of the workshop and build on insights gained, working toward a clear action plan for individual/teams and/or the district in regard to the topic. LFBC has also co-sponsored several events with the BC Principals and Vice Principals.

3.1.7.2 Exemplar: Learning Forward BC Networking Dinners

3.1.7.2.1 Introduction

The focus of networking dinners is aligned with the context of the BC education priorities and the LFBC strategic plan. Given that the board is a cross-role and cross-district team, LFBC showcases innovative practices being carried out by teachers and other educators who are supporting them in their work. The two to three network dinners that are organized for the year provide sustainability and ongoing experience with quality professional learning.

The learning teams who are asked to present have been recognized by the network as being excited and invigorated by their innovative work. Their story is one that includes a classroom teacher, school principal, and district office person who have worked collaboratively over a period of time. There is evidence from student work and feedback from students, parents, and peers that the intervention is making a difference. Participants at the network dinners are educators with an interest in the topic and eager to learn more about quality professional learning. Attendees range from beginning educators to those at career end or have retired and continue to be involved in supporting professional learning.

Held after school, LFBC networking dinners are usually held in a school site to utilize a chef training program. They are organized by one of the LFBC board committees and facilitated by board members. The network dinners are designed to model a process that anyone can replicate: the format, research, and materials used to stimulate discussion are made available.

3.1.7.2.2 Methods and Processes

The methods and processes of the networking dinners vary depending on the topic of the evening and the learning design. Conversation protocols are used with focus questions that will stimulate thinking and learning related to the topic. As well, participants are provided with a handout to capture their thinking related to the focus questions and record take-away ideas. Outcomes for the evening are provided in the advertising for the event, both in print and on the website, in emails sent to members, and at the beginning of the session.

Technology is used at the meetings along with handouts such as the participant template and any print materials that are being used. Social media is being increasingly used to promote the event and push out the thinking that occurs during the event. A major aspect of the networking dinners is

the face-to-face interaction as we build networks. Focused conversations are the backbone of the networking dinners: individual reflection, pair sharing, small group conversation, and whole room sharing.

It is important to note that the learning teams who share their story have been selected because of their ongoing, job embedded collaborative learning experience whereby there is evidence that their innovative practice is making a difference in their work; student learning, passion for their work, and inspiration for their colleagues. The template information that they are asked to provide supplies the following background information and context of their 'story:' initiative, district and school demographics, who is on their team, the inspiration for and focus of their work, evidence of impact on teacher and/or student learning, what has worked or is making a difference, how they know they are being successful (i.e. feedback that they are receiving from students, parents, and their colleagues), challenges faced, questions currently arising from the initiative, and their next steps.

Note: In the network dinner on "Connecting with Innovative Practice to Transform Student Learning: Stories that Support the Core Competencies," LFBC also asked, "In what ways are the 'core competencies' shaping student learning?"

3.1.7.2.3 Network Dinner Structure

A typical network dinner (4:30 to 7pm) has four main components: an opening activity, two team presentations, and a closure. Dinner is infused as a time to network. Opening the session begins by engaging individuals in an activity to 'set the stage' for the focus of the evening. After contemplating and sharing their learning goal for the evening, participants hear from two learning teams. Most of the session involves interaction with the two teams who are asked to present their story. Each team is asked to structure their 'presentation' of 40 minutes into three 'chunks' [a 10-10-10 rule

of thumb], approximately 10 minutes to hook or engage participants with their 'story' via a video clip or question that stimulates conversation, 10 minutes for participants to interact with the information, then 10 minutes for interaction between the audience and presenters.

Each team is asked to fill in a template that is distributed at the meeting. The template serves several purposes; to frame the planning conversation for the learning team, to distill aspects for the teams' work into segments that address the 'what, so what, and now what' aspects of their work, and to leave participants with the background and contact information for further networking opportunities.

Closure for the evening utilizes a protocol or strategy for reflection and sharing that also provides feedback to the presenters and organizers. This is to check that participants met their learning goal, and all have met their intended outcomes.

3.1.7.2.4 Outcomes and Experiences of Professional Learning

The networking dinners address a current challenge within the system and provide examples of collaborative school and district learning teams that demonstrate successful practice. Participants are invited to connect with teams experiencing success with their innovative practices, take away affirmation of their own practice, and to infuse new ideas. They are provided with the opportunity to network with others.

Adult learning and change theory informs Learning Forward British Columbia's work regarding quality professional learning. We attend to what is occurring in learning communities where their work is informed by using data, and that there is strong leadership and tracking of outcomes. Our sessions provide leadership and utilize learning designs to enhance implementation that supports change in practice.¹²

Feedback from our networking dinners informs us that the structure of the session provides a powerful learning experience. Participants feel inspired and value the cross-role aspect when learning about other schools and districts. At each of our network dinners we learn of topics that are of interest and of other examples of practice that are impacting educator practice. We know from feedback [exit task at the end of each session, electronic follow up, and LFBC Board member follow up with those they bring] that the relationships that often develop at our sessions are inspiring. The profile that is created for the presenting teams is rewarding for them. We also know the value of the process that takes place for the learning team in their conversations as they work to address the questions in the template.

In a network dinner on the new BC K-12 curriculum core competencies, the following information was given regarding evidence of impact on student and educator learning:

¹² See for example: Donohoo, J. (2013). *Collaborative Inquiry for Educators: A Facilitators Guide to School Improvement*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin.; Garmston, R.J.. (2012). *Unlocking Group Potential to Improve Schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin.; Hattie, J., & Yates, G. *Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn*. 2014. NY. Routledge. ; Learning Forward. (2015). *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH. ; Learning Forward (2011). *Standards for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH.; Lipton, L., & Wellman, B. (2011). *Groups at Work. Strategies and Structures for Professional Learning*. USA. Miravia.; McDonald, J., Nohr, N., Ditcher A., & McDonald E. (2007). *The Power of Protocols. An Educators Guide to Better Practice*. NY. Teachers College Press.

Teaching Students, Not Courses. Surrey School District: Grade 8/9 Humanities

“Increased engagement: student conversation about learning extend beyond the classroom amongst their peers and with their families. Parents in turn are expressing their own excitement and appreciation about the level of engagement and impact they see in their child’s learning. Ongoing growth and improvement in developing curricular and core competencies: there is a curiosity about the process, strategies and learning experiences that student are engaged in. Colleagues have been making requests for us to share.”

Annieville: The Ripple Effect. Delta School District: K-2

“Teachers are inspired to shift practice. This change has inspired student’s sense of wonder and curiosity, as they become more active members in their own learning. The increasing amount of student questions shows their sheer joy in learning. Changes to classroom environments and thinking have begun to ripple throughout the building and increased overall sense of community, creating deeper and more meaningful relationships and connections at the school. Engaging in shared professional learning and networking with educators both within and outside of the district. – powerful reciprocal exchange of ideas and inspiring teachers to gradually transform their classroom and practice.”

There are few challenges associated with hosting a network dinner. Although the organization and attention to promotion and registration take time, the outcome is worth it. There are always folks who stay to work in their team or talk with other participants. The energy in the room is upbeat and enthusiastic even at the end of a long day.

3.1.7.3 Next Steps

Learning Forward British Columbia will continue to facilitate network dinners. Our next steps are to decide on the focus for future network dinners, set dates, affirm our location, and use our network to find two learning teams to share their inspiring work. Working with members of our education partner groups in BC is an ongoing goal as we seek out innovatively inspiring cross role professional learning practices.

3.1.8 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: THE MINISTRY’S ROLE IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

3.1.8.1 Introduction

The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable the approximately 550,000 public and 80,000 independent school students, and over 2,200 home-schooled children, enrolled each school year, to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy. The Ministry provides leadership and funding to the K-12 education system through governance, legislation, policy, and standards. The Ministry’s role in helping to meet the purpose of the school system involves co-governing the K-12 education system with boards of education, working closely with a network of partners, including independent school authorities, professional education organizations, public libraries, First Nations representatives, provincial ministries, and agencies and the private sector. Specific roles and responsibilities are set out under the *School Act*, the *Independent School Act*, the *Teachers Act*, the *Library Act*, the *First Nations Education Act*, the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*, the *Special Accounts Appropriation and Control Act*, and accompanying regulations. (Service Plan, Ministry of Education, 2016).

There are 6 divisions within the Ministry of Education:

1. Capital
2. Resource Development and Corporate Services
3. Services and Technology
4. Governance and Analytics
5. International Education, Independent Schools and Partner Relations
6. Learning Division

Overall, the Ministry employs approximately 320 people and interacts with education partners and stakeholders within the province. While the Ministry's direct involvement in professional development is somewhat limited, it partners with various stakeholders to provide educational resources and curriculum implementation assistance through a variety of programs and services as outlined below.

3.1.8.2 The Ministry's Role in Professional Learning

The Ministry's role in professional learning is one of visioning coupled with practical collaboration involving education partners to support the implementation of the vision. The Ministry is committed to ensuring that teachers and educators have access to high quality and ongoing professional development. In a world of constant change, professional development must continuously evolve and expand throughout an educator's career. The Ministry is dedicated to supporting teachers, leaders, and other educators with comprehensive learning opportunities that respond to the evolving and unique needs of our students, as well as assisting teachers and educators to enhance their practice through professional and personal growth. This support includes broad training that responds to changing needs

in classrooms as well as customized learning opportunities to support the unique needs of teachers and educators. The Ministry is also committed to supporting effective collaboration within and between school districts for the enhancement of the structure of education as a whole.

The goal of the Ministry, therefore, is to develop a supportive framework in which quality continuing professional learning can occur. Such a framework will support a variety of activities such as the participation in and instruction of training and educational programs, courses and seminars, the provision of teacher mentoring systems and programs, participation in learning activities relevant to qualifications of certificate holders, and the promotion of collaborative partnerships for the purposes of ongoing training, learning, and leadership.

As is happening in many places around the world, the BC Ministry of Education has a desire, vision, and active commitment to modernizing our educational system, and this vision forms the context for continuing professional learning. In order to remain current in a changing world, learning needs to adapt and reflect the changing demands of B.C.'s K-12 system, including integrating Aboriginal culture and teaching practices into the curriculum, providing students with the opportunity to experience world languages and culture, recognizing the diverse needs and learning styles of all students, and expanding trades and technology education to support in-demand job skills. BC's new curriculum will continue to teach students the basics – reading, writing and arithmetic – but it will do so in a way that connects them to collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills so important after high school. These are the core skills universities, colleges, and employers are seeking. During this past 2015-16 school year, the draft new curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 9 was introduced. In 2016-17, that curriculum will be fully implemented and

the draft curriculum will be available for grades 10-12. Secondary teachers will have the option to provide feedback and to use this draft curriculum in their classrooms.

To support these changing demands, working together and sharing knowledge is a key ingredient to facilitate learning.

3.1.8.3 Learning Division

The Ministry of Education established the Learning Division in 2011 to bring together all the branches and functions associated with supporting learning opportunities for youth. Branches within the division are led by Directors, who report to an Assistant Deputy Minister. The Division's focus is to enhance program and service delivery in Aboriginal education, special needs education, distance education, adult education, French education, healthy and safe schools, as well as key government priorities such as student pathways to careers. Curriculum and Assessment initiatives are shared between the Learning Division and the interim Learning Modernization Project (LMP). The Division also coordinates the activities of the Ministry Outreach team. The Division and the Curriculum & Assessment group within the LMP number about 70 staff. The Division's professional learning activities are primarily focused on signaling policy and curriculum changes to solicit feedback, and communicating changes to K-12 educators and administrators about education policies and curriculum that affect programs offered in schools.

Educator and administrator skill development has not been a formal Division responsibility, although there have been notable exceptions (ERASE anti-bullying, and Changing Results for Young Readers). Most recently, the Ministry has provided \$3 million in professional learning support to districts to implement new curriculum, but districts must work with their staff associations to create locally relevant professional learning strategies.

3.1.8.4 Education Policy and Curriculum Implementation

As educational policies, curricula, and learning support initiatives develop and change, the Division needs to communicate directions and changes to K-12 educators and administrators. Division managers, education officers, and the Outreach Team engage in these activities. As the Division's mandates are both broad (curriculum) and specific (adult education standards), participants cover the full range of pre-K to adult basic education programming, with a focus on classroom educators and school administrators.

Learning locations may be within Ministry of Education premises, school properties, or rented meeting spaces. Many activities, particularly education conferences, are organized by stakeholder groups or Boards of Education. Division representatives are invited to deliver presentations, but the Division will also coordinate professional learning sessions for priority activities. To a limited extent, Division programs will participate in stakeholder conference planning and sponsorship where there is alignment in purposes.

The majority of sessions are presentations at face-to-face events, with occasional delivery via web- or audio-conferencing (The Division has access to a provincial Blackboard collaborate license). Depending on the purpose, sessions may also be offered as workshops.

The intended outcomes of this professional learning activity are to promote awareness of policy, curriculum, and program changes, but also to receive feedback to make adjustments. Participants who engage in these sessions typically have a direct connection to the program or curriculum in question. For policy implementation, this form of Professional Learning is a key way to change practice, because it gives practitioners direct access to new policy conversations, and an opportunity to ask questions and offer suggestions for further improvement. The following are examples of professional

learning activities carried out by the Learning Division for the Ministry of Education.

3.1.8.5 Custom Programs

The Custom Programs Branch is the new name for the previous Graduation, Skills, and Distance Learning Branch in the Learning Division. The name change reflects its diverse responsibilities for skills/trades/career initiatives, distance learning, adult education, and alternative schools. It also is the lead branch for the ministry for the province's #BCTech strategy and the implementation of coding (computational thinking) as part of the new curriculum. The Branch consists of about 8 staff, reporting to a Director. Historically, professional learning initiatives followed the general pattern as described above –primarily presentations and workshops to educator groups to seek feedback on and communicate policy directions.

3.1.8.5.1 Professional Learning Program: Coding Implementation

The #BCTech strategy that was announced in January 2016 included a talent development pillar, and one of the Ministry of Education's commitments to talent development was to include coding as part of the curriculum prior to Grade 10 beginning in the 2016/17 school year. In June 2016, the Premier announced that beginning in 2018, BC schools must ensure that every student will have experienced a coding module by the end of Grade 9. The announcement included a commitment to provide \$4 million to support professional

learning, equipment, and resources. The Ministry conducted a survey of districts in February to determine readiness. Nearly half the districts responded and most of the respondents indicated that their teachers were not ready to implement coding in the curriculum. In follow-up conversations with superintendents, two years emerged as the time needed to prepare teachers. Based on district responses, the Custom Programs Branch proposed the following professional learning model:

- Each district would identify 4 lead teachers to be trained as trainers of colleagues in their districts.
- The Ministry would invite proposals from private, non-profit, and post-secondary sectors to develop and deliver a sample student module and training materials for the teachers to take back to their districts.

3.1.8.5.2 Professional Learning Program: Learning Partnerships for Rural Education

The Ministry supports learning partnerships with educators in K-12 and post-secondary that is largely focused on rural education. In this support work, the Ministry participates in '3 Campus,' a collaborative learning partnership that focuses on the application of the new curriculum. The program involves teachers (current and pre-service) and partners from some of the faculties of Education.

**3.1.8.5.3 Professional Learning Program(s):
Learning Division Outreach Team
and Provincial Specialist Workshops**

Ministry Staff deliver presentations at the following Provincial Specialist Association events on average once or twice a year (2015-2016):

Math (BCAMT) estimated 30-40 attendees

Language arts estimated 30-40 attendees (BCTELA)

Science estimated 30-40 attendees (BCScTA/catalyst)

Modern language estimated 30-40 attendees (BCATML)

Social Studies estimated 30-40 attendees (BCSSTA)

Music (BCMEA) estimated 30-40 attendees

Alternate Education . 40-60 attendees (BCAEA)

Career Education up to 100 attendees Society (CES)

Learning Division Outreach Team – Record of Engagement

TIME FRAME	Number of workshops	Total Participants	Participant Descriptor
MAY 2016	50	3323 (smallest 5) (largest 450)	Teachers, teacher consultants, principals, vice-principals, superintendents, school support staff and administrators, early childhood educators, career counsellors and team leaders, parents, school trustees, postsecondary admin, representatives and faculty, school district representatives, Ministry representatives
JUNE 2016	11	676 (smallest 10) (largest 300)	

3.1.8.6 Teacher Regulation Branch

The Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB) was established in 2012 when the Ministry of Education took over the regulatory responsibilities from the BC College of Teachers. The TRB is the operational arm of the regulatory structure, providing administrative resources necessary to allow the Commissioner for Teacher Regulation, BC Teachers' Council, Director of Certification, Disciplinary and Professional Conduct Board, and Independent School Teaching Certificate Standards Committee to carry out their mandates. The TRB supports professional learning through workshop presentations and courses related to professional standards, boundaries, and professional identity.

Workshop Descriptions

Professional Identity/Standards Workshop (3 hrs) – focuses on the 8 Professional Standards and how they guide the daily practice of educators.

Teacher Regulation Workshop (3 hrs) - focuses on the regulatory process for professional conduct. The *Teachers Act* and the work of the 5 statutory players under the Act (BC Teachers Council, Independent Schools Teaching Certificate Standards Committee, Director of Certification, Commissioner, Discipline and Professional Conduct Board) are reviewed along with the TRB's role in supporting and operationalizing this work.

Professional Conduct Process Workshop (3 hrs) – focuses on the disciplinary process and system and on better understanding situations that may lead to disciplinary action.

Professionalism Workshop – a much shorter session (1 hour max.) focusing on *Standard #2* and how educators are held to a professional standard 24 hours a day, outside of school, throughout their careers.

Outreach Workshops (Held Outside TRB)

WORKSHOP TITLE (course descriptions provided below)	Number of workshops held 2014	Number of workshops held 2015	Number of workshops held 2016 (to June 15 th)	PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTOR
Professional Identity, Professional Standards	26	39	26	The majority of participants is composed of pre-service and in-service teachers and administrators *No attendance or participation rates were recorded for these sessions
Teacher Regulation	2	11	4	
Professional Conduct Process	0	2	0	
Professionalism	0	2	3	
TOTALS:	28	54	33	

'In House' Workshops (held at TRB)

WORKSHOP TITLE	AUG 18, 2014	MARCH 18, 2015	JULY 20, 2015	PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTOR
Professional Identity & Professional Standards	23 participants	7 participants	26 participants	90% teachers; 10% a mix of Administrators, Principals or Vice-Principals, HR, Other

Workshop Description

The session opens with an introduction to the role of teacher regulation followed by an interactive workshop that allows participants to reflect on the nature of the student-teacher relationship. The workshop uses case studies to focus on the Standards, off-duty conduct, relevant court decisions, multiple jeopardy, inappropriate use of social media, and what all of this means for teachers and their students. The workshop is held at no charge to participants.

TRB In-House Workshops were replaced in 2015 by more intensive 3-day courses offered through the Justice Institute of BC (see below). These courses are attended for remedial purposes (required for professional conduct disciplinary action) as well as being open for general interest. TRB continues to do Outreach Workshops for anyone interested.

3.1.8.7 Justice Institute Courses for Educators

The first of the three courses now offered by the JIBC, 'Creating a Positive Learning Environment,' was held in March 2016. There were 20 participants for this session, which is considered a full course, and there are already two registrants for the March 2017 session. The course 'Reinforcing Respectful Professional Boundaries' will be offered at the end of August 2016, and again in July 2017. There are 18 registrants for the 2016 session of this course at this time. The third course newly offered by the JIBC is called 'The Mindful Educator in

Managing Conflict.' This is planned for Aug 2017 and registration has not yet opened. This course combines elements of the course 'Dealing with Anger' and 'Foundations of Collaborative Conflict Resolution.'

3.1.8.8 Ministry of Education Exemplar Case Study 1: Changing Results for Young Readers

Changing Results for Young Readers (CR4YR), a collaborative inquiry project, was initiated by the BC Ministry of Education in 2012 under the leadership of Maureen Dockendorf, Superintendent of Reading, to increase the number of BC children who are engaged, successful readers. Teachers in 57 participating districts met with a facilitator 7 times each year to explore inquiry questions they chose. Participating districts and teachers had a variety of networking opportunities, including two provincial sessions per year, shared resources through facilitators and Early Reading Advocates, and ongoing dialogue. The BC Ministry of Education funded the CR4YR Initiative from 2012 – 2015.

3.1.8.8.1 Context of Professional Learning Activity

In the years 2014-2015, there were 10,080 (estimate) primary students, 700 (estimate) educators, 480 case studies of learners experiencing difficulty in reading, and 310 letters to colleagues. These are posted on the [CR4YR research website](#) to support teacher-to-teacher professional

development. As an adjunct to CR4YR, over 20 districts have developed and funded projects modeled on CR4YR for teachers of students beyond grade 3. The groups are typically labeled “CR4AR” (Adolescent Readers) or “CR4OR” (Older Readers). In some districts, these teachers met at the same time as CR4YR; in other districts, there were separate groups and facilitators (outside of CR4YR). Districts with separate groups were funded outside of CR4YR made their own arrangements for facilitators and decided whether they would submit case records and letters to colleagues for central filing. In the Lower Mainland, all districts that were part of the Adolescent Literacy Network participated and shared results.

3.1.8.8.2 Methods and Processes for Professional Learning

Case files, including a summary of student progress, examined the impact of CR4YR on student literacy. Teachers tracked one child from each classroom in the project, from November 2014 through May 2015. The results summarized here are based on completed case files for approximately 300 of the most vulnerable students.

A survey of Early Reading Advocates completed in June 2015 documents the impact of CR4YR on districts, schools, and teachers. To date, 39 districts responded; in most cases, two or more educators who had been involved with CR4YR for 1-3 years completed the survey. Two additional data sources provide evidence of the impact of CR4YR ON STUDENTS:

1. Each participant or team wrote a “Letter to Colleagues” focusing on one strategy/ approach or action that was been useful to them. Letters from 2013-14, and 2014-15 were analyzed and posted on the CR4YR research website CR4YR Research website, <http://cr4yr.wordpress.com>
2. Each participating teacher/team used the BC Performance Standards for Reading or the Kindergarten Oral Language Continuum to assess all of the children in their classrooms in both November and May.

Each participant worked alone or as a member of a team to compile a case file tracking one child from November to May. Wherever possible, the team tracking an individual child included both a classroom teacher and another teacher, administrator, or support (e.g. Learning Support; Educational Assistant; Teacher librarian; Principal; Aboriginal Support; SWIS.) The number of case files roughly represents the number of classrooms in the project – it is difficult to estimate the number of teachers/supporters/administrators as some teachers worked individually and others had a partner; as well in some cases, a support worker or Resource/Learning Support Teacher supported more than one classroom teacher.

Typically, a “complete” case file included 5 entries: a cover sheet, describing the child in November; 3 case records, describing the teacher’s actions and the student’s progress during the year; and a final summary, detailing the students’ progress and indicating plans for the future. Analyses of the case studies are posted on the CR4YR Research website.

At the second last meeting, each teacher in the project was invited to write a letter or message to her/his colleagues, sharing something that would be helpful and/or interesting for other teachers. These provided both a way for teachers to review and reflect on what they have learned, and valuable resources for individual or group professional development. They are posted on the Young Readers website; the research team also prepared a data base of letters on specific topics that individual teachers or local districts can use to stimulate discussion and learning.

3.1.8.8.3 Outcomes and Experiences of Professional Learning

3.1.8.8.3.1 Impact on students

Completed case studies have been coded and summarized to gather evidence about student progress. Analysis of 311 complete case records indicates that teachers have observed strong growth in student literacy; results are extremely positive and mirror results from 2012-2013, and 2013-2014. Ninety-six percent of the vulnerable students selected for the case studies showed growth in reading for meaning; teachers observed major changes in 40% of these students. Furthermore, there were substantial decreases in the gaps between student literacy achievement and grade level expectations—again, similar to 2012-2013 and 2013-14. In terms of literacy, over 60% of students have progressed more than one year during the 8-month project – that is, they are closer to current grade level expectations than they were at the outset of the project. A substantial number (17%) are now meeting grade level expectations.

Teachers also described the extent to which they incorporated a focus on other aspects in their work with the case study student, including:

- self-regulation
- confidence (reduced anxiety)
- personal responsibility and motivation
- social awareness and competence
- personal and cultural identity

Teachers were most likely to focus on *increasing student confidence (75%)*; followed by *personal responsibility and motivation (72%)*. More than half of teachers reported some focus on *self-regulation*; approximately 40% reported focusing on awareness and competence, and 25% reported some focus on *personal and cultural identity*. Generally, when teachers did report focusing on

one of these aspects, they reported significant success. The highest levels of success appeared for *increasing student confidence (75%)*, followed by *personal responsibility/motivation (67%)*.

3.1.8.8.3.2 Impact on teachers, schools and districts

Thirty-nine districts responded to a survey that inquired into the impact of CR4YR on teaching practices and on teacher development. The survey asked respondents to indicate the extent to which CR4YR had had an impact on the following instructional practices:

- Evidence-based reading instruction
- CR4YR researched practices
- Use of specific resources or strategies
- Integration of First People’s Principles of Learning
- Focus on engagement and joy
- 1:1 support within regular classroom

The survey also examined the impact of CR4YR on teacher development, specifically:

- Confidence and voice of teachers
- Collaboration among educators
- Use of inquiry approach

District-based educators reported that CR4YR had a strong impact on instructional practices in their districts, as well as on teacher development. Approximately 80% attributed increased use of evidence-based reading practices, CR4YR researched practices, and specific strategies or resources. In most cases, they learned about the efficacy of these practices through CR4YR provincial networking sessions, from CR4YR facilitators, and through reports and presentations archived on the provincial CR4YR websites.

An even larger proportion of district-based

educators reported an increased focus on student engagement and on the joy of reading (referring to all forms of text and kinds of reading). Nearly half of educators who responded for their districts reported an increase in in-class support; a smaller, but still substantial number, reported an increase in integration of the First People's Principles of Learning in classrooms in their districts. Several others reported that this integration had already taken place and therefore CR4YR did not cause an "increase."

According to district Early Reading Advocates (often supported by other district staff), CR4YR created a strongly positive and broad increase in teacher confidence and voice – all districts reported at least some change; 95% reported "a lot" or "major" change. Increased collaboration was attributed to participation in CR4YR by 98% of districts, with close to 60% describing this increase as "major;" 97% reported some increase in an inquiry approach, and nearly 70% described this as "a lot" or "major" change. All districts reported that teachers in the CR4YR project increased their use of evidence-based strategies for literacy development. Topics frequently identified included:

- Understanding the importance of strong, positive relationships
- Increasing the sense of belonging and identity
- Allington's 6 elements of quality reading instruction (Every Child Every Day)
- Strategies identified in research-based resources such as *Catching Readers before they Fall*
- The strategic and intentional development of early literacy

3.1.8.8.3.3 Impact on instruction

Increased use of practices that CR4YR research indicated were effective in improving results for vulnerable readers. All districts reported that teachers had increased their use of CR4YR research-based practices, which colleagues and the research team indicated were effective in changing results for vulnerable readers; close to 80% reported *a lot of change* or *major change*. Topics frequently identified included:

- 1:1 support within the classroom
- the importance of choice (and knowing children's interests and passions)
- building independence (children in charge of their learning; self-regulated learning)
- reading for meaning
- increased conferencing with students

All districts reported that teachers had increased their use of specific resources or strategies they had learned at CR4YR networking sessions, or in their district sessions; close to 80% reported *a lot of change* or *major change*. Topics frequently identified included:

- Strong Nations and other First Nations books (e.g., *Eaglecrest*)
- Professional books (e.g., *Catching Readers Before They Fall*; *Opening Minds*)
- Greater variety of literature (beyond leveled texts)
- Oral strategies (e.g., Reader's Theatre)
- Sharing of resources and strategies among teachers

Increased attention to First Peoples' Principles of Learning

Additionally, approximately 2/3 of districts reported some increase in attention to the First People's Principles of Learning; in close to 30% of districts, the change was substantial. Survey responses often indicated that their teachers and schools were at "beginning stages" with integration of the FPPL. Districts often referred to:

- Increased awareness
- Broader role for Aboriginal Support workers
- Increased use of First Nations literature

Increased focus on engagement and the joy of reading

Almost all districts reported a substantial increase in focus on engagement and the joy of reading—over half described major changes in this area; a further 37% described "a lot of change." Districts frequently described:

- The impact of choice of increasing joy and engagement
- The importance of relationships and knowing each child well
- New reading materials that were more interesting and motivating
- Focusing on the student rather than "the program"

Increased in-classroom support by learning assistance and other support teachers

Most districts described changes in how learning assistance and other support was provided – in most cases, there was some increase in support teachers working directly in the classroom. Survey responses often described this as a difficult area to change, particularly given current expectations for support teachers. However, many others were enthusiastic about the substantial changes they were seeing.

3.1.8.8.3.4 Impact on teacher development

Increased confidence/voice of teachers

All districts reported an increase in teacher confidence and "voice" attributable to participation in CR4YR. This was one of the areas where districts noted the greatest change. Survey responses often noted how comfortable teachers had become in talking about their practice and how confident and willing they now are to try something new, if it will help their students.

Comments from the surveys:

"Teachers have told me they never felt as confident about teaching reading as they do now. So many said "I wish I knew this when I began my career!" The teachers talk so knowledgeably about their students reading, they are more focused on developing each student's reading process system, and less focused on individual skills. There used to be a lot of talk about just teaching all the sight words, or letter sounds. Now they focus more on the whole process. We still have lots to learn, but it feels like we have stopped searching for the "magic bullet" and are starting to recognize learning to read as a process."

"We have also kept our Trustees informed annually about district participation in this initiative. One of the team members talked very candidly about her initial skepticism of "another new project from the ministry". She went on to captivate her audience with the story of her case study child, accompanied by a video journal that was shared regularly with the student's parents, showing the child's remarkable transformation from a struggling first-grade reader - who avoided the task whenever possible - to a competent, confident second-grade reader who told her classmates not to worry because she had started out with problems too – and then proceeded to read aloud to them her favorite book!"

Collaboration among educators

Collaboration was the area of greatest change across the province: nearly 60% of districts described major change/increase in collaboration that they attributed to CR4YR, and a further 26% described “a lot” of change.

Comments from the surveys:

“I don’t think any of the 75 teachers who have been involved in CR4YR in our district will want to teach and learn alone again! They loved the opportunity to talk with their colleagues and I know those conversations carry on at the school level. I often participate in collaboration sessions at schools and I have found the questions and topics to be much more thoughtful about learning than in the past.”

“Especially noteworthy was the impact on practice and confidence for new career teachers who were mentored by experienced colleagues through this collaboration.”

“Collaboration was also evident in the inquiry planning, case study work, and school-based debriefing/sharing (often outside of CR4YR release time). School teams noted that they were talking about their practice informally, where this didn’t happen before. They valued these new connections.”

“We are a district of small schools in remote locations. The teachers reported that the chance to meet and have professional conversations with colleagues was very beneficial.”

“By being a part of CR4YR, teachers were part of a bigger group and saw a healthy collaborative model in action.”

Using an inquiry approach or model

Comments from the surveys:

It was such a natural way to explore and learn together. We had the spiral out at every meeting and we used it to guide where we were in our process.

This is another instance of how CR4YR promoted evidence-based practice that already existed, and really helped teachers see how what was happening locally aligned with a big idea that was taking place in the larger provincial context.

Teachers are excited to be using an inquiry approach model and credit the CR4YR’s program for encouraging their growth.

The pro-active feel of the inquiry model and the realization that it is a constant quest to seek improved practice helps teachers to remember that we all engage in learning all the time so it’s okay that we aren’t ‘perfect’ in our practice at any given time because we can always learn from one another, learn from research and learn from our students themselves. If we adopt a model of inquiry as a way of looking at the classroom environment, we constantly seek to improve things for kids.

The CR4YR inquiry approach introduced us to the idea of using a case study focused on a vulnerable learner to propel the inquiry process. This was effective for embedded professional learning as it made it relevant as well as prompting accountability to help this child and to explain progress to colleagues.

3.1.8.8.3.5 Overall impact on districts

The district survey invited comments about the overall impact of CR4YR over the three years of the project. Comments were overwhelmingly positive, and frequently described fundamental changes in approaches to early literacy, teacher development, and district initiatives and support. The impact and effects of CR4YR most frequently described in this section included:

- A renewed focus and passion for reading and literacy, and for improved practices;
- Collaboration within schools and across the district;

- Appreciation for the project and the vital role of provincial networking; and
- A renewed focus and passion for reading and literacy, and for improved practices.

The power of the CR4YR strength-based, student-focused, collaborative, inquiry model is now frequently being applied at other grades, and in other areas.

3.1.8.8.4 Sustaining the focus

As described above, and in previous sections, districts frequently described plans to continue and extend the initiatives of CR4YR, although they grappled with issues of funding and a perceived “loss” of the provincial network. Districts most often described plans to continue:

- Opportunities for teacher-inquiry groups focused on literacy;
- Continued support from Early Reading Advocates;
- Time for classroom teachers and resources teachers to co-plan and work together;
- Support from the district Pro-D committee for inquiry groups, and for learning rounds;
- Book club discussions via teleconferencing;
- Refining and developing a model that can be sustained with less funding;
- Extending opportunities to more teachers of older adolescent students;
- Building the principles of CR4YR work into all district initiatives;
- Strategies for focusing on vulnerable students within the classroom;
- Connecting literacy practices and CR4YR to the new ELA curriculum.

3.1.8.8.5 Conclusions

CR4YR has had a significant impact at every level of the system. In 2014-15, over 10,000 young students in CR4YR classrooms benefited from their teachers’ renewed focus on literacy and thoughtful application of effective practices. These students showed substantial improvement as assessed by the BC Performance standards. Approximately 400 of the most vulnerable students in primary classrooms were the focus of in-depth, collaborative inquiries. With the support of their teachers who, in most cases, were collaborating with other educators in the school, almost every student showed gains in reading for meaning, and over 60% demonstrated a gain of more than one year in terms of grade level expectations. In fact, a substantial proportion is now meeting grade level expectations. Most students also showed progress in other aspects of development, with the strongest improvement shown in student confidence (reduced anxiety), followed by: personal awareness and responsibility; social responsibility; self-regulation; and personal and cultural identity.

CR4YR changed the conversation about reading for many teachers, renewing their focus on joy and engagement, in balance with sound evidence-based practices. Teachers found ways to increase students’ sense of belonging and identity, and sustained their focus on building strong, positive relationships in the classroom community. Teachers, schools, and districts placed increasing emphasis on classroom-based support for vulnerable readers and became increasingly strategic in providing the ongoing support these children needed, while preserving their close connection to their classrooms.

Many teachers became more deliberate and focused on the role of student choice in developing young readers—they explored student passions and used what they learned to help engage students and increase their voice in their own learning. This often involved increasing the resources available in the classroom; books with

Aboriginal content and authors made a strong contribution in many classrooms.

From the perspective of most districts, the greatest impact of CR4YR on district practices was in increased collaboration at all levels—classroom, school, and district. CR4YR provided time for teachers to meet, to share their learning, to support each other, to solve problems, and, above all, to inquire—to better understand their practice and their students.

In many districts, CR4YR made a strong contribution to the voice and confidence of teachers; through their collaborative discussions and inquiries, they became more articulate about their teaching practices and more confident in advocating for themselves and their students. They frequently presented their findings to district leadership and school trustees. CR4YR validated the inquiry approach that many districts were already implementing. It provided another lens and another set of examples of the benefits of collaborative inquiry.

In many districts, the opportunities to bring together groups of primary teachers, engaged in collaborative inquiry about literacy on an ongoing basis, helped to re-energize the commitment to early literacy and to vulnerable children. CR4YR provided a new model for ways in which educators could work together to sustain a coherent vision. At the same time, it offered flexibility so that districts could develop the initiative in ways that best suited their own contexts. Many districts used the CR4YR model to develop groups focusing on reading at other grade levels. These groups were often described as “Changing Results for Adolescent Readers” or for “Older Readers” or simply, “All Readers.” Many groups continued into 2015-16.

3.1.8.8.6 Provincial networking

CR4YR was a project with immense heart, and strong personal and professional connections throughout BC. These connections were valued

by those in participating districts, who have often written about the importance of having the support and resources of a wide network. The CR4YR network brought strength from diversity in perspectives, experiences, and areas of expertise, while at the same time, sharing a deep, enduring commitment to supporting engaged, successful, joyful readers.¹³

3.1.8.9 Ministry of Education Exemplar Case Study 2: ERASE Bullying Strategy

3.1.8.9.1 Introduction

The Ministry of Education is focused on supporting capable young people thriving in a rapidly changing world. The Ministry has recently identified the following four core drivers to shape our work over the next 3 years:

1. Modernize Education to Support Student Success
2. Support Student Focused Learning Techniques and Pathways for Post-Secondary, Career, and Life
3. Support Professional Development and Continuous Learning to Enable Teachers and Educators
4. Ensure Safe, Functional Schools and Technology that Enables Learning

¹³ Related documents: Data collection forms <http://cr4yr.wordpress.com>; CR4YR: Message to My BC Colleagues: 2013-14; 2014-15 <http://cr4yr.wordpress.com>; Case Study Analysis: 2012-13; 2013-2014 <http://cr4yr.wordpress.com>; CR4YR main website: <http://youngreaders.ca>; “UPDATES” <http://cr4yr.wordpress.com>; Infographic poster distributed at BCSSA and posted ” <http://cr4yr.wordpress.com> (August 2015)

BC's new curriculum will continue to teach students the basics—reading, writing and arithmetic—but it will do so in a way that connects them to collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills so important after high school. These are the core skills universities, colleges, and employers say they are looking for. During this past (2015-16) school year, the MOE introduced the draft new curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 9. In 2016-17, that curriculum will be fully implemented and the draft curriculum will be available for grades 10-12. Secondary teachers will have the option to provide feedback and to use this draft curriculum in their classrooms.

The Learning Division plays an integral role supporting all of these core drivers and is responsible for enhancing program and service delivery in Aboriginal education, inclusive education, French education, healthy and safe schools, as well as key government priorities such as student pathways to careers. The division is also responsible for operational aspects of Curriculum, Assessment, Graduation, and Reporting.

Student Safety and Wellness is a branch that resides within the Learning Division. The branch is responsible for providing strategic leadership and support to school districts/independent school authorities to address school safety. The branch's current work is guided by the *Expect Respect and A Safe Education (ERASE) Bullying Strategy*, which is a comprehensive prevention and intervention strategy focused on school connectedness, culture and climate, bullying and violence prevention, and threat risk assessment. This includes a comprehensive province-wide training program for 15,000 educators and community partners, online reporting tool for students, and safe school coordinators in every district and many independent schools. The branch also liaises with multiple government agencies on a provincial and national level to support program objectives.

3.1.8.9.2 Context of Professional Learning Activity

In June 2012, British Columbia Premier Christy Clark announced the 10-point ERASE Bullying Strategy, the most comprehensive anti-bullying and threat assessment strategy in Canada. To date, significant progress has been made in advancing the strategy throughout the province.

The ERASE strategy builds on the work of the British Columbia Ministry of Education's Safe, Caring, and Orderly Schools Strategy (2004) to develop schools where students are free from harm, where clear expectations of acceptable behaviour are held for all members of the school community, and where there is a sense of connectedness. The goal of the ERASE Bullying Strategy is to ensure that every child in British Columbia feels safe, accepted and respected regardless of their gender, race, culture, religion, or sexual orientation. The Strategy is designed to help identify, prevent, and stop harmful behaviours by children and adults—whether online, at school, or in the community, and to ensure there are consistent student safety and wellness policies and practices in place across all 60 school districts, backed by strong community partnerships. The Strategy, which began in the 2012/13 school year, includes:

1. A five-year, multi-level training regime—to train 15,000 educators and community partners. Approximately 20% of the training provided in each region of the province is to be available to community partners. Partners include police, mental health workers, child-welfare workers, and other community partners.
2. A new Smartphone app and online tools—to enable kids to report bullying anonymously.
3. Each school district must designate a safe schools co-ordinator who will monitor the online student reporting site, have direct communication with the Ministry of Education, manage the ongoing relationship with community partners,

and co-ordinate the delivery of multi-level training.

4. Stronger codes of conduct for all schools—codes of conduct must include a duty to report and respond in each district, and strengthened language consistent with the Human Rights Act. The enhanced codes must include: “The prohibition of discrimination on the basis of an individual’s or a group’s race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or age.”
5. Provincial guidelines for threat assessments—including a template for school district level threat assessment protocols.
6. Enhanced online resources—including new multimedia information for parents.
7. Development of formal community protocols in each school district—a ‘must do’ to guide and co-ordinate their work with community partners such as Ministry of Children and Family Development child-care workers, police, and mental-health professionals.
8. Creation of a provincial advisory committee—with representatives from police, schools, social agencies, and other community partners.
9. Focus one of the six provincial teacher professional development days on anti-bullying and a safe school culture within a personalized learning environment.
10. Anti-bullying and threat risk assessment materials and training—to be made available to university education programs for their inclusion in the teacher training curriculum.

3.1.8.9.3 Methods and Processes for Professional Learning

The ERASE Bullying Strategy offers four levels of training delivered to educators and community partners in every region of the province:

Level 1 – Preventing Bullying and Ensuring Safe School Communities

Level 2 – Basic Threat and Risk Assessment

Level 3 – Advanced Threat and Risk Assessment

Level 4 – Train-the-Trainer Threat and Risk Assessment

Level 1: Preventing Bullying and Ensuring Safe School Communities—Level 1 training provides participants with a deeper understanding of how to create, measure, and evaluate school connectedness and explores a variety of climates and cultures of classrooms and schools. A main focus of Level 1 training is the prevention of bullying behaviour and intervention techniques—building on participants’ current level of baseline knowledge and capacity in relation to students’ use of digital devices, the Internet, and social media. Level 1 also focuses on updating participants’ familiarity with current trends of youth behaviour online, as well as the negative use of online platforms to engage in cyberbullying, capping, sextortion, and related legal ramifications that apply to the negative behaviour. Also included is knowledge about how to gather digital data necessary for School Based Violence Threat Risk Assessment, and how to establish a school’s current digital footprint/ baseline.

Level 2: Basic Threat and Risk Assessment—key elements of the Level 2 training include:

- Historical overview of school-based violence threat risk assessment (VTRA)
- Composition of a violence threat risk assessment team
- Violence as an evolutionary process
- Girl Violence
- Locker and bedroom dynamic
- Impact of movies, media, and video games – managing technology, and managing media
- Human target selection and site selection
- Traumatic events systems
- Critical periods—ground zero and impact zones
- Assessing violence and threats
- Motivation and emotional state of a threat maker
- VTRA intervention and management
- Domestic Violence
- School responsibilities
- Fair notice
- Responsible reporting and sharing of information
- Involving parents in threat risk assessment
- Social media

Level 3: Advanced Threat and Risk Assessment—Participants include Districts Safe School Coordinators and safe schools teams, Community partners (multi-agency), and local First Nation and independent schools. Individuals must complete Level 2 training prior to participating in Level 3. In advance of Level 3 participation,

individuals are also asked to review their Level 2 training materials, review their school and/or district violence threat risk assessment community protocol (if they have one), and to bring a copy of their district’s critical incident response policy/plan. Level 3 training focuses on VTRA protocols, Critical Incident Response Plans, Child and Youth Mental Health, Inventory of Services, Specific Case studies, and Advanced Social Media Data Collection.

Level 4: Train-the-Trainer Threat and Risk Assessment—Candidates for the Train-the-Trainer program include school/district staff and community partners who have completed Levels 1, 2, and 3. In advance of Level 3 participation, individuals are asked: to review their Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 training materials; to review their violence threat risk assessment community protocol (if they have one); and bring a copy of their protocol agreement with them to the training session. Key concepts from Levels 1-3 training form the basis of Level 4 training. Participants must have a solid understanding of several aspects of previous training levels, including the elements outlined in Level 2.

The provincial trainers supply all training materials (training guides, evaluation forms, etc.). Materials are delivered by courier to the hosting school district head office or pre-arranged training session venue (depending on school district preference) a few days in advance of the training.

Community Partners

The development of community partnerships and protocols to support threat risk assessment and violence prevention is a key component of the Level 3 two-day Advanced Threat and Risk Assessment training. The region and/or school district that is hosting is responsible for inviting local community partners to the training session. Community partners/organizations that participate include:

- Law enforcement (RCMP or Municipal Police)
- Child Protection
- Child and Youth Mental Health
- Health/Health Authority – Hospital – ER units/physicians; Psychologists; Psychiatrists
- Youth Probation
- Youth Crown Counsel
- First Nations
- Child & Youth Serving Community Organizations

Expenses

The Ministry of Education covers the cost of the training (trainers and resource materials), the training venue, and catering. The Ministry reimburses hosting school districts for costs incurred booking local meeting venues and for catering.

Overview of a typical training day

- The training venue is set up in advance (e.g. seating, catering, audio-visual equipment)
- The trainer arrives half hour in advance of session start time; district staff are on-site to meet session trainer
- Hosting district staff welcome participants and introduce the session trainer (The Ministry's School and Student Safety Branch provides bios of session trainers in advance of the scheduled training)
- Session hosts acknowledge the traditional territory in which training is taking place
- Training is scheduled for 8:30am to 3:30pm /or 9:00am to 4:00pm. This includes a morning break, a 45 minute/1-hour lunch break, and an afternoon break.

3.1.8.9.4 Outcomes and Experiences of Professional Learning

The ERASE Bullying Strategy is about personalizing services and supports for kids to help prevent, identify, and stop harmful behaviour—whether online, at school or in the community. The Strategy builds on effective programs already in place and will ensure consistent policies and practices across all 60 school districts, backed by strong community partnerships. The Strategy's multi-level training regime strives to provide a deeper understanding of how to create, measure, and evaluate school connectedness, as well as different climates and cultures present in classrooms and schools.

The main outcome sought is the prevention of bullying behaviour – ability to recognize the different types of bullying behaviour; understand the roles of those who 'bully', those who are targeted, and those who are bystanders; ability to utilize effective intervention techniques for responding to bullying behaviour; the understanding of and ability to implement effective response strategies for addressing violence; and to conduct threat/risk assessment.

Partnerships are key to supporting students academically and socially. Triangle relationships—among students, parents, and teachers—and among family, school, and community are imperative for ensuring student success. The ERASE Bullying Strategy training is helping participants develop the knowledge and skill to ensure students are supported and feel supported.

Schools and school districts continually seek ways to make every student feel valued, respected, safe, wanted, and connected. Many students come to school each day because the school is the only place they feel physically safe, yet they are not connected emotionally to peers and/or staff. ERASE Bullying Strategy training helps participants learn ways to reach out to these students to help them feel valued, respected, and wanted.

When students feel good about themselves, they are more likely to learn and are more likely to engage with others in school activities and events. When schools focus on social emotional learning and infuse it into the curriculum from kindergarten right up to graduation, academic achievement increases, incidents of bullying decrease, violence is reduced, attendance increases, and higher levels of student success are achieved.

The ERASE Bullying Strategy has strong links to the Healthy Schools BC focus on promoting comprehensive school health which encompasses the whole school environment. The four pillars of comprehensive school health include a focus on relationships and environment, teaching and learning, community partnerships, and school policies that help shape a caring and safe school

environment and promote student health and well-being— all of which align with the goals and learning outcomes of the ERASE Bullying Strategy’s multi-level training regime.

3.1.8.9.5 Next Steps

To date, more than 14,000 individuals have participated in the multi-level training program. It is anticipated that the program’s goal of reaching 15,000 educators and community partner participants will be reached in the 2016/17 school year. Enhancement of the ERASE Bullying Strategy is planned with a focus on increasing mental health literacy, and addressing online worrisome behaviours.

3.2 Multi-Organizational Programs and Projects

3.2.1 CASE STUDY: PROVINCIAL CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION DAYS

In September 2015, the BC Ministry of Education and the BCTF jointly announced the creation of a three-year plan to support teachers to “efficiently and effectively” deliver the new K–12 provincial curriculum to full implementation by 2018 (BC Ministry of Education, email communication, September 28, 2015; BCTF, email communication, September 28, 2015). The plan includes an initial \$1-million fund to support the training of 2,000 teacher leaders across the province to familiarize them with the curriculum changes, and to collaborate with school district administration to design professional in-service for teachers for the 2016–2018 implementation period. This undertaking is an example of how multi-organizational collaboration can inform the systemic content and planning frameworks of professional learning.

The collaborative in-service framework created to introduce and familiarize teachers with the new K–12 curriculum competencies preserves the six non-instructional days already embedded in school district calendars, and entails a “re-allotment” of annual instructional hours to accommodate the 10 additional non-instructional hours dedicated specifically for curriculum implementation (BC Ministry of Education, email communication, September 28, 2015).

The BCTF hosted “a group of education partners that worked collectively to develop a framework” to be used throughout all provincial school districts (BCTF, email communication November 4, 2015). This Curriculum Framework Development Team included representatives from the BCTF, Ministry of Education, BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA), and BC Principals’ and Vice-Principals’ Association (*ibid.*). Grounded on “big ideas” of honour, trust, and respect, the Curriculum Framework Development Team stated: “...it is possible to explore the

curriculum by creating a safe space that encourages risk-taking, while valuing a process whereby all come into this as learners. This process of shared responsibility is an opportunity to build on and enhance joint cooperation between educational partners” (*ibid.*).

The design and content of the two days was to be determined by “local school districts and teachers’ associations through agreement between the superintendent and local president” (Ministry of Education, email communication, September 28, 2015). An internal review of local presidents’ reports to the BCTF about in-service activities indicates that a diverse range of themes and approaches were invoked during the two days during the 2015–16 school year.

In School District 79 (Cowichan Valley), the two Curriculum Implementation (CI) days were divided into four half-days, to allow for more flexibility in designing both district and union sessions. District-directed sessions included a webinar on the First Peoples’ Principles of Learning led by the District Principal of Aboriginal Education. A second session on Aboriginal content, facilitated by the union local, examined educational resources, explored strategies and protocols for inviting Aboriginal community members into classrooms, and explored how to implement the new curriculum in the 2016–17 school year (C. Rolls, email communication, April 8, 2016).

In School District 50 (Haida Gwaii), secondary and elementary teachers met in differentiated sessions in April 2016, with a range of sessions including general examination and unit planning based on the new curriculum framework, exploration of cross-curricular instructional possibilities, integrating “culturally relevant” information to support Haida Language and Culture teachers, and reviewing the mathematics curriculum (S. Querengesser, email communication, April 25, 2016).

In School District 42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows), the first CI day held in February 2016 was jointly facilitated by the superintendent, district administrators, and helping teachers in areas across the district to provide an overview of the new curriculum in plenary sessions involving teachers, educational assistants, and CUPE staff. A qualitative analysis of participants' feedback from Day 1 was conducted, with findings informing the design of the second CI day in May 2016. Participants expressed a desire for school and interest group (e.g., subject or grade level) sessions focussing on instructional and assessment implications, cross-curricular learning, and inquiry-based learning approaches (Hales, 2016).

One additional non-instructional day dedicated to the implementation of curriculum is included in each of the 2016–17 and 2017–18 school calendars.

3.2.2 CASE STUDY: BEGINNING TEACHER MENTORSHIP IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

An important element within the professional learning culture of BC is the provision of mentorship for early career in-service teachers during their initial years of practice. New teacher induction and mentorship policies, aims, and approaches vary tremendously across British Columbia—and throughout Canada—due in part to the diverse geographical and organizational contexts within which educational policies and practices are created and implemented. A 2012 survey indicated that roughly half of BC's public school districts provide some form of induction/mentoring programming through a patchwork of voluntary programs with regionally diverse methods of funding, administration, delivery, and accessibility (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2010). Unlike Ontario's New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), for example, British Columbia does not possess a systemic, government-funded provincial framework for early career teacher mentorship (Ontario

Ministry of Education, 2016). However, recent professional and research initiatives have produced movement in that direction. The New Teacher Mentorship Project (NTMP), a pilot program launched in 2012 to explore potential provincial models, illustrates how beginning teachers' professional learning can be supported through multi-organizational partnerships at the provincial level.

Funded by the Ministry of Education, the NTMP was created in response to a policy and program gap wherein mentorship efforts occurred with limited provincial guidelines, legislative and contractual language defining beginning teachers' status, and jurisdictional obligations for providing mentorship funding and staffing. The NTMP is jointly run in a three-way partnership between the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), the University of British Columbia (UBC), and the British Columbia School Superintendents Association (BCSSA). Since its inception in 2012, NTMP participation has expanded from three districts to 45, including the creation of 10 new school district programs. Overall, to date as of the writing of this case study, the NTMP has provided mentorship opportunities for 270 beginning teachers and mentor teachers in pilot programs, and additional in-service and post-secondary educational learning opportunities for several hundred educators through a variety of workshops and institutes across all regions of BC (New Teacher Mentoring Project, 2016).

The NTMP's distributed leadership and multi-organizational governance model provides advocacy and collaborative consultation so districts can develop a path towards self-sustaining mentorship programs. The NTMP's program principles emphasize teacher-driven inquiry, collaboration, and place-based adaptability. The NTMP advocates that beginning teachers' professional learning models "be responsive to the diversity and distinctiveness of district cultures and practices in all regions of

BC,” “ensure that mentorship is non-evaluative and non-remedial, and that participation is voluntary,” and emphasize “learning through inquiry and critical reflection on practice” (Mentoring BC, 2016).

The NTMP’s provincial advisory committee consists of two representatives from the BCTF (the President and the Director of the Professional and Social Issues Division), two UBC representatives (currently the Assistant Dean of Teacher Education and a faculty member), and one representative from the BCSSA (a school district superintendent). The BCTF provides various forms of “support in kind,” including office space, IT services, accounting and administrative staffing for coordinating release time, graphics, research, and communications. Meanwhile, UBC administers the operating grant fund and the secondment of the program’s Technology Integration Coordinator, and hosts the NTMP’s annual Summer Institute—a three-day program which explores mentorship philosophy, pedagogy and facilitation, and sustainable program design. The Summer Institutes have involved UBC faculty and visiting faculty from Alberta and New Zealand. The NTMP has also established connections with other provincial professional learning networks to build alignment of principles and practice related to teacher learning (e.g., Growing Innovation in Rural Sites of Learning Network, Network of Innovation and Inquiry, and BC Early Career Teachers Provincial Specialist Association).

To establish a local mentorship program, school districts apply to the NTMP for funding for release time, and facilitation support from the NTMP co-ordinator and a 15-member Provincial Mentorship Resource Team (PMRT). Applicants commit to cross-role partnership by establishing a local advisory committee that must include representatives from district and school-based administration, and local unions. The NTMP provides facilitation, participant release time,

and various resources, while school districts commit to providing a multi-stakeholder advisory committee, organizational supports, and meeting spaces.

Concurrent with the field work of the NTMP is a longitudinal research initiative, carried out by the UBC Faculty of Education and funded by a three-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Development Grant: *Pedagogical Assemblage: Building and sustaining teacher capacity through mentoring programs in British Columbia* (Mentoring BC, 2016). *Pedagogical Assemblage* brings together the aligned interests of partnership organizations to “establish a leadership network focused on creating strategies and policies to support and strengthen new teacher practice” (Mentoring BC, 2016). This research project explores “the efficacy of mentorship programs and the ways teacher mentorship can enhance teacher effectiveness, grow leadership capacity, and mobilize teacher knowledge” (Mentoring BC, 2016). The resulting research aims “to provide a greater understanding of how to effectively build and sustain teacher capacity through mentoring programs, and subsequently inform the development of a province-wide teacher mentoring program in British Columbia” (Mentoring BC, 2016).

Among the preliminary findings emerging from the three-year research inquiry is the necessity of respecting the diverse and particular “place based” needs of BC’s beginning teachers—whose geographical circumstances range from inner city urban to rural settings, and encompass the complex needs and demographic characteristics of the students they serve. Effective and sustainable mentorship programs also take into account: “reciprocal professional learning communities, the complexity of teachers’ needs, the variety of inquiry foci, increasing cultures of collaboration among schools, teachers, and students, and effective leadership” (New Teacher Mentoring

Project, 2016, p. 7). The study also suggests that “effective teacher mentorship has impacts beyond improved retention of new teachers” (p. 7)—a commonly invoked reason for providing mentorship supports.

and enactment to provide meaningful and relevant professional learning opportunities for BC’s newest teachers and their mentors.

3.2.3 BC K-12 INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP

Over the last several years, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) has been working collaboratively with teachers across BC to modernize the K-12 curriculum, with a focus on ensuring all students are leaving school prepared for a world that is constantly changing.

In recognition that innovation in education was already happening in both the public and independent education sector, with many more teachers wanting opportunities to explore new ways of teaching – from which the Ministry could learn – then Minister of Education Peter Fassbender announced \$500,000 on January 29, 2015 for the creation of the K-12 Innovation Strategy.

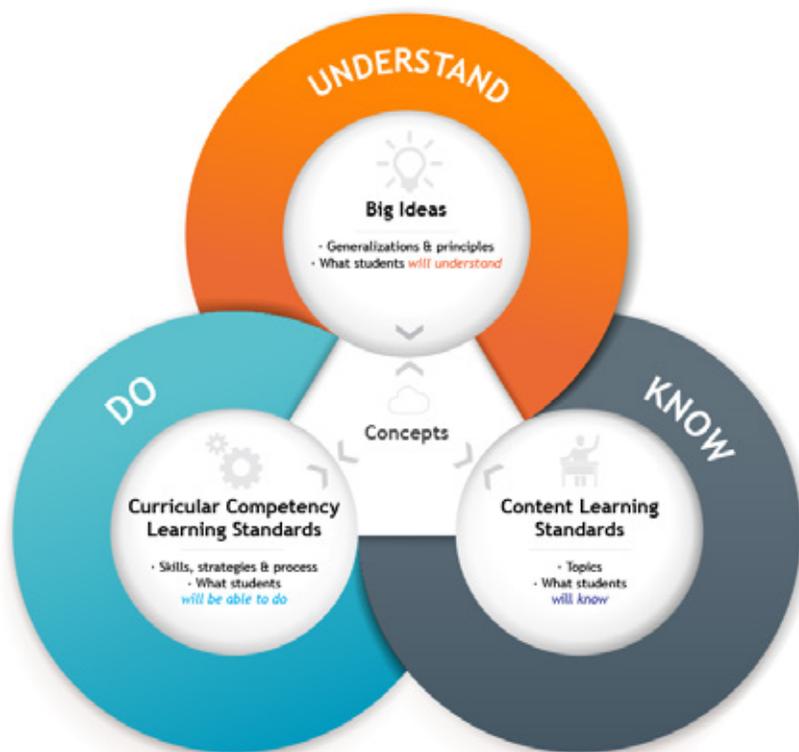
At the heart of the strategy is the Innovation Partnership, identified as a community of practice focused on bridging the theory and practice of personalized learning. The Innovation Partnership Working Group (IPWG) was created to provide cross-sector leadership in supporting this cultural shift. The IPWG, whose structure is unique amongst jurisdictions, is comprised of representatives (the President or senior executive) from the following education partner groups: BC Teachers’ Federation, Federation of Independent School Associations of BC, BC Principals’ and Vice Principals’ Association, and the Ministry. The IPWG sets the vision and goals of the Innovation Partnership, with the Ministry ensuring the direction aligns with government priorities.

Each project has direct connections with the modernized curriculum and competencies, and aligns with the curriculum model of “know, do, and understand.”



A recent application to renew the NTMP’s Ministry of Education grant for a second phase from 2016–2019 resulted in continuing funding for one additional year; consequently, the NTMP is scheduled to end in June 2017. In the absence of a provincial mentorship framework, BC’s decentralized mentoring programs will continue to operate with limited or no dedicated local funding, and diverse mentoring policies and applications—prolonging the quest for equitable access to professional learning supports for early career teachers across BC’s diverse geographic and professional jurisdictions.

Another key consideration moving forward in the design of a provincial mentorship framework is how to maintain a balance between core guiding principles and regional responsiveness—the flexibility to let collective principles take root and live within the diverse jurisdictions and circumstances in which new teachers take up their work. The New Teacher Mentoring Project “experiment” has shown how provincial educational stakeholders can engage productively in cross-organizational visioning, design, research,



Since the Innovation Partnership began, 33 projects across 23 school districts and five independent schools have received support for their innovation project— be it a project related to student reporting, technology use, rethinking scheduling, cross-curricular classes, and connecting with or understanding First Nations culture and ways of thinking.

Early signs indicate that through a small grant of \$8,000, educators are collaborating together to create purpose-focused communities of practice to examine, explore, and change their practice—with the success of their learners always at the centre of the change. Communities of practice are effective for enhancing teacher professional development and student learning (Comber, 2013) (Hannay, Wideman, & Seller, 2010) (Earl & Hannay, 2011) and when properly implemented, they can have a profound influence on board and school level cultures and leadership, on classroom practice, and on student learning (Adams & Townsend, 2014).

Within the first year, project teams from the Innovation Partnership are sharing stories of increased student and parent engagement,

and passionate, reinvigorated teachers. With strong examples of the modernized curriculum, reporting and assessment are being successfully modeled across the elementary and secondary public and independent education system.

Perhaps one of the most profound and demonstrated results of the Innovation Partnership is the relationship of trust and collaboration that has grown between members of the IPWG. Together, this group has established a clear vision of innovation in education and has committed to supporting the many educators throughout BC who are – or who want to begin – exploring new ways of teaching and learning. While working collaboratively on this project, members of the IPWG look to their shared common purpose: how can educators create environments that enable classroom teachers to more creatively engage students in their learning, make learning more relevant, and to have students increasingly take ownership of their learning to better prepare them to succeed in a changing world?

There is no denying that the focus on working together in support of students and teachers

has resulted in a deeper understanding of the perspectives and challenges of each partner group. Each member of the IPWG will attest to the role the Innovation Partnership has played in creating stronger relationships and cultures of trust and respect amongst partner groups, which can be felt beyond the work of the Innovation Partnership.

The IPWG’s theory of action that drives the work of the Innovation Partnership is rooted in the literature and international evidence that system change comes about through cultural renewal. Enabling policies, such as the modernized curriculum and competencies, must be supported— not only through traditional implementation methods, but also through activities that help support deep cultural change throughout the education system. Even the best policy is ineffective unless there is a change in culture to support it.

The Innovation Partnership uses what could be described as a disciplined innovation process. That is, it is not about “do whatever you want and hope something good happens;” it uses the known models of inquiry and networking. The Innovation Partnership itself is a network, which encourages further networks within and amongst its members, but also within and amongst the education sector— as schools in the Innovation Partnership are innovating on behalf of *all* schools in BC. Each of the 33 projects accepted in the first year started with a teacher question— what would we have to do differently that would make things better for learners? Each and every teacher involved in the Innovation Partnership is using an inquiry model.

The Innovation Partnership is also a place where professional learning takes place, within and amongst project teams and across the broader sector as teachers share their knowledge and learning with others. We know that in order for it to be effective, professional learning has to be connected directly to student learning— and ideally, connected to the students right in front of them. That is why BC has landed on focusing on a network strategy and a teacher inquiry set of strategies, both of which is supported by literature, research and best practices from around the world. Teachers are committed to making things better for their students, and that is exactly the opportunity they have in the Innovation Partnership.

Creating a culture of innovation takes time, but projects in the Innovation Partnership are showing us the many possibilities that can occur with personalized and innovative learning. It also acknowledges the confidence and trust BC has in its educators and classroom teachers, and demonstrates the power of collaboration among education partner groups, as modeled by the IPWG. The Innovation Partnership’s values of innovation, connection, and collaboration, coupled with the model of inquiry that BC is well known for, is empowering the shifts in educational thinking that is required to move us in the direction of modernized learning.

The Innovation Partnership is creating a culture of innovation and risk taking that is inspiring students, educators, and classroom teachers and that appears to be showing an impact on student engagement in their learning journey; that is what education modernization is about.

3.3 University graduate and continuing education participation and partnerships

BC educators participate in post-secondary professional learning opportunities by diverse means and for diverse reasons. Many teachers voluntarily enrol in post-secondary graduate degree, diploma, and certificate programs after initial teacher certification. Most graduate offerings in BC post-secondary institutions lead to upgrades in teachers' formal qualification status and salary, a process monitored by the BC Teacher Qualification Service (TQS), the provincial adjudication body jointly funded by the BCTF and BCSTA. In addition, a graduate-level degree is a requirement for those educators wishing to move into most administrative and management roles.

While the TQS does not maintain records regarding total numbers in each qualification

category, it does track certification upgrades, i.e. educators who obtain higher qualification status upon completion of post-secondary graduate degree and diploma programs. Since 2006, according to the TQS, 14,851 BC educators have upgraded their qualifications to Category 6 (indicating completion of doctoral or masters level degrees) and Category 5+ (indicating completion of graduate diploma requirements). Most of those upgrades were achieved through participation in BC post-secondary institutions, though a significant number were completed in programs offered by other Canadian higher education institutions, or through US programs (see Appendix for a complete list of BC-based post-secondary institutions and graduate programs).

TQS Category Upgrades | 2006–2015

Year	In BC	Partially in BC	Outside BC	US Master's degree	Total
2015	1,074	329	91	156	1,650
2014	982	328	77	125	1,512
2013	1,037	363	70	145	1,615
2012	1,127	400	63	101	1,691
2011	1,163	401	47	174	1,785
2010	882	431	80	218	1,611
2009	1,155	410	79	320	1,964
2008	1,106	396	100	237	1,839
2007*	1,148	442	102	279	1,971
2006	390	164	40	310	904

Source: (Teacher Qualification Service, 2007-2016).

3.3.1 TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In addition to enrolment as adult learners in graduate programs, BC teachers collaborate with post-secondary teacher education programs as educational partners in various initiatives. For example, BC schools have a long-standing history of collaborating with teacher education programs, with staff serving as voluntary co-operating teachers for pre-service teacher candidates completing their practicum requirements. There are currently nine approved teacher education programs in BC, servicing approximately 1,500 teacher candidates annually— all of whom require school placements for field-based teaching during their training. Research literature speaks to the professional development potential of co-operating teaching as a motivation for welcoming teacher candidates into classrooms (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014; Landt, 2004; Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006). As an acknowledgment for their voluntary service, sponsor teachers also receive pecuniary recognition ranging from modest honoraria and gift cards, to tuition certificates towards further professional studies.

3.3.2 PROMISING PRACTICES AND PARTNERSHIPS

The following descriptions of professional learning initiatives across BC reveal promising practices inherent in partnerships between universities, the BC Ministry of Education, and school districts. *Growing Innovation in Rural Sites of Learning*, *Three Campuses Project*, *Literacies in Action*, and the Vancouver Island University (VIU)/Networks of Inquiry and Innovation (NOII) *Rural Leadership Capacity Project* are four examples of such cross-organizational partnerships.

3.3.2.1 Example 1: Growing Innovation Projects

Growing Innovation in Rural Sites of Learning is a partnership between the University of British Columbia and the BC Ministry of Education. From 2011 to 2016, school districts embarked upon inquiry-based projects seeking to enhance school, parent, and community connections; student engagement, success, and well-being; and enhanced teacher practice within areas such as differentiation, inquiry-based learning, place conscious learning, assessment, and the renewed BC curriculum.

Growing Innovation has been able to support 30 diverse projects in innovative change in rural education. Documentary conversations have ensued around many themes, primarily those of Growing Innovation grant criteria [from the BC Ministry of Education]: to consider an inquiry with respect to a proposed innovative change in practice in education; to consider what knowledge(s) are required/involved to support proposed innovative change; to consider the role and engagement of students in proposed innovative change; and to have a plan for the involvement of community in project plans.

(Giles, 2016)

The following districts served as active sites for the varied *Growing Innovation* professional learning activities:

- District: No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)
- District: No. 6 (Rocky Mountain)
- District: No. 8 (Kootenay Lake)
- District: No. 10 (Arrow Lakes)
- District: No. 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin)
- District: No. 48 (Sea-to-Sky)

- District: No. 49 (Central Coast)
- District: No. 50 (Haida Gwaii)
- District: No. 51 (Boundary)
- District: No. 52 (Prince Rupert)
- District: No. 57 (Prince George)
- District: No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen)
- District: No. 59 (Peace River South)
- District: No. 60 (Peace River North)
- District: No. 62 (Sooke)
- District: No. 64 (Gulf Islands)
- District: No. 69 (Qualicum)
- District: No. 73 (Kamloops-Thompson)
- District: No. 74 (Gold Trail)
- District: No. 82 (Coast Mountain)
- District: No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)
- District: No. 84 (Vancouver Island West)
- District: No. 85 (Vancouver Island North)
- District: No. 91 (Nechako Lakes)

The website ruralteachers.com archives the resources associated with each of these projects and learning activities. An interactive map showing the school districts involved as well as providing summaries of each of the school district projects can be accessed through the following link: <https://www.thinglink.com/scene/717595234451587073>.

Participants involved within these wide-ranging projects included students, elementary and secondary teachers, local community members (artists, designers, elders, local business leaders), school-based leaders (principals, vice-principals), district leaders, and faculty members from the University of British Columbia. Numerous publications have been inspired by these projects, their artifacts, and resources, including videos.

Video resources were developed to represent the shared investigations, framing what project organizers call “participatory video inquiry, where interviewees create questions and themes for discussion. Some of the themes common to the videos include topics such as Innovation, Community, and the encounter of First Nations cultures with contemporary educational institutions” (Giles, 2016).

Created in dialogue with project participants in Port Hardy, Salt Spring Island, the West Kootenays, Ft. St. John, Dawson Creek and Lasqueti Island, [the videos] are derived from 125 project interviews and try to contextualize each project in its particular place. The teachers, students, administrators and community members participating in the videos, commit to transformation in rural education in British Columbia.

(Rural Teachers, 2016)

One such video, *Listening to Students*, features fourteen students from many regions of British Columbia (from the Peace River region in the Northeast, to Northern Vancouver Island and a Gulf Island in the Southwest, the Kootenay region in the Southeast and the region of the confluence of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers in the Southern Interior) and explores the following:

“How do students describe engagement? What do students want school to be? What do they not want from school? How is school important to them, and what does this say about them and how we should be with them? What do they say they need, and how does that agree with, or contest, your ideas of education? What is to be explored further with them? When we listen to students, we hear important things all the time. To document, share and celebrate their candor, commitment, delicacy, hope and thoughtfulness is always to find with them places from which to begin in education.”

(Giles, 2016)

With the support of the UBC Rix Professorship of Rural Teacher Education and the BC Ministry of Education, *Growing Innovation* held a symposium for project leaders to share their projects. Participants additionally met face to face and virtually through online meetings using the platforms of Blackboard Collaborate and Elluminate to further build upon their learning journeys with one another.

A *Growing Innovation Project* featuring ongoing collaborative processes for professional learning co-designed between university and school district staff is the Arrow Lakes project entitled *Collaborating to Engage All Learners*. This video provides access to an overview of the work the district and university embarked upon together. In this initiative, educators joined together from across many school sites with the aim to improve practice around an inquiry question, while using the process of lesson study. A cohort of teachers (experienced practicing teachers and teacher candidates) from three elementary schools and one secondary school, along with the university faculty members, had the opportunity to co-plan, co-teach, observe, and debrief the learning through a cycle of lessons which were based on their individual passions, interests, and observation of student learning needs.

Growing Innovation Projects' researchers and participants continue to develop further "[Exploring](#)" video sequences derived from their collective lesson study observations and conversations. They believe these will continue to contribute to "new pathways in education change concerning curriculum & assessment, collaboration, place, leadership, and social justice" (Giles, 2016). *Growing Innovation* projects can be followed [@ruralteachers](#) on Twitter.

3.3.2.2 Example 2: Three Campuses Projects

The Three Campus In Situ Teacher Education

project involves Vancouver Island University, the University of Victoria, the University of British Columbia: Okanagan, BC school districts, and the BC Ministry of Education. Involved in the projects are new-to-the-profession and seasoned teachers, students, community members, faculty members, newly graduated and current teacher candidates, and staff from the Ministry of Education.

The participants in the projects learn together in cohorts, exploring the possibilities of what change in education could look like. Through interviewing students from participating school sites in order to hear their views on learning, the teachers, administrators, and faculty members then use this information to inform their collaborations and underpin the creation of interdisciplinary curricular units of study. The learning networks created through the projects support participants with the implementation of the new BC curriculum and help to build teacher capacity in the areas of student-centered inquiry utilizing driving questions, learning through community partnerships, and passion-based learning as foundations for the learning projects.

A Research/Implementation partnership project between University of Victoria, Ministry of Education, and selected local School Districts aimed at enhancing:

collaborative professional learning opportunities among new teachers, experienced teachers and teacher educators

experiential implementation of BC's draft curriculum by pre-service and in-service teachers; (with evidence-based feedback/recommendations provided to ministry)

teacher education methodology that aligns with 21st century teaching/learning practice

Question: What are the impacts on educator professional learning (i.e., in-service and pre-service, teacher educators) AND secondary students' engagement when educators (e.g.,

faculty members, secondary school teachers, education officers, new teachers) work collaboratively across learning contexts to explore the possibilities and challenges BC's new draft curriculum?

(Sanford in Noble, 2016)

Access to faculty members from the participating universities, along with the funding from the Ministry of Education to create embedded learning, allows participants ongoing opportunity to dialogue, collaborate, and receive support as they field-test new approaches in relation to the draft curriculum, and furthers the work leaders in schools and districts are doing in the area of curricular change. The sharing networks help make natural connections from the field to school learning and best support learners and teachers because of the broad set of voices that can come together from across multiple sites, different grade levels and levels of expertise, as well as diverse areas of interest and passion. The relationships formed in the cohorts is key to the success of the projects, strengthening the ties between the universities, the school sites, and districts, and breaking down the classroom and district silos and hierarchy that naturally exist in these systems.

The “Dialogue Series” project between VIU and Vancouver Island West SD #84, highlighted in an online [video](#) is an example of the impact of partnerships between the faculty, teachers, teacher candidates, school-based and district staff working together as partners, coaches, mentors, and guides in the field learning experience, and its resulting impact on student learning. For a more in-depth view of the projects, an online [video](#) further explores the successes and next steps. The *Three Campuses Projects* tweets highlighting the professional learning that has unfolded over time can be followed @ [threecampus](#) and through the following hash tags on Twitter: #3campus #uviced #yyjedchat #atcc2016.

3.3.2.3 Example 3: Literacies in Action

As part of a multi-year program, Dr. Leyton Schnellert is working with UBC Okanagan teacher candidates and School District 23 teachers to find “synergies between literacy and diversity; philosophy, research and practice in BC’s redesigned curriculum” (Schnellert, 2016). This literacy project, co-constructed by the university and the school district, is an opportunity to frame learning together, seeking to determine “where are we going together? What do we want for kids and what are the kinds of practices that will make that happen? How can we change schools from the inside out based on our passions and our beliefs? How do we align philosophy and research with the things we actually do for children?” (Schnellert, 2016). Participants involved in the ongoing learning initiative include practicing teachers, faculty, teacher candidates, and district staff. Throughout the project, participants co-plan the learning, co-teach, and debrief lessons together based on a lesson study approach.

3.3.2.4 Example 4: VIU/NOII Rural Leadership Capacity Project 2011-2016

Rural hubs and school communities formed a provincial network in three broad regions across BC, with the aim to bring about grassroots transformational teaching and learning. The regional hubs involve Victoria, Saanich, Sooke, Nanaimo, Cowichan, Ladysmith, Parksville, Qualicum, Kelowna, and Arrow Lakes school districts. Three BC faculties of education host the regional hubs: UBCO and partner districts; UVIC and partner districts; and VIU and K–12 partner schools and districts.

In the hub meetings, participants are involved in “on-the-ground” professional learning with practicing teachers, teacher candidates, and PSI faculty members all learning together. In 2012, three pilot school districts with over

270 Educators were involved in ongoing Collaborative Professional Learning Summer Institutes for professional learning. In 2016, 39 Pilot School Districts are participating. Further information may be obtained by viewing the following video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzu_vS3ZC_A.

3.3.3 OUTCOMES OF POST-SECONDARY PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

In summary, the four examples outlined above demonstrate the following promising features and outcomes related to professional learning in British Columbia arising from post-secondary partnerships:

- Changes in pedagogy and practice have roots and wings when emerging from the “ground up,” and are powerful when inquiry driven from a personal question.
- Processes that were designed in each of the highlighted projects fostered and nurtured a sense of ownership for the learning.
- Teamwork was situated across roles, between schools and districts, building networks of support for learning together in organic ways.
- Participants focused on applying the learning to improve their own practice and enhance the student learning experiences and success.
- Changes in teacher perspectives and practices emerged from participants understanding how these practices best serve the student.
- Structures were deemed to be collaborative and involved learning together about pedagogy.
- Learning circles within learning circles emerged as a result of the learning designs which involved coaching, mentoring along the way.
- Processes were iterative, collaborative, based on feedback from peers engaged in the project and through self-reflection.
- Inquiry questions emerged from teacher passions, were refined through observation of the impact on student learning.
- Participants indicated that they felt extremely supported to navigate through a particular curricular or pedagogical change; through dialogue, they built upon and further refined practices for and with one another.
- Many participants indicated these projects were the most powerful learning they have ever engaged with because of the cohort approach that allowed them to be engaged in ongoing conversations about learning.

4 | Values and Experiences in Professional Learning in British Columbia

4.1 Introduction

This section of the case study report includes methodological notes and presentation of summary findings of data collected from participants across the BC Education Collaborative. The summary findings presented are drawn from multiple organizations and primarily presented in the aggregate; data from individual organizations is presented where there is significant divergence in views and responses. The individual organizations from the BC Education Collaborative have access to their datasets and may opt to publish their organizational data analyses in the future; however, this case study aims to capture broad patterns, trends, and perspectives in professional learning values, experiences, opportunities, and challenges in British Columbia.

4.1.1 SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

In order to survey a larger contingent of participants from the BC Education Collaborative, representatives from the BCEC developed an online survey questionnaire for distribution to their organizational memberships. The survey was hosted by Simple Survey (www.simplesurvey.com), a Canadian-owned data collection and analysis software. The questionnaire consisted of a front page with study details and informed consent information, followed by twelve structured closed-ended questions and three open-ended questions. This questionnaire probed the demographics of respondents and their experiences, values, and needs for professional learning (see Appendix for survey questionnaire).

Between July 20, 2016 and September 30, 2016, participating BC Education Collaborative organizations (BCTF and BCASBO) distributed individualized (per organization) secure URL links to prospective participants inviting their anonymous and confidential participation. At the conclusion of the data collection period, the Senior Research Analyst cleaned and collated the aggregate data and generated summary results, as reported below. Disaggregated organizational data subsets were transferred by a secure file transfer protocol in October 2016 for use by participating organizations.

4.1.2 SUMMARY SURVEY FINDINGS: BCTF

These summary findings represent a total of 2,449 BCTF member survey respondents drawn from a sample of active BCTF members, including members with continuing or contract appointments, and TTOCs:

Demographics:

- Majority of survey respondents are classroom teachers (66.6%) and a smaller minority also identified as specialist teachers (21.7%).
- Respondents have worked in multiple education settings including most commonly, Elementary (64%), Secondary (55%), and Primary (38.6%).
- The mean level of teaching experience for respondents was 17.4 years with a mean time in their current position of 8.3 years.

Participation in Professional Learning

- Nearly 3/4 of respondents (73%) expressed a desire to participate in more professional learning opportunities than they had been able to over the past 24 months.
- The top 3 reasons respondents gave as to why they were not able to participate in more professional learning opportunities were:
 1. The professional learning activity would be at my own personal cost and I could not afford it (66%)
 2. Insufficient funds to support the costs of my professional learning needs (65%)
 3. Lack of time and/or space for professional learning provided within my role in the education system (55%)
- The top 5 most commonly cited professional learning experiences that respondents *had participated in* (within the past 24 months) corresponded closely to the previous question on available opportunities:
 - District-sponsored professional learning opportunities (73%)
 - School-sponsored professional learning opportunities (61%)
 - Participation in a network of teachers specifically for professional learning (43%)
 - Educational conferences or seminars (40%)
 - Union-sponsored professional learning opportunities (39%)
- The lowest rates of participation in professional learning opportunities among respondents (in the past 24 months) were:
 - Masters or Doctoral Courses (10%)
 - Observation visits to other schools (7%)

- The top 5 most commonly cited professional learning experiences that are *available* to respondents were as follows:
 - District-sponsored professional learning opportunities (88%)
 - Educational conferences or seminars (79%)
 - Union-sponsored professional learning opportunities (72%)
 - School-sponsored professional learning opportunities (70%)
 - Participation in a network of teachers specifically for professional learning (67%)
- The two least commonly cited professional learning experiences that are *available* to respondents were as follows:
 - Ministry of Education sponsored professional learning opportunities (28%)
 - Observation visits to other schools (39%)

Rating of Professional Learning Opportunities

- From the Table below, we can identify that the top 5 rated professional learning activities by respondents were:
 1. Individual research on a topic of professional interest
 2. Masters or Doctoral courses
 3. Collaborative research on a topic of professional interest
 4. Participation in a network of teachers specifically for professional learning,
 5. Mentoring and/or peer observation
- Respondents clearly valued research-based, advanced education, and peer and mentoring opportunities for professional learning.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITY	Respondents rating as MODERATE or HIGH impact	Respondents rating as MINOR or NO impact
Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching as part of a formal school arrangement	72%	28%
Participation in a network of teachers specifically for professional learning	73%	27%
Learning and/or training on educational technologies	52%	48%
Ministry of Education Sponsored professional learning opportunities	54%	46%
District sponsored professional learning opportunities	52%	48%
School sponsored professional learning opportunities	54%	46%
Union sponsored professional learning opportunities	59%	41%
Educational conferences or seminars	72%	28%
Individual research on a topic of professional interest	87%	13%
Collaborative research on a topic of professional interest	73%	27%
Online courses or seminars	62%	38%
Masters or Doctoral Courses	84%	16%
Observation visits to other schools	66%	34%

Elements and Qualities of Professional Learning

- The **top four elements** of quality professional learning in teachers' work according to respondents (based on a response of "Very Important") are:
 1. Content is relevant to my work in the education sector (84%)
 2. Participants are engaged by skilled facilitators (70%)
 3. The duration of professional learning is sufficient to allow ongoing time for educators to learn new material and content (69%)
 4. The content is based on research and evidence into effective teaching and learning (65%)
- The **bottom two elements** (least ranked as very important) of quality professional learning in teachers' work, according to respondents:
 1. Learning opportunities are available in an online format that can be completed at my own pace
 2. Sessions incorporate learning on educational technologies

4.1.3 SUMMARY SURVEY RESULTS: BCASBO

A total of 27 BCASBO members responded to the survey. Given the low response level, the following findings may not be considered statistically reliable, but nonetheless provide informative insights into the perspectives of respondents from this educator group.

Demographics:

- Large majority of survey respondents are holding current positions as school business officials (85%); 15% identified as working in a District office.
- Very large majority of respondents (92%) have primarily worked in a District office in their current and past educational setting experience. Less than 8% of all respondents had worked in any other educational setting than a District Office.
- Very large majority of respondents (96%) work in public school settings.

Participation in Professional Learning

- Exactly 60% of respondents expressed a desire to participate in more professional learning opportunities than they had been able to over the past 24 months.
- The top 2 reasons respondents gave as to why they were not able to participate in more professional learning opportunities were:
 1. Lack of time and/or space for professional learning provided within my role in the education system (67%)
 2. I was not aware of the available professional learning activities that would have been relevant to my needs and/or interests (33%)

- The top 4 most commonly cited professional learning experiences that respondents *had participated in* (within the past 24 months) corresponded closely to the previous question on available opportunities:
 - Educational conferences or seminars (70%)
 - Professional Association sponsored professional learning opportunities (65%)
 - Online courses or seminars (60%)
 - Individual research on a topic of professional interest (45%)
- The lowest rates of participation in professional learning opportunities among respondents (in the past 24 months) were:
 - Masters or Doctoral Courses (5%)
 - Learning and/or training on educational technologies (5%)
 - Participation in a network of teachers specifically for professional learning (5%)
 - School or union-sponsored professional learning activities (0%)
- The top 5 most commonly cited professional learning experiences that are *available* to respondents were as follows:
 - Professional Association sponsored professional learning opportunities (95%)
 - Online courses or seminars (70%)
 - District-sponsored professional learning opportunities (65%)
 - Educational conferences or seminars (60%)
 - Ministry of Education sponsored professional learning opportunities (50%)

- The two least commonly cited professional learning experiences that are *available* to respondents were as follows:
 - Union-sponsored professional learning opportunities (5%)
 - School-sponsored professional learning activities (5%)
 - Participation in a network of teachers specifically for professional learning (5%)

Rating of Professional Learning Opportunities

- From the Table below, we can identify that the top rated professional learning activities by respondents were:

1. Educational Conferences or seminars

- Given the small sample size, the rating data on professional learning activities is not reliable, but is instructive to show that participants valued Educational Conferences or seminars as professional learning opportunities. There were significant “inapplicable” categories of professional learning opportunities where BCASBO members would not be able to comment because these learning opportunities did not apply to their employment or professional needs (e.g. union or school-sponsored professional learning opportunities).

Professional learning opportunity	Respondents rating as MODERATE or HIGH impact	Respondents rating as MINOR or NO impact or NOT APPLICABLE
Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching as part of a formal school arrangement	10%	90%
Participation in a network of teachers specifically for professional learning	16%	84%
Learning and/or training on educational technologies	0%	100%
Ministry of Education Sponsored professional learning opportunities	25%	75%
District sponsored professional learning opportunities	25%	75%
School sponsored professional learning opportunities	0%	100%
Union sponsored professional learning opportunities	0%	100%
Educational conferences or seminars	73%	27%
Individual research on a topic of professional interest	25%	75%
Collaborative research on a topic of professional interest	9%	91%
Online courses or seminars	18%	82%
Masters or Doctoral Courses	9%	91%
Observation visits to other schools	9%	91%

Elements and Qualities of Professional Learning

- The **top four elements** of quality professional learning in teachers’ work according to respondents (based on a response of “Very Important”) are:
 1. Content is relevant to my work in the education sector (67%)
 2. Learning opportunities are connected to my long-term goals and growth plans (47%)
 3. Participants are engaged by skilled facilitators (44%)
 4. Learning opportunities allow for reflection on how they may help enrich my practice (33%)
- The **bottom two elements** (ranked as least important) of quality professional learning in teachers’ work, according to respondents:
 1. Learning opportunities are available in an online format that can be completed at my own pace
 2. Sessions incorporate learning on educational technologies

4.1.4 FOCUS GROUPS METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The focus group data collection process included six focus groups conducted over the period of March 15 to June 30, 2016. Led by Learning Forward BC facilitators, seven focus groups collected qualitative data from 79 participants from the BCPVPA, BCTE, BCSTA, Ministry of Education, NOII, FISA, and Learning Forward BC board members. Data collection involved both the use of a common questionnaire distributed to individual participants (see Appendix for focus group questionnaire), as well as a set of core questions for group discussion.

At the conclusion of the data collection period, data generated from questionnaires and group discussions were transcribed into Word documents and uploaded into Atlas.ti 7.0, a qualitative analysis software program. Two Senior Researchers from the BCTF coded the data and evaluated for methodological rigor or “trustworthiness” of results using verification strategies (Shenton, 2004) and generated summary results, which are presented in this report in Section 3.2.

The methodology and approach to data analysis involved the generation and enumeration of codes and meta coding families, and ultimately identification of **five predominant themes** emerging from the analysis of participants’ views and responses (see Figure 1.0). These themes, developed from analysis of coding families, provide a framework for the data analysis of the dominant coded responses contained in this summary report.

4.1.5 FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Figure 1.0

Focus Group Participants’ Views on Quality Professional Learning: Enabling and Challenging Conditions in British Columbia



4.1.5.1 Purposes and Principles of Professional Learning

4.1.5.1.1 Purposes

One theme around which participants' responses coalesced was that of “purposes and principles” of teachers' professional learning (PL)—considerations of *why* professional learning should occur, and *how* PL undertakings are planned and contextualized. Participants expressed consensus that the *purpose(s)* of quality professional learning predominantly relate to:

- Addressing student achievement, learning needs and social/cultural contexts
- Knowledge generation and mobilization
- Building professional capital and human capacities.

4.1.5.1.2 Addressing student achievement, learning needs and social/cultural contexts

Research literature regarding school improvement broadly asserts that teachers are central to fostering systemic educational improvement, particularly with respect to student learning and achievement (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Focus group participants echoed this assertion, commenting that professional learning activities should be “student-centric,” directed towards “informing student achievement,” and have an “impact on student learning.” Many participants associated the “relevance” of PL activities with “immediacy of use in [the] classroom environment,” and that well-designed PL programs should demonstrate “relevance for educators themselves but also with a true focus on and for children.”

4.1.5.1.3 Knowledge generation and mobilization

Another key purpose cited is the generation of new, innovative approaches and ideas to address current educational challenges. A significant number of responses described powerful PL experiences as nurturing the creation, acquisition, application, and reflective assessment of knowledge regarding curriculum, leadership, and instruction within BC's educational systems. Many participants referred to the importance of developing a “shared” body of knowledge and common language for approaching current educational issues in a systemically coherent manner. One example of knowledge “generation” is when a group of educators comes together to deepen its understanding of a specific aspect of educational practice (e.g. instructional approaches, leadership capacities, First Peoples' Principles of Learning). Knowledge “mobilization” includes having the time and supports to disseminate, experiment with, reflect on, and adjust one's teaching practices in light of newly emerging pedagogical understandings gained through inquiry or other PL experiences.

4.1.5.1.4 Building professional capital and human capacity

Beyond pedagogical and epistemological functions of professional learning, a third theme emerged characterizing professional learning's potential for building professional capital. Drawing on Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), Professional learning models that explicitly embrace the cultivation of professional capital as a central purpose recognize that teaching is a complex and difficult activity that requires sustained attention over time (p. 14). In such a professional learning context, teachers engage in learning as a long-term investment

in their individual and collective development, to strengthen their pedagogical judgment, collaboration skills, and reflective capacities (p. 3). Many focus group participants spoke to professional learning's role in developing "teacher capacity" through its connectedness and applicability to classroom practice, but also to building "human capacity" more generally in terms of cultivating "collaboration," "leadership," "flexibility," and "deep thinking."

4.1.5.2 Principles of Professional Learning

Participants expressed consensus that the *principles* of quality professional learning demonstrate cultural, political, organizational, and pedagogical sensitivity within BC's particular educational context. Culturally, participants spoke to the need to cultivate a climate of "trust" and "respect" among participants, and among participants and their employers/administrators. In turn, a culture of trust and respect encourages more risk-taking and/or exploration of new ideas and concepts by teachers in the current climate of curriculum reform—an acknowledgment that reform is "a process not an event" and cannot be mastered in "one-off workshops." Within a climate of trust and risk taking, resistance to change can also be overcome, both with respect to innovation of content, and leadership and participants' attitudes.

In terms of *organizational* principles, participants expressed the view that powerful professional learning is purposeful in its design, content, process, and application stages, and strives to attain alignment and balance between individual/personal and community/systemic needs. The invitation to participate in professional learning must include sensitivity to needs and existing workloads of all educators—a theme echoed across all organizational groups—including teachers, administrators, trustees, and school business officials. Ideally, professional learning occurs in a job-embedded way over a

continuous period, not as an add-on to the role but embedded within—and a product of—professional roles, needs, and interests.

In terms of *pedagogical* principles, a recurring theme was the importance of the "relevance" of professional learning to participants' work, practice, interests, and needs. Relevance was second only to "time" as the most frequently mentioned factor in shaping the efficacy of professional learning endeavours across all participant groups. Besides professional and contextual relevance, the opportunity to integrate reflective practice (Schön, 1983; Brookfield, 1995; Zeichner, 1996) was also cited as a significant quality of effective professional learning.

The *political* features of BC's professional learning environment were expressed in terms of a tension between teachers' stated needs for teacher-led and teacher-designed PL and administrator/trustee/business official support for team-led and/or collaborative approaches to PL. Generally, teachers in the focus groups desire support from administration and districts to design and implement professional learning activities and opportunities, but largely wish to retain ownership over their own professional learning.

4.1.5.3 Learning Design and Process(es)

4.1.5.3.1 Learning Design

Participants articulated several key elements of professional learning *design(s)*. A frequently mentioned element was that transformation of educational knowledge and practice involves a long-term approach to learning (not just "one-off" sessions). Therefore, learning models that extend over a school year—or several—and include regular meetings or sessions were preferred to delivery-type sessions without built-in opportunities for "follow-up" or "implementation." The inquiry-based professional

learning model (e.g., (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014) was mentioned as an example of a professional learning approach that both supports sustained learning and remains flexible and dynamic in the face of shifting contexts and teachers' emerging understandings.

As with purposes and principles, “relevance” also re-emerged as a theme within design considerations— both in incorporating content that acknowledges the immediate, practical concerns of educators, and in involving (or being developed in consideration of) a diversity of participants.

Effective professional learning design also incorporates high quality facilitators who are knowledgeable, engaging, skilled, and who ground their approaches in research-based content and practices.

4.1.5.3.2 Learning Processes

Participants valued several elements of professional learning *process(es)* when describing powerful experiences with lasting or transformative impact. Worthwhile professional learning experiences incorporate collaborative dialogue and interaction and applied/hands-on learning as a strong interactive element. They tend to offer participants time and support for long-term follow-up and/or implementation into their practice, and to celebrate and “acknowledge” learning and change. Change can be unsettling and difficult to interpret and process, and effective PL provides learners with ways to express their uncertainties and integrate new knowledge and practices over time and with organizational and cognitive supports.

4.1.5.4 Material Conditions

The next theme describes what the researchers broadly conceptualize as “material conditions”— the tangible resources required to support the intentions and implementation of professional learning principles and activities. Participants identified several significant *challenges* in material conditions for professional learning in their roles and the broader context of the education system. There was significant consensus among participants that the two chief challenges, and indeed, serious obstructions, to effective and quality professional learning are 1) time, and 2) funding/resources. Time was consistently, across all focus group questions, the top response with respect to enabling and challenging conditions. Participants viewed the insufficiency of time, with respect to release time from regular work duties and general adequacy of time within their respective roles and schedules, as central to their values and experiences of professional learning. Release time, ample peer collaboration time, and professional development days were cited as specific time provisions that could be enhanced or more effectively leveraged.

The second most common response relating to the challenges and obstacles to professional learning centered around adequacy of funding and resources. Many participants commented that the system lacks adequate funding, resources, and related supports to allow educators, trustees, and school business officials to engage in quality professional learning. Specifically, participants identified the following material *needs*:

- Access to and incorporation of current, appropriate technology to support participation, engagement, and generation and sharing of knowledge.
- Quality learning materials and resources.
- Credible and relevant research literature for design, planning, and learning purposes.

4.1.5.5 Organizational Structures and Conditions

Participants articulated various *comments and/or concerns* with respect to the organizational structures and conditions for quality professional learning in their roles, and the broader context of the education system. Participants consistently expressed a lack of system coherence in professional learning funding, design, and implementation throughout the province. Focus group data conveyed a consistent expression by participants of moderate to serious challenges with collaboration and co-operation across system- and school-based roles.

The data contained frequent commentary around generating collective vision and understandings of professional learning through cross-organizational collaboration and the maintenance of strong, representative networks. Participants also spoke to the importance of leveraging and enhancing existing organizational structures and spaces to support and sustain professional learning efforts. Finally, the data exhibits broad consensus for the need to develop and deepen understandings about effective means of collaboration and what this might look like in practice.

4.1.5.6 Cultural and Political Conditions

Participants identified several core *cultural and political challenges* to quality professional learning. One significant theme concerns the issue of authority over professional learning. In particular, there was a notable contrast between teachers' responses, which contained significant consensus over the critical need for teacher-led professional learning, and administrator, trustee, and/or school business official participant responses, which tended to underline the importance of co-ownership and co-construction on professional learning. The latter set of

respondents underscored the importance, as well as the challenges, of co-construction, and a concern/curiosity over how to exercise leadership and support for teacher professional learning, while teachers expressed critique of excessive administrator or district-level control of professional learning.

Given this tension, some participants expressed the need for (and often the lack of) supportive and positive relationships between (and among) teachers and administration and/or district-level personnel in cultivating quality professional learning. Where collaboration opportunities exist, or the potential for such, meaningful consultation and communication were identified as key focal areas for ongoing development. Many participants acknowledged challenges with communication and collaboration across roles and the lack of formal or informal structures for cultivating dialogue on professional learning needs and opportunities. An additional challenge, considered a feature in the political landscape, is the perception of education underfunding and lack of systemic commitment towards professional learning.

Participants viewed several elements as central to *cultivating a supportive culture* for quality professional learning. Firstly, a supportive professional learning environment acknowledges the diversity of interests and needs of participants, and provides a wide range of choices and "entry points" for developing knowledge, skills, and critical understanding. Teachers identified strongly with the principle that teachers are responsible to self (committed to personal professional learning), their profession (e.g., the learning communities within which they work), and the public (pursuing professional learning activities that foster students' personal, social, and educational development).

Another prominent theme regarding leadership culture was the need for effective professional learning leaders at an organizational level, and skilled facilitators in particular professional learning activities. Supportive professional learning leaders and facilitators were described as “passionate,” “collaborative,” “consultative,” “enabling,” and “engaging” in their roles. Participants recognized, however, that strong leadership and facilitation does not just happen, but must be cultivated. Therefore, respondents also commented that teachers, administrators, trustees, and school business officials should be given the necessary organizational supports, resources, coaching, and time to work effectively as advocates, facilitators, and partners in professional learning.

Even with the most effective leadership and facilitation, however, professional learning experiences will not be successful without some key qualities and attributes on the part of participants. Focus group respondents described several traits that those engaged in professional learning ideally bring to the process, including 1) an openness to and disposition towards reflective inquiry and practice, and 2) long-term commitment to the learning process. The combination of effective leadership and engaged participation might move away from what some respondents describe as the current “culture of no” in seeking out and/or designing professional learning opportunities, and towards developing a “culture of yes” that allows for and celebrates risk-taking and exploration of new ideas.

5 | Conclusions

This comprehensive case study has attempted to document and generate a detailed portrayal of the diverse ways in which professional learning is conceptualized, designed, enacted, and experienced within British Columbia’s education system. The intent of this collaborative multi-organizational effort has been to analyze key BC education system indicators, statistics, and contextual issues as they intersect with professional learning, and to highlight enabling conditions and promising practices as well as systemic tensions and challenges for further study and discussion.

Among the collaborative working group organizations— although we have some differences in perspective— we see the many advantages of working together to meet individual, group and systemic needs that lead to a educational environment that supports quality professional learning for all learners in our system. The BCEC members see this as essential to the continued success of learners in BC, and view this case study’s content as a beginning point for future dialogue regarding the complex conceptual and practical elements of educators’ professional learning. To conclude, we leave some questions that have emerged for further consideration about enabling and challenging conditions—and as potential points of comparison and contrast with neighbouring Canadian provinces:

1. How might educational organizations more effectively identify, share and learn from the many “promising practices” currently in play throughout BC’s geographic regions, and across role groups—whose participants encompass not only teachers and administrators but also school business officials, trustees, and higher education faculty?
2. How might BC’s professional learning stakeholders work collaboratively towards improving systemic coherence and alignment of goals while acknowledging and respecting the diversity of individual educators’ needs, contexts and aspirations?
3. Having identified lack of time and resources as systemic obstacles to achieving high quality, sustainable professional learning experiences, how might BC’s professional learning communities respond in organizational, material and policy terms to address these “disabling” conditions?

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7 | Appendix

7.1 Focus Group Questionnaire

The following is a copy of the focus group questionnaire distributed to participants. The line spacing has been reduced for the purposes of space in this case study document:

The State of Educators' Professional Learning in Canada:
A Research Study Funded by Learning Forward

Focus Group Background and Questions for the BC Case Study

Name (Optional) _____

Email: (Optional) _____

School District /Organization: _____

Role: _____

Experience in the system: _____

School or district setting e.g. Early Learning, Elementary, Middle, Secondary: _____

School Governance: Public, Independent other? _____

FOR DISCUSSION AND RECORDING

1. Describe a powerful professional learning experience you had over the last 24 months.
2. Describe the design of the experience? What made this powerful?
3. In your experience, what are the essential elements of professional learning for educators?
4. In your experience, how are school and system leaders engaged in and enabling professional learning within schools, districts and systems that support the work?
5. What are the enabling conditions (policies, resources, capacity) for supporting quality best practices for professional learning?

6. What are the challenging conditions (policies, resources, capacity) for supporting quality professional learning?
7. What further advice would you like to give the research team?

The State of Educator’s Professional Learning in Canada (Draft Literature Review, March 2016, University of Toronto)

Key Research-Informed Components and Principles of Effective Professional Learning

Key Components	Principles and Practices for Effective Professional Learning
Quality Content	Subject-specific and pedagogical content knowledge
	A focus on student outcomes
	A balance of teacher voice and system coherence
	Evidence-informed
Learning Design and Implementation	Active and variable learning
	Collaborative learning experiences
	Job-embedded learning
Support and Sustainability	Ongoing in duration
	External support and facilitation
	Supportive and engaged leadership

Please comment on the above.

7.2 Survey Questionnaire

Learning Forward BC: The State of Educators' Professional Learning in British Columbia Survey



Study Details:

This study is designed to investigate British Columbia's education context and the perspectives of British Columbia's Education Partners on professional learning needs, values, and experience. Education partner organizations in British Columbia believe that this survey will provide important data to support your professional development and plan for change taking place across Canadian education.

Informed Consent:

The results of this survey will inform the British Columbia Case Study, an integral part of Canadian research on professional learning. The initial results of this survey will be released at the Learning Forward Conference in Vancouver, BC, December 2016, and may also be published by partner organizations in the BC Education Collaborative (BCASBO, BCPVPA, BCSSA, BCSTA, BCTF, FISA, ABCDE, Ministry of Education). There are no known risks associated with participating in this research study. Your responses will remain confidential and your IP address or other identifying details will never be collected or available to the researchers or partner organizations. Your privacy will be ensured by storing the online survey results on a Canadian server, and only the partner organizations will have access to the survey data. If you have questions about this study, you may contact Dr. Sherri Brown at sbrown@bctf.ca or Audrey Hobbs-Johnson (Learning Forward BC) at audreyhj@shaw.ca. You may withdraw your participation in this study at any time by clearing the page and exiting the survey. By submitting this survey you are consenting to participate in this research study. If you wish, you may print a copy of this page for your records. We thank you for your time and interest in this survey.

Survey Components:

- There are 15 questions in this survey.
- The first five questions collect demographic data.
- Questions six through nine and twelve to thirteen inquire about your experiences, values, and needs for professional learning.
- Questions ten, eleven, and fourteen and fifteen are short open-ended questions designed to gather data on professional learning that takes place within schools and outside the school.

We thank you for your participation in the survey and look forward to sharing the results with you in December 2016.

Demographic Information

1. What is your current position? (Please select all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Specialist Teacher (Learning Assistance, Resources, Special Needs, Librarian, Counsellor)
<input type="checkbox"/> Elective or special area teacher (music, art, physical education, second languages, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Teaching on Call (TTOC)
<input type="checkbox"/> Principal
<input type="checkbox"/> Vice-Principal
<input type="checkbox"/> District Office
<input type="checkbox"/> School Trustee
<input type="checkbox"/> School Business Official
<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Please specify your role:

2. Please describe your experience level (to your best estimate) as an educator, trustee, or business official, in terms of the total number of years in these roles (combined, if you have served in more than one role). If you have been in these roles less than a year, please use a decimal to estimate your experience as a fraction of a year (0.2, 0.5, etc.).

3. To your best estimate, indicate the number of years (up to one decimal) that you have been in your current position.

4. Please indicate the education settings in which you have worked. Please select all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Kindergarten
<input type="checkbox"/> K-12 School
<input type="checkbox"/> Primary
<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary
<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary
<input type="checkbox"/> Middle
<input type="checkbox"/> French Immersion or Francophone
<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal, Indigenous, and/or First Nations
<input type="checkbox"/> Specialist learning programs (e.g., special needs, specialized art, music or sport programs, gifted programs, English Language Learner, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Distributed Learning
<input type="checkbox"/> District office
<input type="checkbox"/> Other

If "other" selected, please specify:

5. What is the school governance of your current school setting? Please select one if applicable.

<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Independent
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Other
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Not applicable

If "other" selected, please specify:

Professional Learning Opportunities and Experiences

6. Which of the following professional learning opportunities are available to you? Please select all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Professional qualification courses
<input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching as part of a formal school arrangement
<input type="checkbox"/> Participation in a network of teachers specifically for professional learning
<input type="checkbox"/> Learning and/or training on educational technologies
<input type="checkbox"/> Ministry of Education sponsored professional learning opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> District sponsored professional learning opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> School sponsored professional learning opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> Union sponsored professional learning opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Association sponsored professional learning opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational conferences or seminars
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual research on a topic of professional interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative research on a topic of professional interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Online courses or seminars
<input type="checkbox"/> Masters or Doctoral Courses
<input type="checkbox"/> Observation visits to other schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Other

If “other” selected, please specify:

7. Within the past 24 months, please identify up to five (5) professional learning opportunities in which you have participated.

<input type="checkbox"/> Professional qualification courses
<input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching as part of a formal school arrangement
<input type="checkbox"/> Participation in a network of teachers specifically for professional learning
<input type="checkbox"/> Learning and/or training on educational technologies
<input type="checkbox"/> Ministry of Education sponsored professional learning opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> District sponsored professional learning opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> School sponsored professional learning opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> Union sponsored professional learning opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Association sponsored professional learning opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational conferences or seminars
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual research on a topic of professional interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative research on a topic of professional interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Online courses or seminars
<input type="checkbox"/> Masters or Doctoral Courses
<input type="checkbox"/> Observation visits to other schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Other

If “other” selected, please specify:

CASE STUDY

8. Within the past 24 months, if you participated in any of the following kinds of professional learning activities, what was the impact of these activities on your development as an educator, trustee, or school business official?

	Not applicable	No impact	Minor impact	Moderate impact	Large impact
Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching as part of a formal school arrangement	●	●	●	●	●
Participation in a network of teachers specifically for professional learning	●	●	●	●	●
Learning and/or training on educational technologies	●	●	●	●	●
Provincial-based professional learning workshops/sessions	●	●	●	●	●
District-based professional learning workshops/sessions	●	●	●	●	●
School-based professional learning workshops/sessions	●	●	●	●	●
Union-based professional learning workshops/sessions	●	●	●	●	●
Individual research on a topic of professional interest	●	●	●	●	●
Collaborative research on a topic of professional interest	●	●	●	●	●
Educational conferences or seminars	●	●	●	●	●
Online courses or seminars	●	●	●	●	●
Masters or Doctoral courses	●	●	●	●	●
Observation visits to other schools	●	●	●	●	●
Other	●	●	●	●	●

If “other” selected, please specify:

Professional Learning Qualities, Resources, and Barriers

9. Please assess the level of importance of the following elements of quality professional learning in your work.

	Neutral/ not sure	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important
The content is based on research and evidence into effective teaching and learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content is relevant to my work in the education sector	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participants are engaged by skilled facilitators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The duration of professional learning is sufficient and ongoing to allow time for educators to learn new material and content.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning opportunities allow for active engagement (hands on learning) during the sessions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning opportunities allow for reflection on how they may help enrich my practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning opportunities are connected to my long-term goals and growth plans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sessions incorporate learning on educational technologies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning opportunities are available in an online format that can be completed at my own pace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning resources are provided to all participants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provides opportunities for collaboration with other colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For school sponsored professional learning opportunities, there is collaborative engagement and co-design among teachers and administrators.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Please describe any additional elements of quality professional learning (other than those listed in previous question) that are important to your work:

11. Please briefly describe 1-3 professional learning experiences that have been most meaningful for your professional growth and have led to enhancing your practice.

12. Within the past 24 months, did you want to participate in more professional learning activities than were able to?

<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes
<input checked="" type="radio"/> No

If you answered “Yes” to Question 12, which of the following reasons best explain what prevented you from participating in more professional development than you did? Please select all that apply. Please select “other” to describe additional barriers.

<input type="checkbox"/> I did not have the pre-requisites (e.g., qualifications, experience).
<input type="checkbox"/> I was not aware of available professional learning activities that would have been relevant to my needs and/or interests.
<input type="checkbox"/> There were no professional learning activities offered that were relevant to my needs and/or interests
<input type="checkbox"/> There were insufficient funds to support the costs of my professional learning needs.
<input type="checkbox"/> The professional learning activity would have been at my own personal cost and I could not afford it.
<input type="checkbox"/> There was a lack of time and/or space for professional learning provided within my role in the education system
<input type="checkbox"/> I needed to pay attention to my home/work life balance
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning activities that I was interested in were not available to me within a reasonable geographic distance.
<input type="checkbox"/> There was a lack of emotional and/or professional support for my learning needs and/or interests.
<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Please specify any other barriers that stand in the way of your professional learning that is relevant to your role in the education sector.

13. What resources have been most useful in enabling you to engage in quality professional learning?
(Maximum 150 words)

14. What do you perceive to be the most significant benefits of participating in professional learning opportunities? (Maximum 150 words)

7.3 British Columbia Post Secondary Graduate Program Offerings in Education

• Royal Roads University

The various degree types (Doctoral, Graduate, Graduate diplomas, and Graduate certificates) are all linked from: <http://www.royalroads.ca/prospective-students/programs/education-and-technology>

Doctoral:

Doctor of Social Sciences

Graduate:

Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management

Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration and Leadership

Master of Arts in Learning and Technology

Graduate Diplomas:

Graduate Diploma in Higher Education Administration and Leadership

Graduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and Management

Graduate Diploma in Learning and Technology

Graduate Diploma in Technology-enhanced Learning and Design

Graduate Certificates:

Graduate Certificate in Business Development in International Education

Graduate Certificate in Instructional Design

Graduate Certificate in Systems Leadership in Higher Education

• Simon Fraser University (SFU)

Doctoral Degrees <http://www.sfu.ca/education/gs/degreediploma/doctoral.html>

Master's Degrees <http://www.sfu.ca/education/gs/degreediploma/masters.html>

Graduate Diploma in Advanced Professional Studies in Education

<http://www.sfu.ca/education/gs/degreediploma/graddiplomafp.html>

Graduate Certificate Programs <http://www.sfu.ca/education/gs/degreediploma/certificates.html>

Note: TQS upgrade courses are listed under “benefits” on this page:

<http://www.sfu.ca/education/gs/explore/prog-comparison.html>

- **Thompson Rivers University (TRU)**

[Graduate Certificate in Online Teaching and Learning Master of Education](#)

Graduate Certificate in Child and Youth Mental Health

<http://www.tru.ca/distance/programs/education/child-youth-mental-health-certificate.html>

- **Trinity Western University (TWU)**

Graduate Certificate in Leadership

Master of Arts in Educational Leadership

Master of Arts in Educational Studies - Special Education

- **University of the Fraser Valley (UFV)**

[Graduate Certificate in Teacher Leadership and Mentorship](#)

- **University of British Columbia (UBC)**

The following departments listed online offer various diplomas, certificates, masters and doctoral programs:

[Curriculum and Pedagogy](#)

[Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education](#)

[Educational Studies](#)

[External Programs and Learning Technologies \(M.Ed., Diplomas and Certificates\) – now called: Professional Development & Community Engagement](#)

[PDCE delivers off-campus and online professional development programs, both domestic and international, for UBC's Faculty of Education.]

[Language & Literacy Education](#)

[Indigenous Education](#)

[School of Kinesiology](#)

The “programs” link (<http://educ.ubc.ca/programs/>) provides direct access to lists all UBC Faculty of Education offerings.

- **UBC Okanagan**

[Graduate Programs in Education](#)

[Post-Baccalaureate Certificate/Diploma Programs](#)

[Summer Institute in Education](#)

- **University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC)**

[Master of Education](#) (Counseling, Multidisciplinary Leadership, and Special Education)

- **University of Victoria (UVic)**

The “Graduate Students” page lists 25 Masters degree options, as well as doctoral and Certificate programs within the Faculty of Education: <http://www.uvic.ca/education/prospective/graduate/index.php>

Professional Specialization Certificates in ICT and French Immersion:

<https://www.uvic.ca/education/curriculum/undergraduate/home/certificates-diplomas/index.php>

- **Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina University-College)**

Graduate Diploma Programs

Special Education Teacher Specialty (SETS) Post Degree Diploma Program

<https://www2.viu.ca/education/programs/diploma/index.asp>

Online Learning & Teaching Diploma (OLTLD)

<https://www2.viu.ca/education/programs/diploma/sets/index.asp>

Source: Compiled by BCTF Information Services (July 2016)



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international membership association of learning educators committed to one vision in K–12 education: Excellent teaching and learning every day. To realize that vision Learning Forward pursues its mission to build the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning. Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning, adopted in more than 35 states, define the essential elements of professional learning that leads to changed educator practices and improved outcomes for students. Information about membership, services, and products is available from:

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