



School Board and Employees *Taking Our Contractual Commitments Seriously*

by Henry Contant

Annually, around one thousand legal contracts between Christian school boards (employers) and principals, teachers, and support staff (employees) are in place within our SCSBC. What does it really mean for both parties to have entered into a legally binding agreement? What obligations and commitments have both parties made to each other? What happens when one of the parties doesn't honour the commitment they have made to the other party? As SCSBC proposes the implementation of the new and updated Employment Contract, we do well to re-examine these fundamental questions and understand why it is wise and prudent for both school boards and employees to embrace an updated contract.

Luke 6:40 states, "A child when fully trained will be like his teacher." Therefore, a Christian school board must take any and all appropriate steps to recruit, employ, compensate, train, evaluate, and retain teachers, support staff and administrators who model Christian attitudes and whose teaching practices are consistent with Biblical principles.

In my visits to Christian schools throughout the SCSBC community, it is an absolute joy and inspiration to see so many dedicated principals, teachers, and support staff pour their lives and energy into making our Christian schools outstanding learning environments for our children. Their modeling of Christian character, integrity, behaviour, and perspective affirms that every dollar spent on Christian school tuition is well worth it.

Thousands of parents are grateful to God for Christian school employees who teach, coach, and counsel their children and teenagers on a daily basis.

Yet, sadly, there are a few exceptions. There have been a few times over the years that the contractual relationship between a school board and one of its employees became strained, and commitments were

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broken. Beyond the legalese of an employment contract, what are the commitments school boards make with their employees? What must school boards pay close attention to in upholding their contractual commitments? What do our Christian school employees have a right to expect from their boards? Conversely, when does a school board have the right to terminate the employment contract of one of its employees? These are important issues that require a clear understanding by both school board and employees, and well-articulated human resource policies and procedures to guide the process.

First, a school board must ensure that they recruit the best possible staff to fulfill their school's mission of providing high quality Christian education. Second, a school board must ensure that newly hired staff receives effective orientation, a fair compensation and benefits package, provision for on-going professional development, encouragement in their work, and regular evaluation of their performance. School boards who ensure that their administrative team provides these things for

their staff have long understood that the real strength of their school is its staff. These boards do all that they can to retain a vibrant teaching and support staff. Needless to say, these are the schools that are thriving today.

An employment contract is a legally binding document for both employers and employees. Once a contract is signed, employees have professional responsibilities to abide by the provisions of the contract. School boards (and principals acting on behalf of the board) have a similar responsibility. The Employment Standards Act of BC was proclaimed to ensure that employees' rights are protected in our province. The school's employment contract, community standards policy, and employment provisions outlined within the staff handbook add significant legal weight to this responsibility.

However, a school does not simply exist for the purpose of providing employment for teachers any more than a school board exists to extend employment contracts. Christian schools have a unique mission to provide quality Christ-centered

Christian school employees should be asking themselves:

- Did my new staff orientation adequately cover all of the school's employment expectations as outlined in my employee contract, our school's Community Standard Policy, and staff handbook?
- Do I understand all the terms and conditions of my probationary contract?
- Do I understand the professional development expectations the school board and principal have of me? Do I understand the professional development opportunities available to me?
- Has my principal discussed how s/he intends to conduct my staff evaluation?
- Do I understand the opportunities and timeline that will be given to me to improve my performance in the event my performance is deemed less than satisfactory?
- Do I understand the important dates in my contract including when intention forms are due, the date by which my evaluation must be completed, the date when my probationary period expires, and the date when notice of non-renewal of my contract must be given?
- Do I understand both my rights and responsibilities in regards to the SCSBC Facilitation, Mediation and Arbitration Policy that is referenced in my contract?
- Do I understand what might constitute the violation of "professional boundaries" in regards to my relationships with colleagues, students and parents?

Christian school boards should be asking themselves:

- Does our school have adequate policies and procedures in place to ensure that good hiring and staff orientation practises occur?
- Are our employees given a fair salary and benefits package?
- Does our school issue an appropriate and timely cover letter and contract for each individual that is hired? Do boards and employees understand the difference between a probationary contract and a (continuing) indefinite contract?
- Does our school explain, and then require, each employee to sign the school's Community Standard Policy as a condition of their employment? Is our school consistent in the application of the Community Standard Policy among all employees?
- Is appropriate provision made for on-going professional development as stipulated within the contract?
- Is staff encouraged in their tasks frequently?
- Do administrative and staff evaluations occur regularly? Are appropriate evaluations completed well before the contract renewal date, typically April 1st?
- In the event of a less than satisfactory staff evaluation, is opportunity and guidance given so that corrective measures can be taken to improve performance?
- Is appropriate written notice given to each employee in the event of a change to or non-renewal of their employment contract?
- Do our school board and all employees understand the contractual implications of the SCSBC Facilitation, Mediation and Arbitration Policy?

New in Our Library!

Check out these resources ...

education. Therefore, school boards and principals must ensure that the best possible staff are employed to help achieve that important goal.

I trust Christian schools do not retain employees who lack a vibrant Christian faith, are unwilling to grow professionally, display professional incompetence, violate the school's community standard, cross professional boundaries, or undermine the school's mission and statement of faith in any way. I also trust school boards do not violate the terms of their own employment contracts. Boards need to make certain that their employees are evaluated properly, provided adequate opportunities for professional growth and improvement, and given adequate notice. Boards need to follow due process and procedural fairness in the event that employment contracts are not renewed.

As members of a Christian community, our employment contracts are covenants that we make with each other, and as such they must carry with them a Biblical understanding of justice, grace and compassion.

*Henry Contant (contant@twu.ca)
is the SCSBC Executive Director*

You are invited to the Christian School Business Management & Development Conference

March 5-6, 2013 Christian Schools Finance Business Management and Development Conference

SCSBC

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

in support of learning

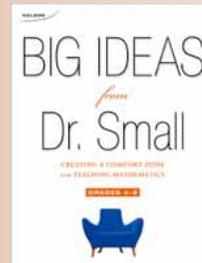
WHO SHOULD ATTEND
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For details, go to www.BusinessConference2013.scsbc.net

Big Ideas from Dr. Small: Creating a Comfort Zone for Teaching Mathematics, Grades 4-6

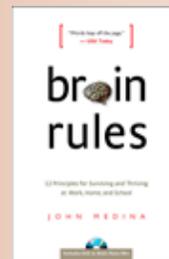


by Dr. Marion Small

This professional resource is designed to help established elementary teachers increase their comfort level and confidence in math content knowledge and pedagogy while showing how mathematics can be taught more effectively through big ideas. Teachers will develop a solid grounding in mathematics content and, armed with knowledge of the big ideas in math as

well as model tasks and questions, will be able to shape and focus their instruction to help students make powerful connections.

Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home and School



by John Medina

Molecular biologist John Medina shares how the brain sciences might influence the way we teach and work. In each chapter, he describes a Brain Rule – what scientists know about how our brains work – and then offers transformative ideas for daily life. You will discover how exercise improves cognition, every brain is wired differently, we are

designed never to stop learning, memories are volatile and susceptible to corruption, sleep is powerfully linked with the ability to learn, vision trumps all the other senses, stress changes the way we learn.

Managing the Madness: A Practical Guide to Middle Grades Classrooms

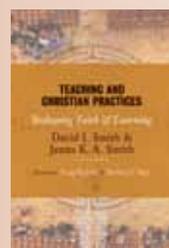


by Jack Berckemeyer

In this book you'll find innovative and specific ideas on discipline, humour, technology integration, student-teacher interactions, attention grabbers, classroom management and much more. Reflection questions are posed at the end of each chapter. These would make excellent discussion points for a full staff book study throughout the

course of the school year.

Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning



by David I. Smith and James K. A. Smith

University professors describe their efforts to allow historic Christian practices to reshape their pedagogical strategies. Whether allowing spiritually formative reading to enhance a literature course, employing table fellowship and shared meals to reinforce concepts in a pre-nursing nutrition course, or using Christian hermeneutical practices

to interpret data in an economics course, these teacher authors envision ways of teaching and learning that are rooted in the rich tradition of Christian practices, as together they reconceive classrooms and laboratories as vital arenas for faith and spiritual growth.

Request these books through our SCSBC online resource library at www.scsbc.ca

Pulling Out the Stops in a

Angelica. Clarone. Doris. Llano. Melodie. Orlos. Quint.

These are not typical names on a class list. An organist though, might find these names on some stops in the console¹. Having particular sounds in mind, the organist knows when to pull these stops out or push them in. If he wants to emulate a trumpet, flute, or oboe, he'll pull out the stops that will give him those sounds. Before stops were invented, there was no mechanism to turn off certain pipes, so the effect was akin to a mass choir singing simultaneously, which may not have been the sound the organist wanted! Stops give the organist a greater range of possibilities of sound, so he intentionally selects them to accomplish his intent.

There are distinct commonalities that make pipe organs similar. They all have a console with stops and one keyboard or more. There is a board of pedals. There are tin and wooden pipes of varying lengths. Yet each organ will be different in console design, in size, and in sound, some being French, romantic, or even Baroque.

And so it is with a multi-age classroom. These classes have commonalities such as having a range of ages and abilities in one classroom, and likely having one classroom teacher for

The teacher sees each child as a *stop* in the console – unique and an important contributor to the class community. Sometimes a *stop* is pulled out and sometimes a *stop* is not activated. At other times, groups of *stops* are open. Many times, pulling out all the stops for whole-class participation contributes to the harmony or, occasionally, cacophony! Whatever the degree of student involvement, the selection of *stops* is determined by the goals and intent of the teacher to optimize student learning.⁵

What does this look like in a school with multiple multi-age classrooms?

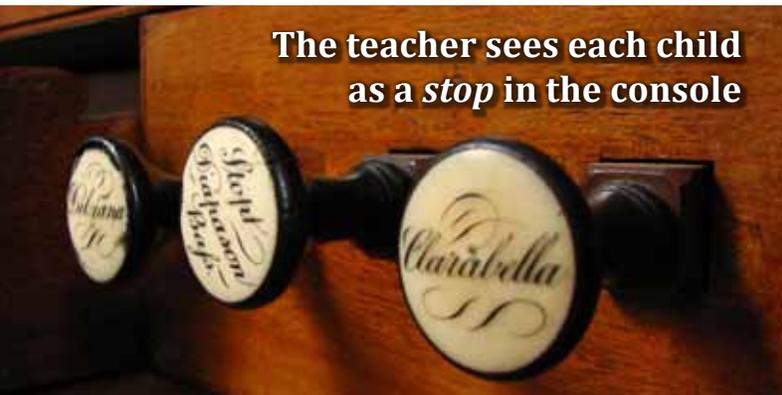
Common planning times are scheduled for teachers to collaboratively prepare their units or themes of study. This allows for checks and balances regarding developmental milestones represented by the ages of students in the classroom. How and when will the teacher pull out the 4' or 8' stop? Common planning helps teachers identify specific learning targets and then articulate the essential learning outcomes so that all children can achieve them. Since many 'big ideas' are the same throughout the curriculum (e.g. writing in a variety of genres for various audiences), multi-age classrooms lend themselves well to having all students in the class often work together. Multiple teachers collaborating during common planning times generate a broad range of strategies and experiences to ensure learning.

Because the children are regarded as a class, the classroom environment is arranged so that students are intermingled. You will not find Grade 2 children sitting on one side of the classroom, with Grade 3 students sitting on the other side. Children are neither grouped by age nor by ability. Visitors to these classrooms will be challenged to know which student is in which grade. During my ongoing visits to several multi-age classrooms, I still don't know which child is in which grade.

Differentiating instruction in a class of children that spans four birth years is challenging. To address this challenge, teachers in these multi-age classrooms must draw upon their collective years of classroom experience to accommodate the needs of the diverse ages and abilities of their students.

I have observed several classes where there are up to five different levels of learning on one topic. For example, in one class, children were learning to skip count, a learning outcome in both Grade 2 and Grade 3. Some children were skip counting forwards by 5; others were skip counting by 2's – backwards! Younger children who were ready to skip count by 25's were being challenged to do so, and older children who lagged a little were reinforced in their skip counting by 5's. One child explained that when he used the 100's chart to skip count by 25's, he visualized groups of 25 by thinking of quarters. Flute, trombone, viola – the teacher pulled out various stops to ensure that all students were being enriched or supported depending upon their needs – concurrently, producing a lovely sound of learning.

The teacher sees each child as a *stop* in the console



instruction. Multi-age classrooms are mostly seen in elementary schools. Schools may call these split classes, blended classes, or combination classes. A school may have such a class for only one year to account for increasing or declining enrolment. "There is no single model of classroom organization that will meet the needs of every school ... [Schools] make decisions to design the best possible organization for their students."² It is, however, uncommon for a school to intentionally choose to create a multi-age class let alone five of them at the same grade levels.³

What sets multi-age classes apart from other organizational structures is that children are viewed as a community of learners rather than as two or three different grades sharing one teacher in one classroom.⁴ The intentionality behind a multi-age classroom is to regard the children as one class, as one group of students, as a whole console of students, whose learning will be organized and differentiated by the teacher.

Multi-age Classroom

by Joanne den Boer

Another multi-age class I observed was working on conventions in writing. One non-verbal child matched letters using scrabble tiles. Two girls searched for convention errors on a worksheet, looking for missing punctuation or capitalization. They reminded each other that upper case letters were necessary for proper nouns and at the beginning of sentences. In the same pod, a young lad in the group worked on the same skill, but with shorter sentences. Meanwhile, the teacher worked one-on-one with a child, nudging her beyond this activity, to consider improving the sentences by adding adjectives. Differentiated instruction requires pre-planning which, as these teachers who are committed to multi-age learning demonstrate, is doable. This is comparable to an organist who reads the score and selects pre-sets from which to draw at an instant, yet exercises discretion to bypass the pre-sets when the moment requires it.

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits that I have seen as a result of multi-age learning, is the growth in social-emotional development. One doesn't always think to intentionally plan learning experiences to develop this in the children, yet it is a key component of the official BC Primary Program.^{6,7} Older children take leadership roles, helping peers and younger children navigate social interactions, stay on task, make thoughtful choices, and make appropriate decisions, all of which contribute to the class as a community of learners. Children learn to cooperate in order to cooperate to learn.

Teachers report that, over time, younger children begin to assume leadership roles as well. This allows the teachers to pull out more stops, thus increasing the volume of learning, amplifying layers of learning, and harmonizing the voices of Angelica, Clarone, Doris, and Melodie.

In effect, with a growing range of sound possibilities at her finger-tips, the teacher can pull out even more stops to accomplish her intent – joyful learning.

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1- There are over 1300 pipes listed at <http://www.organstops.org/>. The smallest portable pipe organs may have only one or two dozen pipes and one manual; the largest may have over 20,000 pipes and seven manuals – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pipe_organ

2- The Primary Program, 2000, p. 100.

3 – One SCSBC school has upper primary classes with students ranging in age from 6 to 9, at the Grade 2 and 3 levels.

4 – Metaphors have limitations. For example, this metaphor doesn't address self-directed, co-operative, nor play-based learning. See Van Brummelen, H., Badley, K. (2012). *Metaphors We Teach By*. Wipf and Stock Publishers. Eugene, OR.

5 – This is not to say that a split, blended, or combination class is not a community of learners.

6 – This article is referring specifically to the scenario where there are several multi-age classrooms of the same age range, e.g. several Grade 2-3 classes. As part of a professional leave, I have a year-long commitment to visit, observe, and co-teach in these classes. Being a part of this professional learning community allows us to speak into each other's teaching practice, as iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17).

7 – Under the BC EdPlan, socio-development in children appears to be retained as an important component in the new Draft Curriculum Framework. The Draft is not yet available to the public.



Managing Parking Lot Gossip

by Gerry Ebbers

“You shall not give false testimony” (NIV) and “thou shalt not bear false witness” (KJV) are two translations of the ninth commandment. The Heidelberg Catechism, a 16th century teaching tool, expands on this commandment by enjoining us to “wrest no one’s words; be no backbiter or slanderer” and “to avoid all sorts of lies and deceit as the proper works of the devil.” Rather, we are to “defend and promote the honor and reputation of our neighbour.”

Alas, our school communities have their share of gossips, slanderers, pessimists and nay-sayers. So how does a board and administration handle negativity and misinformation that can be so destructive to the mission of the school?

Proverbs 18:8 says “the words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man’s [and woman’s] inmost parts.” “Head them off at the pass,” the cowboys used to say in old westerns. One place gossip may be heard and spread is on the school parking lot. So as parents drop off and pick up their children, get out there! Move around and talk with people. Head to the clusters of chatter and join in. Ask how things are going. Ask if they have any questions or concerns. If you know questions or concerns exist in the community, bring them up and speak about them. If there is one person in particular who is the source of gossip, call that person into your office, don’t just phone or email, for an honest and forthright talk about the ninth commandment.

Second, address issues in all your communications with your community. Before the gossip begins, inform people of what is going on. If the issue is confidential, remind people of that and remind them too that any gossip they do hear will be one-sided,

incomplete, and therefore, dishonest and harmful. When full disclosure must be delayed, tell people so and give them the date that you will be sharing information with them. This shows people that you are not trying to keep them in the dark about what is going on.

Third, do not leave the interpretation of information up to individuals. The pessimists will have a field day creating negativity and depressing everyone. For example, when you are sharing the results of a fundraising drive or the enrolment numbers for a new year, put the information in context. Don’t just give the numbers. Explain the significance of the numbers. Are you as a board and administration happy and satisfied with the numbers? If you have concerns, what are they and how will you address them? Don’t leave it up to others to speculate on the problems and consider the most negative option imaginable. Let people know that you care and that you’re doing something.

How information is presented can become *spin*, which often has a negative connotation. The temptation is indeed there for a board and administration to withhold all the information or to massage it to look better, but it is a temptation to be avoided. It is still true that honesty is the best policy. Part of being honest is to help people understand information within context, and thereby promote the whole truth.

We need wisdom as we endeavour to speak the truth and nothing but the truth, and to help our school community to do the same.

Gerry Ebbers (geraldebbers@shaw.ca) is the SCSBC Consultant for Stewardship and Development

Tuition Strategies

by Tim Williams

This is the time of year when school boards should be setting their tuition fees for the upcoming 2013-14 school year. How much should Christian schools charge for tuition? Why are some schools able to charge higher fees than other schools? Some schools have high tuition rates and waiting lists. Other schools have low tuition rates and lots of empty seats. What explains this phenomenon?

Basic economics explains that you can charge a higher price when demand is high and supply is low. However, the economics of Christian education is a little more complex since our public and distributed learning (DL) schools offer a different product for no tuition cost. Some school districts have safe and excellent public schools with new facilities and a variety of academic, vocational, and fine arts choices. Not only do these schools offer no-cost tuition but their product is perceived to be superior by some families. Some Christian schools are faced with competition from other Christian schools in the same city. These schools find themselves competing for a limited number of Christian families willing and able to pay tuition.

Since competition is a reality, there is significant economic pressure on schools to keep tuition rates low. Many Christian school communities hold to a core value that they must keep Christian education affordable for everyone. Perhaps the wiser response is not setting a low tuition for everyone, but the provision of a robust tuition assistance program for those low income families who simply cannot afford a Christian education.

When Christian schools keep tuition fees unrealistically low for everyone, a downward spiral begins: programs get cut, staff salaries and benefits are reduced, buildings are not properly maintained, donors are asked to fund operating deficits, and the value of the Christian education product being offered is further eroded. This in turn forces tuition to be cut even further with the hope that it will attract new families.

Here are several strategies Christian schools are using in dealing with their current situation:

- Some schools try to fill available seats following the logic that it is better to get some Block Grant money with zero tuition than not have the seat filled at all. This creates a slippery slope and may

Let Us Not Be Weary in Welcoming *by Marlene Bylenga*

Transitions. We all face them – changes in our job, moving, getting married, additions to our family or changing schools. Even though some changes can be positive, each of them has their own stresses. I am sure that if you took a moment to identify the times of change in your life you would have a flood of emotions, both happy and sad around those times. As Christians, we have the surety that our Father will be with us, but in order to grow we need to be willing to be shaped and changed through the process.

I just spent an afternoon with two new students from China. They are excited to be in Canada and are hopeful for the future. I am excited for them too, but I also know that the journey they face will be filled with happy experiences and disappointments. They will be challenged to adjust to new ways of living and thinking away from their parents and family. Thankfully, technology allows them to have regular contact with their families. However, their parents will not be able to totally understand the challenges they are facing because they are not physically present and living the experience with them.

I have been an International Student Coordinator for many years but somehow the arrival of these two boys has challenged and reminded me of the encouragement and prayer that they will need in their journey. The first few months will be difficult for them. I need to make a point of reassuring them that the anxiousness and nervousness they are feeling is normal and that the adjustment to a new way of living is difficult but with a positive attitude they will navigate through and be enriched by

their experience. I need to encourage them to not be in a rush, to focus on the long-term, to take care of themselves by getting plenty of rest, exercise and eating well. I also need to tell them it is okay not to like all aspects of their new environment, but to do their best to remain positive.

I am not able to do this all on my own. School staff and students all need to be encouraging, willing to welcome and enfold the newcomer and not growing weary in this important role. As I reflect, I am thankful that not one of us is totally responsible for the students in our care. We are educating and training them in community.

My prayer for all the students coming from overseas to our school is that they will not only experience success in their studies and school life but that they will meet Christ in a new and fresh way. I pray they will meet Him in their interactions with their teachers, fellow students, and administration and in their studies as they explore God's hand in the creation. I also pray they will have the discernment to assess cultural differences and make wise choices, not throwing aside everything from their culture but taking the good from each culture.

Like me, I am sure that many of you have been awed by the responsibility of being a part of nurturing and caring for the students in your programs. May the Lord continue to give us an open and caring heart for each of His children put in our charge.

*Marlene Bylenga (ieprogram@scsbc.ca) is the
SCSBC International Education Coordinator*

lead to some dissatisfaction from full tuition paying families.

- Some schools fill seats with international students that may or may not be mission appropriate.
- Some schools relax their admission policies to allow non-Christian families to attend their independent school.
- Some schools increase their tuition and differentiate their product offering, marketing their loving and safe Christian environment, integration of biblical worldview in the curriculum, higher FSA (Foundation Skills Assessment), and Fraser Institute scores, missions trip opportunities, service learning options, music program, student leadership emphasis, industrial arts program, and many other exciting distinctives.

The demand curve for Christian education is relatively inelastic. Elasticity of demand is a simple economic concept. Fuel, for example, has an inelastic demand curve – even though the price of gas goes up, few people quit driving. Although families from all income levels have a strong commitment and priority towards Christian education, I would argue that Christian education has a kinked demand curve, whereby it is more elastic for families with low discretionary income, and more inelastic

for families with higher discretionary income. Tuition increases can cause real hardship for some families who may have to leave the school if even a small increase in tuition occurs. Therefore, tuition increase decisions must go hand in hand with fair and compassionate tuition assistance policies.

Many Christian schools understand that once children and their parents have started school and feel loved and embraced by the Christian school community, the elasticity of their individual demand curve becomes more inelastic. In marketing terms, your customer (parent) becomes stickier (more committed) and will be unlikely to move when faced with modest annual tuition fees increases. Understanding this principle, many schools have introduced a lower tuition fee for first time families.

Understanding the demand curve for Christian education in your city, the consequences of unrealistically low tuition fees, and the importance of robust tuition assistance policies will greatly help your board determine the tuition strategy for your school.

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NEWS AND EVENTS

UPCOMING CALENDAR

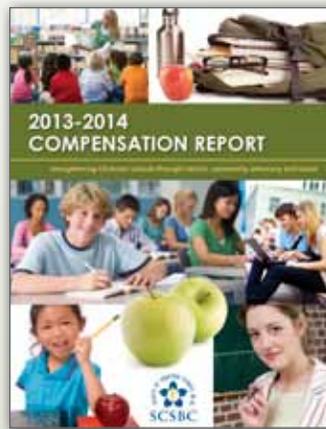


13th Annual Leadership Conference

170 school board members, school staff and SCSBC board members demonstrated their commitment to Christian education by giving up their Saturday to attend the 13th Annual Leadership Conference on November 3, 2012. The theme of the day was Planning Strategically. The plenary was presented by Henry Contant and Tim Williams with guest spots by Jim Vanderkooy from Kings Christian Collegiate in Ontario, and Ray Pennings from Cardus. Workshop choices followed, including an indepth look at the Kings' strategic planning process, and an exploration of the implications of the Cardus Education Survey.

2013-14 Compensation Report

Every year, SCSBC reviews and compiles salary recommendations for all staff positions in our Christian schools in BC. The resulting guiding document is distributed to our member schools in January. It is also available to members on the scsbc.ca website. Wage ranges are derived through researching Stats Canada figures, Conference Board of Canada Annual Compensation Planning Outlook, and salary and compensation grids from public schools and other independent school organizations in BC and nationally



Our Small High Schools – Stable and Flourishing

Administrators from our small SCSBC high schools met for two days in December to share, discuss and learn about the unique opportunities and challenges their schools face. What distinctives make our Christian schools stand out from all the rest of the educational opportunities parents can choose?

Learning Leaders

“Understand by doing” was the order of the day on November 16 when 27 SCSBC learning leaders met on the campus of TWU to experience speed-building a curriculum unit with master teacher, Joanne den Boer. By the end of the day, they not only had a unit well under way, but they had a process to take back to their own schools and train their teachers in the technique. This meeting represented a new stage for SCSBC – the learning segments were filmed and published online as a further teaching resource for those who attended.



FEBRUARY

- 11: BC Family Day
- 12: CTABC ProD - Vancouver Island
- 15: CTABC ProD - Okanagan
- 21-22: CSI / CEO Roundtable
- 22: International Coordinators Networking
- 28-March 1: CSI / CEO Round Table - Seattle

MARCH

- 1: School Administrative Assistants Focus Day
- 1: CTABC ProD - Lower Mainland
- 5-6: Business and Development Conference
- 18-22: Spring Break
- 25-28: Spring Break - optional week

APRIL

- 11: Learning Leaders Meeting
- 19: CTABC ProD - Northern
- 22: International Coordinators Networking

MAY

- 1-3: CPABC Conference

JULY

- 2-12: TWU Summer Institute for Teachers
- 8-12: ELDI West Coast



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