SCSBC

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The Board's Role in School Budgeting

by Ed Noot and Tim Williams

If you've read a book or attended a workshop on board governance, you've no doubt heard that fiduciary oversight is an important and inherent board responsibility. Board members are caretakers. They have been entrusted with the school they govern, including the money and property of the school. Board members are trustees who are charged with protecting the school – its mission and vision, its integrity and its *financial wellbeing and sustainability.* This trust is an integral obligation to all board members, not just the treasurer or finance committee.

At the same time, SCSBC is keen to remind board members that governing is best exercised from the *crow's nest*. The metaphor comes from sailing ships before the advent of radar or GPS. The person in the crow's nest guided the ship with a *long view,* protecting it from hazards, and charting a course that protected passengers and crew, ensuring they arrive safely at their destination. Boards shouldn't micromanage the school's administration staff unless there are problems on board the ship.

How does a school board appropriately exercise its fiduciary responsibility? One way is by establishing an excellent budgeting framework and process.

Q: Why did the accountant have a pencil stuck up his nose? A: Because he couldn't budge-it.

School budgeting is no joke. It is often a difficult process, and one that requires appropriate governance oversight. Christian schools have a very tricky situation to manage when they attempt to budget for the coming school year. It is hard to predict how much revenue a school will bring in. Firstly, the number of children that will arrive for school in September is an educated guess that makes projecting tuition revenue difficult. Secondly, the provincial government grant that will be received is usually not a guaranteed figure when schools are setting their budgets.

It gets more complicated yet. Based on these educated guesses regarding income and enrolment, a school then needs to commit to teacher contracts many months in advance of the beginning of the school year, usually around April. This is important for teacher morale and so that the school can hire the very best new teachers as they graduate.

In summary, the dilemma is that schools tend to have relatively fixed budgeted cost structures and their revenue can be a little fuzzy. Any budget agreed to by a board or society in May or June has a 100% probability of being different from the September reality.

How can a board effectively and appropriately engage in the budgeting process? Follow a healthy and timely process, and establish realistic parameters – parameters that move the school to a position of financial health and sustainability.

Best practice in the budgeting process

1. Understand your school's budgeting goals (with a long term view) and set clear budget parameters for staff and committees.
   - SCSBC suggests that your goal should be to achieve an education operational surplus i.e. educational income less expenses should be positive after including depreciation, interest and all school costs. This ensures there is a buffer if some of your projected income doesn't materialize and ensures funds are set aside to replace equipment and buildings.
   - If you are not able to achieve this ideal scenario in the short run, then what is your timeline to get there, and what concrete steps will you take on a year by year basis to move your school towards a position of financial health?
   - SCSBC suggests that schools never use donations or fundraising to balance the school budget. Ideally, these funds should be set aside for strategic purposes.
2. Set a clear budget development timeline and monitor progress.
   - Who is responsible for what and when?
   - At which board and committee meetings during the year will you expect to discuss budget matters such as tuition increases, projected enrollment, staff wage increases, capital asset replacement?
3. Start the process early. Ideally, a January board meeting should have an early draft of the next school year's budget. A January board meeting should be deciding what the tuition fee increase will be for the next school year so that potential new parents have some certainty regarding what tuition fees they will be paying. Your development staff will really appreciate this. Tuition fee increases are a reality because expenses rise every year. Also at this meeting, the board should be reviewing SCSBC's recommendations for staff wage increases.
4. Ensure that you also have a capital budget for all the new and expected replacements that will be needed for the next year. Your facility staff, IT staff, athletics staff and others will need to provide input regarding these costs for the next year.
5. In March or before, ensure there is a re-enrollment process where the parents provide an early commitment for their children to attend the next year. Clearly, you want to give existing families the first available places for their children and for development staff know how many students they need to recruit in each grade. These early numbers give the board confidence regarding how many teachers to offer contracts to in the next year. It is important for teachers to know as early as possible if their contracts are being renewed. Firstly, it enhances staff morale. Secondly, if a teacher contract is not being renewed due to falling enrollment, it gives the teacher time to look for a new position at another school. Lastly, in a growing school, it allows the board to know how many new teachers to hire.

6. In the June society meeting, ensure that your society members understand that any budget being brought to members is actually a *draft* budget that will need to change in September when more concrete information is known. Also, help your society members and staff to understand the parameters of how the school's budget is formulated. Transparency is a good thing. Helping everyone understand why it is important for a school to have a healthy surplus every year to build resources to replace assets, pay off debts and allow for growth will provide confidence in your board's leadership of the school.

7. At the September board meeting, ensure that the budget has been updated with accurate student numbers and approve the final budget for the next school year. We also recommend a budget template that provides a projected monthly cash position of the school throughout the year.

8. Every month, ensure that your administration team and the board are receiving budget vs actual financial data to confirm that your school is on track financially. This also ensures that the treasurer and directors fulfill their fiduciary responsibility as board members. Board members should ask the reason for variances and should expect an answer from administrators.

As you read this article, your school may have only a few months to set a course for the 2017-18 school budget year. Experience shows that school boards have really only two major variables that can materially influence the budget outcome: firstly, tuition increases and secondly, staff efficiency ratios i.e. student per staff levels. Experience also shows that boards are reluctant to tell parents their fees need to go up, and reluctant to tell administrators their staffing levels need to go down. Therefore, very careful planning is needed if your school is to avoid the "deficit trap."

SCSBC is happy to assist schools to develop best practices in budgeting.

Ed Noot (ed.noot@scsbc.ca) is the SCSBC Executive Director

Tim Williams (tim.williams@scsbc.ca) is the SCSBC Director of Finance

Clear Communication Builds Relationship

by Marlene Bylenga

One of the unique features of an International Program is the homestay program. In a school environment, every day there are new things to learn and new challenges to face. For an international student, this is even more undeniable. Not only are students coming to study in a different environment, but they are also experiencing home life in a very different culture. At times, misunderstandings occur, loneliness sets in, students and homestay parents become frustrated, and relationships breakdown.

Recently, I have been reflecting on two different situations with two different outcomes.

- When school staff take the time to build relationships with parents, explain policies and procedures, and communicate on a regular basis, many misunderstandings can be resolved.

- When policies and procedures are not followed, more difficulties can be the result. When we try to take shortcuts or make exceptions, we run into trouble, and it is hard to build trust and resolve differences. When parents and students have an understanding of guidelines and policies, it is easier to come to resolutions.

As we enroll international students, our first focus should be on building trust-filled relationships with parents and students. It is my experience that the most successful students are those whose parents are connected to the staff in the international student program, understand the values of the school and support the homestay guidelines. When trust has been established between the parents and the school, there is a relationship of mutual respect. Then if misunderstandings arise, it is easier to work through the issues because the relationship has a firm foundation.

Establishing relationship begins in the application process. Ensuring that parents understand the mission and vision of your school, and taking the time to hear the parents' concerns and reasons for sending their children is a building block in establishing good connections. The importance of a face to face interview cannot be overemphasized.

In addition, if at all possible, it is important that the host parents and the student's parents have a trust-filled relationship. Many parents accompany their children to this country when they begin school. I take these times to ensure that parents meet the host parents and visit with them in their home. Meeting and visiting with each other allows parents and host parents to learn a little more about each other. Host families who are committed to building strong relationships with their student and family are the backbone of an international program. Beautiful relationships develop between host and student parents and through them strong ties are built with other families in the school community. Our community is enlarged.

Lastly, be available and take the time to "hear." Find ways to establish communication. Using social networks, regular emails, telephone calls or a quick text to parents and homestay parents can be good ways to keep in contact.

Building community is a key element in our Christian schools. Building community with parents whose students are studying here from overseas is another way to extend our tent pegs.

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

Leadership Development:
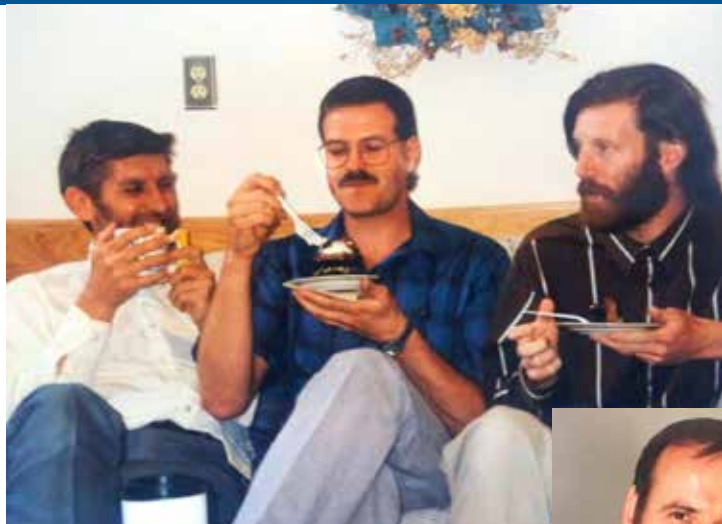
Above: Henry Vanderveen, Ed Noot, Dave Loewen
Inset: Henry Contant

Nothing in the picture above would lead you to believe that these three teachers would grow into key educational leaders in the SCSBC family of schools, and yet we have.

The picture, taken around 1994, shows Henry Vanderveen, me and Dave Loewen enjoying cake as the staff of the Clayburn Hills Campus of Abbotsford Christian School celebrated a milestone. At the time, we three were emerging leaders. I served as a vice principal, Henry as the learning assistance coordinator and Dave as a Grade 7 teacher in charge of athletics. Abbotsford Christian School was at the tail end a period of explosive growth, having built the Clayburn Hills campus to replace some thirteen portables that were situated on the Heritage Campus site. Henry Contant, who was the principal at Clayburn Hills at the time, notes that, "The unprecedented growth at ACS elementary necessitated an ever-changing and growing leadership and administrative structure."

The "ever-changing and growing leadership structure" offered opportunities to the three of us. Today, Henry and Dave serve as superintendents of two large SCSBC school systems and I serve as the Executive Director of SCSBC. While the growth of ACS at that time created the need for leaders, there were other factors that contributed to the leadership identification and development. As we three reflect on our leadership journey, it is clear that leadership skills were nurtured in a culture of support that led us to take on a variety of leadership roles along the way.

The story highlights the importance of leadership development as a key responsibility of all leaders, and one that ultimately contributes to the greater cause of Christian education. "I always tried to hire those whom I deemed had the greatest potential for growth as a leader, whether that be at the administrative or curricular level. I knew that dynamic, emerging school leaders would eventually leave ACS for other schools. However, I always felt that it was better to have worked with them for a few years, than working with other less inspiring leaders who would want to stay their entire career at our school." (Contant)

Key elements in the leadership journey seem to be identification, opportunity and support.

Leadership Identification

Vanderveen notes that, "Leadership development should be an important part of every leader's work. Senior leadership in our schools should be hiring great teachers but, as early as the interview process, should be looking for leadership potential as well. Leadership potential may be evident from an individual's education or experience, but can be discerned from watching interactions with others or observing how difficult situations are handled. Potential leaders often need to be nudged. We become teachers because we love working with kids and it can be difficult to imagine doing anything different."

Contant echoes this reflection when he states, "I was constantly and aggressively recruiting staff who were much more talented than me in many areas. I learned very quickly that as the principal I couldn't do it all by myself. Our school needed a strong leadership team of young and veteran educators/leaders to deal with the myriad of issues that came with a growing and ever changing school system."

What is it about emerging leaders that catches our eye or leads us to see potential in them? Noot believes that two character traits stand out among emerging leaders:

- Emerging leaders express interest in the *big picture*. They are engaged in the school community and express an interest in and passion for the aspects of school that are beyond their classroom walls – such as policy, government initiatives, the work the school board and FISA.

- Emerging leaders are often staff members who seek to find solutions when issues emerge. It is easy to identify problems in our schools, but emerging leaders can view a problem or issue as an opportunity for constructive change and begin to seek solutions that will address the issue and enhance our professional learning community. They display the confidence to move beyond a problem and engage others in collaboratively seeking to turn a negative into a positive.

Once an emerging leader is identified, they sometimes need a shoulder tap. An open conversation highlighting the leadership potential that is evident and asking if there might be a desire to take on some leadership roles or to at least explore leadership can be a pivotal moment in an emerging leaders career. I remember several times when an experienced teacher, leader or friend tapped my shoulder, and these conversations have had a profound effect on my career path.

Leadership Opportunities

Loewen's experience as a new teacher hired by Contant supports the importance of opportunity. He reflects, "At ACS I was given ample opportunity to exercise already existent leadership gifts, but more importantly to develop leaderships gifts and skills I did not know I had. This was accomplished because the formal leadership teams were willing to be creative in how they provided opportunities AND because they were NOT threatened by seeing someone succeed in an area they once led in." Vanderveen notes that, "When a teacher has been identified as a potential leader, a senior administrator should find opportunities for him or her to experiment with leading, perhaps even giving up a favourite task, to create an opportunity."

As Contant noted earlier, school growth can create new leadership opportunities, but it goes beyond that. Loewen frames it this way: "To some degree there was a *culture of try* which meant that I was allowed to try new stuff (outdoor education, new sports teams and cross campus unit plans) I had to bring the idea, rationale and details, and I was generally encouraged to go for it." A *culture of try* encourages new ideas, thereby creating natural opportunities for leadership. A vigorous discussion of the rationale will ensure that ideas are consistent with a school's mission and vision.

Opportunity is critical in the leadership journey. Without opportunity, the emerging leader has no sense of testing the waters and therefore is not developing as a leader. School growth can create natural opportunities for new leadership but even when schools are not growing, creative principals can create natural and authentic leadership opportunities for emerging leaders to embrace.

Leadership Support

Once a leader is identified and given opportunity, it is critical that they receive support. Support can come in many forms and can be informal or formal. When supporting the emerging leader, Vanderveen notes the importance of, "providing clear direction and honest feedback." Loewen reflects that during his time as an emerging leader he, "received support in trying new things and in taking on new roles and responsibilities".

Informal support can include meeting regularly to review how things are going and to have informal discussions on leadership tasks, joys and challenges. This type of regular and informal interaction is critical for the emerging leader as it gives an opportunity to process new experiences with a veteran leader.

At a certain point, however, more formal leadership support should also be engaged. This could include focused professional development seminars and workshops, mentorship (within or outside of the school), reading of professional journals or books and enrolling in a leadership development program like Educators Leadership Development Institute (ELDI).

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to supporting a new leader. The important aspect is to create opportunities to learn and to reflect on the nuances of educational leadership. Establishing these opportunities will take the intentional focus of the emerging leader and of the one who tapped their shoulder, but it is well worth the effort. The common engagement around professional readings or workshops can be a time of significant learning and connecting for both leaders. It is also noteworthy that, by engaging in these types of supporting activities, the senior leader is not only contributing to the development of the emerging leader, but they are modeling the practice of lifelong learning and development.

Formal support can also include programs like the jointly sponsored (CSI/SCSBC) Education Leadership Development Institute – ELDI. Vanderveen highlights the benefit of this program, "ELDI is an excellent program to help potential leaders to determine for themselves whether school leadership is really for them. Participants are exposed to a wide variety of school leadership scenarios – the good, the bad and the ugly – so they have an understanding of potential leadership issues."

"What if you train them and they leave?
What if you don't train them and they stay?"
~ John Maxwell

Contant highlights the desire for a blend of youth and experience in the leadership mix, "I consciously focused on hiring young, energetic, visionary, creative, innovative, educators, but I also looked for experienced master teachers who could provide needed curricular leadership within our school."

The three emerging leaders in the picture all benefited from Contant's approach and from the opportunities presented by the Abbotsford Christian School community. We, in turn, have all played a role in identifying and supporting a new generation of emerging leaders.

Leadership development is a critical need in society at large and in Christian schools in particular. It is a shared responsibility and one that we exercise for the betterment of our schools and for the greater good of Christian education.

*Ed Noot (ed.noot@scsbc.ca) is
the SCSBC Executive Director*

Assessment Is Central to Learning

Among educators, there is very little argument about whether or not engaging in assessment is a required dimension in the role of teachers. There is, however, much variability in individuals' understandings and living out of how assessment is practiced in the classroom, and regarding its role in the learning process. The BC Ed Plan and BC's newly released interim reporting policy have re-ignited the assessment conversation and have captured the attention of most educators. Current dialogue is captivated by BC's stipulation that all students are to perform self-assessments on the core competencies, self-assessments which are also to be included in final summative reports; this represents a significant shift or expansion in thinking. What are the implications, and how might we begin to engage all staff in deep consideration around how assessment practices can further facilitate student learning?

Perhaps the starting point is more obvious than we think and begins simply by engaging teachers with the question, "What is the purpose of assessment?" At first glance, the answer seems obvious, and the question might almost be construed as insulting to a professionally trained faculty. However, articulated answers and how those answers are framed are very telling. For some, assessment centres around summating how a student has *done* (at the end of a task or journey); others will speak about assessment's role in determining how one is *doing* (during a task or learning journey), and many will note that assessment requires both elements. What is interesting though is that helping a student become a better assessor of themselves is a far less commonly stated purpose of assessment.

In 1989, Costa worked to articulate the need for reframing assessment and asserted that "we must constantly remind ourselves that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to enable students to evaluate themselves."[1] Yet over the past two and a half decades, while the language we use to discuss assessment has changed somewhat, practice has been less impacted. Educators agree that the goals of assessment hinge on facilitation and improvement of student learning, yet classroom practice is often dominated by methodologies that serve to measure students against some standard rather than serving to discover the change and progress in a student's learning journey.

To illustrate this, consider *Figure 1* which graphically represents the distribution of how teachers have stereotypically engaged with assessment practices, and what we might consider the newly proposed distribution of assessment methodology and purpose. In current assessment literature, a common way to think about methods and practice are summarized as assessment *As* learning, *For* learning, and *Of* learning. Loosely defined, assessment *as* learning pertains to student engaged self, peer, or group evaluation which is intended to inform the student while they are engaged in a process, allowing constructive feedback iterations to inform

the process and product. Abbreviated, assessment *as* learning informs a student's current practice and kindles immediate improvement. Assessment *for* learning refers to practices typically employed by a teacher which serve to gauge student understanding during a learning journey (or unit, etc.) so that the teacher might use this information to inform their choice of pedagogical engagements and planning. Assessment *for* learning, then, informs teacher practice as responsive to the current needs of students. Assessment *of* learning is often defined as a final evaluation intended to measure how far a student has come, or what level of understanding they have achieved along some spectrum.
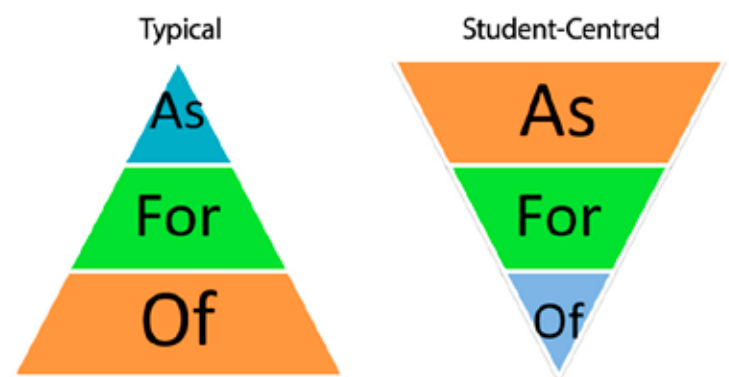

Figure 1 - Typical and Proposed Distributions of Assessment

While the delineation of assessment into the categories of as, for, and of learning are helpful in facilitating comprehension of the various aspects or elements of assessment, their definitions have done little to transfer the promise of the theoretical framework into practice within classrooms. Educators readily acknowledge the need for engaging in more assessment *as* and *for* learning and placing less onus on assessment *of* learning, but I contend that the language framework of *as, for,* and *of* do not provide enough action-driven impetus. In other words, how can we better help teaching staff to translate the three components of assessment into understandings of concrete application and practice such that student learning is positively affected?

Perhaps we might reconceive of the lesser understood components - assessment *as* and *for* learning - in terms of *who* is primarily engaged in their practices. Strategies for assessment *as* learning are those that primarily involve learner processing. Student engagement and reflection are the most critical elements in this regard, and therefore assessment *as* learning might be better expressed as **Student-Enacted** assessment. This naming makes overtly clear the active role students themselves play in engaging in a practice of assessment. Students play a role in peer feedback, self-assessment, and in setting personal development goals to which they will work toward. While the naming convention makes clear

that the learner holds the pivotal role in student-enacted learning, teacher involvement as a facilitator or coach and as a constructor of meaningful time for engaging student-enacted assessment opportunities cannot be understated.

Assessment *for* learning might be reframed as *Teacher-Enacted* assessment where the teacher evaluates current student comprehension and curricular competency during a learning journey. The intention of *Teacher-Enacted* assessment aims toward the identification of learning gaps present within the student group then applying that knowledge of where learning is breaking down to inform them in planning learning activities which address the learning gaps, on a class level, individual needs level, or both.

If we think and speak about assessment in terms of *Student-enacted* (teacher facilitated), and *Teacher-enacted*, and summative while considering the proposed distribution or frequency of utilization, teachers are more likely able to gauge their assessment practice choices. Simply, teachers might ask or reflect on:

- How much of the assessment in my class is *Student-Enacted?*
- How much of the assessment in my class is *Teacher-Enacted* and used to inform pedagogical choices?
- How much of the assessment in my class is *Summative*?
- What evidence do I have that supports engagement in each of these areas?
- And finally, is my assessment practice distribution congruent with student-centred assessment practice?
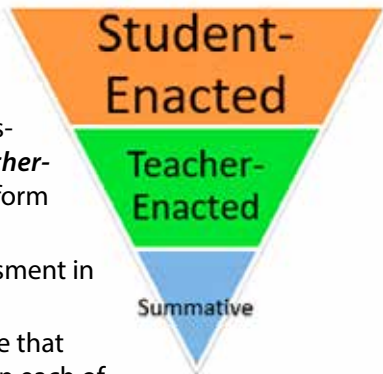
*Greg Gerber (greg.gerber@scsbc.ca)*
is an SCSBC Director of Learning

References:

1 Costa, A. L. (1989): "Reassessing assessment," Educational leadership 46-7, p. 2.

Earl, L. M.; Katz, M. S. (2006) Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind: Assessment for Learning, Assessment as Learning, Assessment of Learning, Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education, Retrieved from https://www.wncp.ca/media/40539/rethink.pdf

BC Ministry of Education (1994) Assessment handbook series: Student self-assessment, Curriculum Development Branch, Retrieved from https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/classroom_assessment/self_assess.pdf

Strong and Weak: *Embracing a Life of Love, Risk and True Flourishing* – *Andy Crouch*
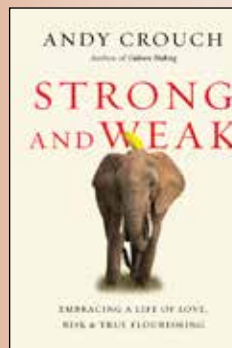
True flourishing travels down an unexpected path – being both strong and weak. We see this in the best leaders, people who use their authority for the benefit of others, while also showing extraordinary willingness to face and embrace suffering. Rather than being opposites, strength and weakness are actually meant to be combined in every human life and community. If you want to become the kind of person with the strength to be compassionate and generous, whose influence leads to healthy communities, this book is for you.

Featured Websites

Resources for Integrating Aboriginal Ways of Knowing and Learning – *ERAC*

abedsupport.bcerac.ca

This is a site to bookmark for researching BC-specific resources, particularly for elementary grades, to use with BC's redesigned curriculum which is grounded in current child development and learning theories research including a large body of research that supports the inclusion of Aboriginal content for all students. To assist with this, ERAC is continuously identifying and evaluating aboriginal resources that you can access from this site.

Development and Leadership Coaching – *Zach Clark*

developmentandleadership.org

Use this site to learn more about Zach Clark's approach to development and leadership. He says, "Your to-do list is long, the demands on your time overwhelming, and the pressures just keep coming. Every day you push forward, but deep down you wonder if you'll get the needed results. Sometimes you can feel drowned by the reality of what it takes to make progress. You don't need more ideas. You need to know how to go from where you are to where you need to be."

NEWS AND EVENTS

Maple Ridge Christian School Turns 60

In September 1956, two teachers and twenty-eight students began the first classes of Maple Ridge Christian School. Although many things have changed in sixty years, the school's mission and vision have not. Founded with the purpose to teach every subject from a biblical worldview and challenge students to impact the world for God's glory, that mission and vision are still strong today. Maple Ridge Christian School joins five other SCSBC schools in the six-decade achievement.

Taking an Opportunity to Do Justice

In August, thieves stole $12,000 of personal items from Popkum volunteer firefighters while they were responding to an emergency. To encourage the firefighters and show them their volunteerism was valued, a number of Timothy Christian School student volunteers organized a car wash and bake sale on Saturday, Sept 17. Despite being drenched in a downpour, the Popkum community turnout was enormous and the students raised $9,500 to help replace the stolen items. Students were invited to attend the next firefighting practice where they presented the volunteer firefighters with the proceeds of their hard work. Organizing teacher Daniel Van Brugge said, "My deep hope for this event was that students come away with an understanding of how working to fill the needs of others can both enrich the served and the servant."

8

SCSBC New Website

The new, mobile-friendly SCSBC website, a project that began well over a year ago, launched during the first week of school. This pared-down, contemporary Wordpress site coordinates with the SCSBC members' portal, which was introduced last September as the repository for secure documents, policies, resources and collaboration spaces. This new website is designed to be the public face of our organization, and provides an introduction and overview to anyone seeking information about who SCSBC is and how we work to fulfil our mission of strengthening Christian schools.

CSC Conference

211 educators attended the Christian Schools Canada Conference with featured speaker Andy Crouch, hosted this year in Banff, Alberta, by the Prairie Centre for Christian Education. Almost one-third of the registrants came early to participate in the Deeper Learning pre-conference day. One of the many highlights of the event was the unveiling of the new CSC logo and website to represent this innovative and forward-thinking organization.

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS CANADA