



BCASCD Newsletter

British Columbia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

Mark Your Calendars!

Alan November, well-known speaker on Educational Technology, is coming to B.C.!!! Alan's book, Empowering Students with Technology, swiftly became a best-seller due to its powerful stories, ideas and practical applications for educators. Plan on joining us at the Sheraton Inn in Surrey on October 19, 2006 to hear this outstanding educator share his ideas!

We are pleased to present **B.C. Educator Rob Rankin** speaking on Assessment. Don't miss this presentation in Kamloops, on the October 20th Provincial Pro-D Day.

Registration information for both sessions will follow in June. Stay tuned!

BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSOCIATION FOR
SUPERVISION AND
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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President's Message

Welcome to Spring!

Our BCASCD Executive has been working hard this season, attending meetings, workshops and conferences to seek out the very best professional development opportunities to bring back to the membership.

The most exciting event of the season occurred Thursday, April 6th, as BCASCD hosted its first ever Student Chapter meeting. We have forged a partnership with Simon Fraser University and welcomed 18 new members to both ASCD and BCASCD. The pre-service teachers heard about the joy of teaching from Julie Pearce, Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Coquitlam, and met several members of the executive. It was inspiring for us to see the excitement and dedication of our newest educators and to know that it will be enriching for all of us to work together.

Leslie Andersson and I have recently returned from the International ASCD Conference in Chicago. We'll go into detail about what we learned in the next newsletter, but I would like to share a particularly inspiring quote from Bonnie St. John, an Olympic ski racer who grew up with only one leg, and no snow (she's from San Diego) and very little money. When describing what she learned during one race, she said, "People fall. Winners get up. Gold medal winners get up fastest." Kudos to all of you who help our students earn gold medals each and every day.

Judy Robb

About Our Organization...

BCASCD is a provincial chapter of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, one of the largest professional organizations in education. ASCD has chapters across North America as well as overseas. ASCD is well-known for its publication of the professional journal, Educational Leadership, as well as its outstanding annual conferences. We invite you to add membership in your provincial chapter to your ASCD membership. Becoming a member of BCASCD will connect you to colleagues in British Columbia who are dedicated to providing and developing leadership in curriculum and instruction for enhancing the quality of life-long learning.

A Wonderful Conference

Northwest Southwest Regional Meeting
Phoenix, Arizona
February 10 – 11, 2006

Our BCASCD representative Randy Huth attended this year's Regional Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. Randy met for two days with forty-five ASCD delegates from affiliates in the northwestern and southwestern states, a number of Canadian provinces (Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and the Atlantic Region), Japan and Singapore. The conference started with a discussion on how excellent affiliates view their programs as opportunities to develop educators' capacity for learning and teaching, and to fulfill their mission and goals. Delegates specifically looked at programs in the following areas: Reaching Urban Areas, Hot Topics, Hot Speakers, Delivery and Formats and Links to ASCD Adopted Positions.



Randy and other ASCD delegates debate 'hot topics'.

There was a lot of discussion and continued support for the four adopted ASCD positions around the Whole Child, Health and Learning, High-Stakes Testing and the Achievement Gap. One of the delegates used the following Martin Luther King quote, "Our life begins to end when we become silent about the things that really matter" as an inspiration to us all to keep working hard to support **all** children and their learning. As well, there was lots of discussion around curricular areas such as Assessment for Learning, Struggling Readers for Secondary Students, Mathematics Initiatives, Full Day Kindergarten, Literacy Support, Differentiated Learning and Secondary School Reform.

Kathy Welling, our ASCD regional director and the lead facilitator of the conference, as well as the other ASCD Directors, Gail Dickson, Molly McCloskey and Margaret Murphy did a fantastic job facilitating the entire session. Delegates at the conference were called upon to facilitate different sessions of the program. This example of leadership by the ASCD directors demonstrated their understanding of distributive leadership. During the conference there was also time for delegates from all the Canadian Regions to get together to talk about Canadian issues in education. In the future we hope to connect with our Canadian partners on a more regular basis. One way we hope to do this is through our provincial websites to share with one another the latest professional development we are offering in our regions. One of the most interesting sessions was titled "Tapping into Generational Power". In this session we looked at the four different age groups of society and how we need to be aware of the specific needs of each group if we want to attract them to our organization.

A new strategy called Open Space Principles was used to gather ideas around general discussion issues towards the end of the conference. The delegates were asked to provide some topics and the facilitators posted the titles on chart paper around the room. Delegates were told to roam around the room and sit down at one of the tables to discuss the topic with the following rules:

1. Whoever comes is the right person
2. Whenever it starts is the right time
3. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
4. Whenever it's over, it's over!

*"Our life begins to end
when we become silent
about the things that
really matter"*

Dr. Martin Luther
King

Dr. Paul Shaker Presents to BCASCD in January 2006

By: Grant Lenarduzzi, SD#20

One hundred BC educators received a thoughtful, and sometimes passionate, presentation on “the blurring border between scholarship and advocacy”, when they listened to a presentation from Dr. Paul Shaker and Dr. Dan Laitsch on Thursday, January 26th. Dr. Shaker is the Dean of Education at SFU, where Dr. Laitsch is an associate professor.

The presentation titled, “*Education in BC: Current (Future) Issues and Trends*” centred on the changing nature of information use as it pertains to education. Their premise is that knowledge use and knowledge control is becoming a predictable partner of the increased exploitation of ideological research, which is lacking quality control and is seldom questioned. While many of the examples were from the United States, the Fraser Institute was a close example that was often paralleled to make their points.

Conservative ‘Think Tanks’, compared to Liberal ones, spent far more time, energy and money in ideological research and efforts to change public opinion. It was conveyed that, possibly, public organizations put less money into changing public perceptions, because they feel the good message, the good values, will naturally emerge for the public to see.

It was also put forth that the conservative interest in education served the purposes to reduce government (size and expenditure), to weaken unions, to increase private sector profit and to attack secular humanitarianism, while protecting traditional values.

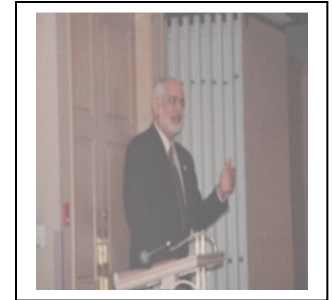
It was clear that Dr. Shaker was a strong supporter of public education and was surprised by the lack of criticism of such things as the Fraser Report. He felt the Fraser Report was not straight-forward, and incorporated a weighting of the measures in line with their conservative values. Feeling the report comprises flawed research, he is hoping to organize an analysis of the data used to generate the report.

North American illustrations were referred to that showed how policy is increasingly being developed first, and then research is carried out by various groups to justify the policy. It was presented that Think Tank policy strategy served to undermine the current systems, to convince people that “the system is broken” and attack the ideology of the public education system. This was analogous to the Fraser Report where BC education, which has ‘fabulous’ results internationally, is made to look inferior in order to show how the private system can outperform the public education system.

Dr. Shaker felt that public education would continue to be attacked unless bad research and bad ideas were not challenged more often. He urged people to get out of the ‘numbers box’, and to present education as the multifaceted art that it is, and to criticize reports that come from groups like the Fraser Institute.

Dr. Shaker concluded the joint presentation by stating that education used to be protected as a ‘public good’, but is now becoming more of a political football. He reiterated his strong belief in public education, that good education develops from the community and thus efforts to centralize education should be resisted.

(The slide presentation of the talk can be found at <http://www.sfu.ca/~dlaitsch/BCASCDpres.pdf>)



Dr. Shaker



Audience listens intently to the presentation.



Members of the BCASCD Executive at Newlands

Assessment FOR Learning: Beginning the Dialogue

By: Jean Borsa, SD # 73 (Kamloops/Thompson)

The greatest influence on student achievement and success is what happens day-to-day in our classrooms. Classroom teachers have a major impact on student instruction, assessment, learning and achievement. Master teachers consciously consider the value and purpose of both formal and informal, summative and formative, assessments as sources of information for student learning. The information provided by classroom assessments for learning about student learning progress is a powerful guide for teachers in planning daily instruction to appropriately meet students' specific learning needs. Such instruction yields the greatest positive results in terms of improved achievement for ALL students. So how can we engage staff to reflect on our classroom assessment practices for learning?

We can begin by honouring what teachers are already doing in our classrooms. By making a commitment to have agenda items and dialogue about the existing classroom connections among assessment, instruction and learning during every staff meeting, every department meeting and/or every school planning council meeting we can reflect on our assessment practices on an ongoing basis.

Conversation and dialogue about classroom assessment FOR learning may begin by asking teachers to bring and share their own classroom assessments that provide them with useful and relevant feedback to inform further instruction and learning for students. Together teachers can explore ways to modify existing classroom assessments to create a greater focus FOR student learning. Through collaboration and sharing we can build our assessment repertoire, increase our assessment literacy, and identify and refine the moment-to-moment, or day-to-day, assessment techniques we already use to make instructional decisions.

Discussion about classroom assessments for learning may also start by asking individual teachers to reflect on their own personal experience as 'test takers', either in public school settings or universities. Ask teachers to share their worst experience and their best assessment experience. Reflect on what factors made teachers' assessment experiences positive and led to increased learning. Ask teachers to reflect on how their personal assessment experiences are influencing how they construct and conduct their own classroom assessments for their students. Ask teachers to submit for discussion questions, or things they are still wondering about, in terms of classroom assessment for student learning.

Dialogue may include posing questions for discussion in a Think/Pair/Share activity. Whatever discussion format is used, it should include the opportunity for each individual teacher's voice to be heard. Possible discussion questions may include: "Why do we assess our students? What needs and purposes does the classroom assessment process fulfill? Which type of assessment do you find has the greatest effect on student learning - and why? Should students ever be the primary users of assessments? How can students become involved in assessment FOR learning - their own or their peers'? What do you predict students will say about your classroom assessments, and why?"

The dialogue about, and the sharing of, classroom assessments, criteria and rubrics result in the use of common language and understandings among staff, and among staff and students. Grade level or school-wide marking of assessments for learning reveal student strengths, indicate areas for further learning and instructional focus, and provide teachers with relevant, practical feedback on their own classroom assessments. Most importantly, all teachers begin to take collective responsibility for the achievement of all students, and the problem-solving process of instructional challenges benefits from the collective wisdom of many staff.

Identifying, examining, and reflecting on staff assumptions and beliefs about student classroom assessments may yield a rich professional dialogue. Some guiding principles, or beliefs, about classroom assessments that inform teaching and promote learning might include the assumptions that: students are the key assessment users; clear, appropriate and accurate targets for assessment are essential; students should always know what they are being assessed for/on; informational feedback, not a letter grade, is the most valuable form of assessment for learning; and, sound assessments must be accompanied by timely feedback and effective communication.

Students themselves, even in primary classes, can provide us with powerful insights into what helps them learn. We need only to ask them which classroom practices make learning difficult for them and which practices build confidence and success. What would happen to student learning and achievement in our classrooms if we did not provide any letter grades throughout a term, or a semester, but instead provided written and/or oral feedback referenced to criteria or rubrics? What would happen if students also provided each other with feedback on their own work based on common criteria and rubrics? Research (Black & Wiliam, 1998) strongly suggests that learning, motivation, relevance, and achievement will increase for all students, especially the lower achievers, and that teachers may no longer always be working harder than their students!

Could we say that our students have become lifelong learners when their self-assessment of their own academic success matched their teacher's assessment?

Next issue: [Quality Classroom Assessments](#)