BCCPAC Representation Report

Submitted by: **Ann Whiteaker, President**
Name of Event: BCPVPA Short course
Date of Event: July 14, 2011
Location of Event: Vancouver, BC

I was invited to address the attendees of the BCPVPA short course to bring greetings and a better understanding of parents in education during their dinner celebration.

The evening was enjoyable and had a light social atmosphere. (Speech attached for reference)

Recommendation

BCCPAC continue to pursue opportunities to address partner groups. It is noted that in the past BCCPAC Presidents would facilitate a workshop at the short course efforts should be made to renew this relationship.

WHY DO WE VALUE PUBLIC EDUCATION?

Thank you for including and welcoming me to your event this evening and providing me this opportunity to speak to you on behalf of parents. As Principals you will have new and different opportunities to support students and families and develop a new understanding of the unique perspective of Parents as partners in the education of their children. Your ability to actively listen to parent concerns and seek unique solutions, to work collaboratively with your school PAC to support student success and to nurture and build a culture of inclusion in a welcoming environment will be crucial to your individual success and the success of your students.

Parents value education. We recognize the benefits of the shared responsibility and strong commitment to building vibrant systems that contribute to the growth and development of children and youth which cultivates their capacity to shape their lives, their communities, their workplaces and their country in a system that accommodates their learning and human needs.

Parents value the importance of transmitting knowledge, culture, and ways of thinking, from one generation to the next and seek to help each and every child have the same opportunity to discover and develop who they are.

By exploring what learners of all ages need for successful learning, - the needs that must be met by educators, parents, and government and by acknowledging the purpose of education as the making of a human being, together we can embrace the essential elements of inclusivity, community building, along with recognition and the celebration of individual uniqueness.

The ability to look beyond today and to think of the skills, programs and supports children need to succeed, now and in the future; a future that will be very different from what we see today is the key to public confidence and to increasing the value of public education.

School systems build public confidence when they help people learn how to effectively navigate and advocate for themselves within the system. In many ways we have become vested in "fixing the problem" or "putting out fires" as a way of building public confidence.

Often this has the opposite effect as it brings the stability and fairness of our systems into question and fosters adversarial relationships.

It is a difficult balance to achieve, but to create value, we need to build trust in the ability to meet the needs of individual students while also making sound strategic decisions that benefit all students and partners. Imagine what the experience of community, family and educational partnerships could do to support learning, through collaborative relationships? *(pause)*

Public education depends on public confidence. Schools can only flourish where the population – not only parents, but teachers, students and the entire community – believes that the system is performing well and helping students attain good educational outcomes. After all, the 'system' is expecting parents to trust them with their children, expects students to trust their time and energy will be rewarded later in life and for the public to provide significant sums of money to educate these children for the future.

Each interaction between schools, students, staff and the broader community affects public attitudes towards education – for better or worse. While we should be pleased with the degree of support education does have, this support can never be taken for granted and must be built and rebuilt continually – hard, but vitally important work.

We each have unique opportunities to reflect on how public education serves communities and individual learners. Education must provide open spaces for both learners and communities to express who they are, to imagine what they might be, and to struggle to become worthy of their best aspirations.

As a community we need to be aware of the need for change. We need to share ideas, we need to discuss, and we need to embrace the thoughts and ideas of others. We need to care in deep and sincere ways.

While the system can over time, absorb failure, each parent only has one chance to support their child in meeting their unique potential. This most basic of parental instincts must be valued and responded to as we study, pilot and implement new programs.

There is a great deal of work to do to reach the potential of both the system and each individual learner. Supporting leadership and critically examining practice – even as we fight for adequate funding and focus on the needs of each learner within the implementation of 21 century education. We need to remember where we have been - so that we can better move forward in the creation of new learning and teaching environments that will see personalized learning achieve success for all students.
Parents feel strongly that dialogue is an important bridge from the past that leads to future possibilities. Within such dialogue lies the opportunity for change.

In BC we have a strong public education system however, like many other provinces, the school system provides all children and youth with equal opportunities, but produces unequal outcomes. Our educational challenge is to create schools and school systems that achieve equal opportunity and good outcomes for *all* students.

Parents expect and desire more from our educational system. They want to see the building on successes and to ensure nothing short of excellence in the future.
At the same time, however, we have to overcome a tendency in education – and many other public policy areas – to think about change as a process of improving what we have, rather than a process of discovering new and novel ideas for transformation.

As Gordon Martell observes and commented on new forms of governance for First Nations' education in Canada:

sometimes the only way forward is through "the continued development of new and innovative responses" that force "antiquated structures and one size fits all educational delivery models" to give way to a variety of local and regional ideas grounded in the vision and capacity of communities.

"Public education is the most important investment we can make as a society for our communities. Our education system not only shapes individual student's lives, it shapes the very nature of our society. A

strong and vibrant public education system is critical to develop social cohesion and the kind of civil society we desire for the future."

If our beliefs hold true across the province, and we all value public education, we need to grasp BC's education challenge as something that matters to all individuals, identify strategies to revitalize the role of all partners in education, and create the conditions for thoughtful dialogue about the future of education that we desire for our students and for ourselves.

It is time to work together to experience education as a positive force for creating, building and rebuilding - a place where one feels inspired and hopeful in terms of what is possible for the future. There is no greater motivation than the success of our children.

In closing I would like to thank each and everyone one of you for your energy, and commitment to public education and wish you all the best in your future leadership roles …and remember that we are here for "Children First"