

The value of educating the *whole* person



Marnie Mayhew
Executive Director,
International Education &
Independent School Branch

The new Executive Director of the International Education and Independent Schools Branch at the Ministry of Education has a valuable quality that most parents of children in the independent school system will totally respect.

Marnie Mayhew has two daughters, 12 and 15, who attend an independent school.

When Mayhew and her husband made their schooling decision many years ago, they toured a non-denominational all-girls' school in their neighbourhood and were impressed by the confidence of the students. She remembers asking them, "What do you like about the school?" and being blown away by their answers.

"They really projected a sense of confidence and self-assurance and comfort that they were in a place that was responsive to their needs," Mayhew says. She was also struck by a strong sense of community.

Mayhew's interest in and support for independent schooling led her to apply for the job at the Education Ministry last year, after 20 years of working in government, at both the municipal and provincial government levels. She earned her Undergraduate Degree from McGill University with a major in Sociology and a minor in Women's Studies. She also holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Victoria.

Mayhew started her working life in the mayor's office at the City of Victoria, doing communications and stakeholder work. From there she moved to the Victoria Police Department, working in public affairs.

Her background in criminal justice eventually took her to the provincial Justice Ministry, where she was the media spokesperson for the Corrections Branch. Then she shifted gears and went to work in Human Resources. Most recently she led the introduction of conflict management services across the BC government.

"It was an effort to help reduce workplace conflicts, and try to find ways to help employees resolve these conflicts through less adversarial approaches," she recalls. "Conflict is normal. It's how we respond to conflict that matters." She was able to lead a team responsible for overseeing the design and implementation of a new set of mediation services.

Prior to taking on this new role, she was responsible for stakeholder engagement in the child care and early years sectors, supporting the provincial government's commitment to introduce universal child care.

Now that she's moved to Education, Mayhew's primary responsibility for independent schools will be regulatory. Her job will be to ensure schools are operating with the legislative and policy requirements articulated by the ministry. But Mayhew prefers to express her work in plain English: "It's really about ensuring students are learning in an environment that helps them achieve their full potential," she says.

For Mayhew this means making sure that schools meet the needs of the whole student. "Learning is just one facet of our existence," she says. "There's also social health, emotional health and safety. For me, when I talk about achieving the ultimate outcomes of student success, I'm talking about supporting the *whole person*."

She has already attended her first FISA BC board meeting and has also accompanied a school inspection. "What's struck me so far is how healthy and robust the relationships are within a very diverse sector," she says. "I've been really impressed by the many different philosophies, approaches and models that I've heard about and seen."