



January 2021: Issue 231

# NEWSLETTER

## Welcome to Minister Whiteside

The Honorable Jennifer Whiteside was sworn in as BC's new Minister of Education on November 26, 2020. Minister Whiteside is the newly elected MLA for New Westminster. FISA President Ed Noot and I met the new Minister earlier this month to set the stage for a productive ongoing relationship between FISA and Government. Previous to her political career, Minister Whiteside was the chief spokesperson and lead negotiator for the Hospital Employees Union. She is a long-time champion of social justice issues such as accessible post-secondary education and health equity. FISA extends warm congratulations to Minister Whiteside for her Cabinet appointment and looks forward to continuing to work with the Minister to support educational excellence and choice for children and families in British Columbia. A special thanks must be said to Hon. Rob Fleming (now Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure) for the stalwart leadership that he displayed during his term as Minister of Education, both before and during the pandemic.

Sincerely,  
Shawn Chisholm

## Independent School Sector COVID Lead (ISSCL)

To assist in managing the COVID reporting process for independent schools, FISA has been contracted by the Ministry of Education to serve as the sector's COVID lead. Janet Dhanani, FISA's Assistant Executive Director, will take on the primary responsibility of serving as the ISSCL. When your school has a student or staff member who tests positive for COVID, please complete the [COVID Exposure Report](#) and submit it to [ISCovidLead@fisabc.ca](mailto:ISCovidLead@fisabc.ca) and cc your association head. Catholic schools should follow the exposure reporting procedure determined by their diocesan superintendent. There is no longer a need for a school to send their report to the Ministry of Education. Reports may be submitted prior to Health Authority notification and updated afterwards. For schools that are considering closing a classroom, cohort, or school due to a COVID exposure a follow up report form will be provided. Our request is that Janet, as the ISSCL, is informed of the potential partial or full closure before an announcement is made to the school community. The Ministry respects the authority of First Nations to make decisions regarding school operations. First Nations independent schools may participate in this reporting process or request assistance through this process, but this is not required.

## Mental Health Grant

FISA has received a \$477,000 grant from the Ministry of Education to support the mental health of students, staff, and families in independent schools. The FISA Board has allocated this funding to three main categories: (1) continuation of part-time Independent School Mental Health Coordinator(s) position for two years, (2) offer the Middle Year Development Instrument for grade 4 students in 2021-2022 and grade 8 students in 2021-2023, (3) provide funding to the five FISA associations to create association specific initiatives. You may recall that FISA has received this grant for the past two years, although the amount was substantially less. In the first year, the funding was primarily used to develop the [wellbeingbc.ca](http://wellbeingbc.ca) website which is a treasure trove of Social and Emotional Learning ideas. For this current year, the funding is supporting the administration of the MDI for grade 4 students, continued enhancements to the [wellbeingbc.ca](http://wellbeingbc.ca) website and supporting additional association-level mental health initiatives.



### Contact Information

Website: [www.fisabc.ca](http://www.fisabc.ca)

Email:  
[info@fisabc.ca](mailto:info@fisabc.ca)

Address:  
4885 St. John Paul II Way  
Vancouver, BC  
V5Z 0G3

Telephone:  
604-684-6023

Executive Director:  
Shawn Chisholm

Assistant  
Executive Director:  
Janet Dhanani

Executive Assistant:  
Marina Cholakian

Executive Assistant:  
Magda Hogewoning

Federation of  
Independent School  
Associations in  
British Columbia

### FISA Mental Health Virtual Pro-D

Normally the winter edition of FISA's newsletter includes a list of highlights from the fall's Provincial Outreach and Regional Tour events. Unfortunately, this year we had to forgo our beloved road trip and prioritize safety over in-person learning. However, like you, we have embraced the wonders of technology and have retooled our Pro-D offerings. We are happy to be able to provide a Provincial Outreach this year through Zoom. Our current Mental Health Coordinators, Jamie Morris and Michelle Hussey, will be conducting six webinars this spring focusing on how to use the [wellbeingbc.ca](http://wellbeingbc.ca) website for staff development. Each webinar is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and will be offered by region. The purpose for scheduling the webinars by region is to continue the FISA practice of using Pro-D events as networking opportunities.

- [March 2, 2021 – Northern Schools](#)
- [March 3, 2021 – Interior Schools](#)
- [March 9, 2021 – Vancouver and Gulf Island Schools](#)
- [March 12, 2021 – Fraser Valley Schools](#)
- [March 31, 2021 – Metro Vancouver and Coastal Schools](#)
- [April 9, 2021 – BC Secondary Schools](#)



**Michelle Hussey**  
FISA Mental Health Coordinator  
Director of School, Kleos Open Learning  
[michelle\\_mhc@fisabc.ca](mailto:michelle_mhc@fisabc.ca)



**Jamie Morris**  
FISA Mental Health Coordinator  
Head of Student Services, Brockton School  
[jamie\\_mhc@fisabc.ca](mailto:jamie_mhc@fisabc.ca)

### MDI

Grade 4 students across the province in public and independent schools have started their participation in the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI). FISA has arranged with the UBC HELP team for grade 4 students this year to participate in the MDI at no cost to the school. The results from the MDI will help inform and affirm individual schools on what is working well and identify areas where further growth is required to support the continued positive development of schools and students. Furthermore, the results will provide FISA and the school associations with valuable data and insight into the overall well-being of the grade 4 students in the province. The FISA Mental Health Coordinators, Michelle Hussey ([michelle\\_mhc@fisabc.ca](mailto:michelle_mhc@fisabc.ca)) and Jamie Morris ([jamie\\_mhc@fisabc.ca](mailto:jamie_mhc@fisabc.ca)), are available to answer any questions you may have on this important project.

### BC Teachers' Council

The nomination period for regional representatives to serve on the BC Teachers' Council ends on February 15, 2021, with elections to be held in March 2021. Per BCTC's eligibility guidelines, a nominee must hold a valid BC teaching certificate, be a practicing certificate holder and reside in a BCTC electoral zone. The certificate holder must also be nominated by ten certificate holders each having his or her principal residence within the zone. Certificate holders are eligible to vote only in the zone in which their principal residence is located. The five electoral zones are the Interior, Fraser, Northern, Vancouver Island, and Vancouver Coastal. More information is available on the Ministry's website [here](#).

### erase Training Opportunities

Thus far this school year, 233 independent school educators have attended the Basic VTRA/DTA training sessions established specifically for independent schools. The one remaining independent school session scheduled for February 18, 2021 has a small number of seats set aside for schools that must have *erase* training completed this school year in order to be in compliance with Ministry regulations. Please contact Janet at [janet@fisabc.ca](mailto:janet@fisabc.ca) to access one of these reserved spaces. A complete list of *erase* training opportunities and registration links can be found on the FISA website [here](#).

## **ArtStarts**

It takes more than a pandemic to stop the BC Arts Council and Province of BC from bringing the arts and children together! ArtStarts has confirmed that the annual Artists in Education (AIE) grant program will continue as usual with FISA being awarded nearly \$25,000 to distribute. Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 independent schools may apply for an AIE grant to support professional artists offering in-school or virtual performances in the areas of theatre, music, visual arts, literary arts, and dance. To assist schools in connecting with eligible artists who have adjusted their offerings with health and safety considerations in mind, ArtStarts has produced a [COVID Conscious Directory](#). Applications are due in the FISA office by March 15, 2021. AIE grant applications are available on the FISA website under the Services tab [here](#).

## **Scholarship Opportunities: District/Authority Scholarship**

On behalf of the Ministry of Education, FISA oversees the District/Authority Scholarship (DAS) program for grade 12 students graduating from independent schools. This award recognizes students for excellence in a wide variety of interest areas such as Fine Arts, Technical and Trades Training, Indigenous Languages and Cultures, and Physical Activity. Winners receive a \$1,250 voucher to assist in funding their post-secondary pursuits. The DAS application process varies by region. An application form for each region is available on the FISA website under the Services tab [here](#).

## **BC Excellence Scholarship**

Independent schools have until February 15, 2021 to nominate one graduating student for the BC Excellence Scholarship. This \$5,000 scholarship will be awarded to 55 grade 12 students in the province of BC. We know that independent schools are bursting with talented students who show an aptitude for their chosen career path and who have provided service and leadership to the school and local communities. More information on this opportunity is available on the Ministry's website [here](#).

## **Pathway to Teacher Education Scholarship**

Grade 12 students who intend to pursue a career in K-12 teaching have until February 15, 2021 to apply for a Pathway to Teacher Education scholarship. This \$5,000 scholarship will be awarded to 20 grade 12 students in BC. It can be deeply affirming for a school to have a graduate express a desire to join the ranks of educational professionals and to complete a journey where they transition from a student to a colleague, with some teachers returning to their former elementary or high schools to carry forth the school's vision. More information on this opportunity is available on the Ministry's website [here](#).

## **Coast Capital Savings Education Awards**

FISA manages the Coast Capital Savings Education Awards for independent schools. For 2020/2021 three awards of \$3,500 each will be distributed to students graduating from independent schools located in Metro Vancouver, Fraser Valley, mid and southern Vancouver Island and Kelowna. Application forms will be available March 1st on the FISA website [here](#). The application deadline is April 9, 2021.

## **Good News Story**

Congratulations to Purpose Independent Secondary School in New Westminster for being featured on the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education's website. Purpose Secondary is one of nine BC schools selected to participate in the DLC's Heart-Mind in Schools Project. You can read about how the school has successfully incorporated social and emotional skill development throughout their entire program [here](#).

**FISA BC  
PRESIDENT'S REPORT  
November 25, 2020**

**"be kind, be calm, and be safe" - Dr. Bonnie Henry**

**STATISTICS:**

FISA BC member schools have shown increased enrolment over the past year:

| Association  | 2018/2019    |               |            | 2019/2020    |               |              |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
|              | # of Schools | Enrolment     | % of Total | # of Schools | Enrolment     | % of Total   |
| ACSIBC       | 25           | 12,404        | 14.9       | 23           | 11,690        | 13.8         |
| AMS          | 141          | 21,146        | 25.4       | 143          | 21,946        | 26.0         |
| CISBC        | 77           | 22,121        | 26.5       | 77           | 22,262        | 26.3         |
| ISABC        | 29           | 14,175        | 17.0       | 29           | 14,330        | 17.0         |
| SCSBC        | 44           | 13,463        | 16.2       | 46           | 14,312        | 16.9         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>316</b>   | <b>83,309</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>318</b>   | <b>84,540</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Total number of independent schools in BC              | 363                    |
| Total number of FISA BC member schools                 | 318                    |
| Total membership enrolment                             | 84,540                 |
| Increase in FISA BC member enrollment                  | 1,231                  |
| Percentage increase FTE                                | 1.47%                  |
| <b>Total public school enrolment (Head Count - HC)</b> | <b>591,405</b>         |
| Total independent school enrolment (HC)                | 88,470                 |
| Percentage of independent school students - FTE        | 14.96%                 |
| Total independent DL students (HC)                     | 13,193                 |
| <b>Total FTE in public schools</b>                     | <b>565,304.8</b>       |
| Total FTE in independent schools                       | 84,864.8               |
| Total FTE  | 679,875                |
| <b>Total funding to public schools</b>                 | <b>\$5,970,100,000</b> |
| Total funding for independent schools                  | \$436,469,000          |

FISA membership has increased by 1,231 students (HC) and the overall independent school enrolment has increased by 762 students (HC). Overall independent school FTE enrolment increased by 1,219.4 FTE and independent schools now educate 13.1% of BC's student population.

The government increased total funding for the BC Education system from \$6.3 billion (2018-19) to \$6.57 billion (2019-20). Independent school funding proportionally decreased from 6.7% to 6.34% of the total BC education budget. The Provincial Budget provided an increase of \$10.2 million in funding allocation to independent schools, for a total of \$436.47 million for the 2019-20 school year. Independent schools received welcome news in December 2019, as the Recalculated per student grant increased an average of \$128 for Group 1 schools and \$90 per student for Group 2 schools.

## **NEW FISABC MEMBER SCHOOLS: Incorporation of the AMS Society of FISABC**

In November 2018, the Associate Member Group incorporated as a legal entity, relieving FISA the responsibility of acting as its secretariat, as it has done since 1966 for the now approximately 120 AMS member schools. The AMSofFISABC has its own elected Board of Directors and approves new member schools within the society. In 2019-20 the AMS approved 5 new member schools.

The FISA office has taken on the administration of the AMS Society of FISABC for a fee which will be determined annually. This year's fee was \$25K.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

At the November 2019 AGM, the Board elected the Executive Officers: Ed Noot, (SCSBC, President), Elizabeth Moore (ISABC, Vice President), Bev Pulyk (CISBC, Treasurer), Kent Dykstra (AMSofFISABC, Secretary) and Phil Hills (ACSIBC, Ex-Officio).

In November 2019, the Board seated Diana Chalmers as an AMS Director, replacing Arnold Grimm who, sadly, passed away on September 10, 2019. Even as we welcome Diana to full participation on the board we remember, with thanks, the dedicated service Arnold Grimm offered to FISABC. Arnold served on the board, and as an officer, representing the group that was formerly known as the AMG. Arnold was instrumental in transitioning the AMG, into the AMSofFISABC and he was a strong advocate for parental choice in education in BC. Arnold's gentle demeanor, modest humour and sage wisdom are missed around the FISABC board table.

## **GUEST SPEAKERS ATTENDING BOARD MEETINGS:**

- September 25, 2019: Marnie Mayhew – Executive Director of Independent Schools; Grant Sheppard – Deputy Inspector Independent Schools; Eleanor Liddy – Executive Director of Student Information (phone); Megan Harris – Executive Director of Corporate Priorities and Strategic Objectives and Lead for the Anti-Money Laundering Secretariat (phone); Theo Vandeweg – Inspector Independent Schools (phone).
- October 23, 2019: Jenny Williams, Director of Support Services at SCSBC and FISA's Mental Health and Well-being Committee chair.
- January 22, 2020: Jamie Morris (ISABC) and Tracey Lee (ISABC) reported on FISA's Mental Health and Well-being grant allocation.
- February 26, 2020, for a presentation on Workforce Analytics: Brett Wilmer – Director Governance and Analytics; Linda Beddouche, Director, Workforce Analytics; Marnie Mayhew, Executive Director of Independent Schools; Grant Sheppard, Deputy Inspector Independent Schools; Theo Vandeweg – Inspector Independent Schools.
- April 22, 2020, for an MDI presentation: Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, Director MDI, Human Early Learning Partnership; Marit Gilbert, MDI Implementation Manager; Sally McBride, Knowledge-to-Action Manager; Alex Gist, Middle Years Knowledge-to-Action Lead; Kim Mascarenas, MDI Implementation Lead; Shannon Piedt, HELP Operations Director. Additional guests attending this presentation were members of FISA's Mental Health and Well-being Committee.

## **MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:**

FISA BC continues to work collaboratively with the Ministry of Education in all aspects from curriculum development to policy and legislative matters. The Independent Schools Branch (ISB) staff remained the same, with one positive exception, Grant Sheppard returned to the ISB as Director/Deputy Inspector in May 2019.

## LEGISLATION AFFECTING INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS:

### (a) Government Order to Change Funding to IDL Schools:

On May 4, 2020, the government announced an Order in Council (No. 221) that reduced the Independent Online Schools (IOS) funding percentage from 63 – 50%. Shortly after this announcement was made the I wrote a letter to Minister Fleming protesting the lack of due process and consultation on this decision, and asking for a deferment as the decision was made after IOS schools had planned their 1920-21 budgets. FISA was able to secure a meeting with Minister Fleming to advance our arguments, but to no avail.

### (b) COVID-19 Provincial Health Officer Orders:

Independent schools have been consulted and informed on all matters relating to Provincial Health Orders during the pandemic. I am proud of how independent schools have responded to the challenges of the pandemic, shifting educational platforms quickly and effectively and complying with all health orders and protocols to bring students safely back into our classrooms.

## FISA BC ACTIVITIES:

The FISA BC Board continues to work at matters concerning effective and efficient operation of the Federation including developing and submitting various briefs to government that seek changes to existing protocols affecting independent schools.

- Mental Health Grant – secured equal per student funding for IS.
- Funding Model Review – continue to promote equitable and just funding for choice in BC education.
- wellbeingbc.ca website – to provide accessible mental health and wellbeing support for all IS.
- Consolidated MSP Billing – secured this option for BC independent schools.
- Employers Health Tax – sought clarification for IS, especially for schools with multiple campuses and successfully advocated for an increase in the salary threshold for an EHT exemption for non-profit organizations.
- Revised Ombudsperson Policy – provided more clarity on the role and function of IS ombudspersons.
- Revised Homeschooling Guidelines – provided an IS voice to discussions to revise these guidelines.
- Cash Payments Policy Template – to help IS comply with a new MoE policy, FISA consulted with all associations and a legal firm to create a template resource for IS.
- LOP Renewal for 2019-20 – were successful in having the MoE and TCB extend, for one more year, the ability for schools to renew 2018-19 LOPs for the 2019-20 school year.
- COVID-19
  - o In collaboration with the MoE, provided daily updates on the quickly changing educational environment and shared “good news” stories and best practice suggestions.
  - o IS are represented on the many collaborative committees and working groups that are supporting the K-12 sector and providing direction to ministry decision makers.
  - o The FISA Officers regularly meet with the ISB to consult on COVID-19 related issues.
- Provincial District Authority Awards: There were 681 applications submitted from member schools and 422 awards of \$1,250 each were granted to independent school graduates in Metro Vancouver, Fraser Valley/Interior and Vancouver Island.
- Response to Government Order to Change Funding to Independent Online Schools – FISA met with IOS to get a complete sense of the negative impact this decision has on IOS, their business operations and the effects it has on IOS programming offered to BC families. FISA has pursued political solutions to address the careless timing and lack of consultation with IOS and FISA regarding the government’s decision.
- Federal and Provincial School Startup Grants – FISA proactively requested equal funding for independent and public school students in anticipation of governmental support of public health, COVID-19 supports. FISA continues to pursue equal funding from the federal grant for IS.



- Election 2020 – due to the unanticipated provincial election call, the scope of FISA's engagement was frustratingly limited. FISA secured and distributed responses from the 3 major party leaders on issues important to independent schools. The FISA Election Committee will continue to meet and produce a strategy to best engage with BC political policy makers.
- Immunization Registry - consultation with the Ministry to establish independent school protocols.
- Medical coverage for International Students.
- Opportunity to Access a BC Provincial Pension Plan.
- Shoulder Tapper Program - two independent school educators, Herb Krul and Sean Engbers, are visiting schools across the Province to explain and help introduce programs to support career, skills and technology training. This program is modelled on the Shoulder Tapper Program in public schools, however, it is modified for the eclectic diversity of independent schools.
- Independent School Act Review Committee.
- Emergency Planning Guide Supplement - this FISABC document supplements the Ministry Emergency Management Planning Guide for School Districts and Authorities (2015).

## PROVINCIAL COMMITTEES:

The leadership of the FISABC sits on several provincial councils and committees, assisting with the continued growth and development of the education sector:

- Sector Advisory Council (SAC): The SAC is an advisory body appointed under section 171 of the School Act. It is intended to advise the Minister of Education and has the objective of providing advice on policy considerations and ensuring sector perspectives are included in Ministry initiatives. The SAC may advise the Minister on overall policies of the education system, including, without limitation in the areas of curriculum and assessment, the teaching profession, system governance and finance. This group is chaired by the Deputy Minister and FISA is represented by Ed Noot and Shawn Chisholm.
- Leadership Development Working Group (LDWG): The LDWG was a sub-committee of the SAC that has an uncertain future as government no longer plans to provide leadership development funding to the K-12 sector. FISA reps on this working group are Elizabeth Moore and Shawn Chisholm.
- Independent School Teaching Certificate Standards Committee (ISTCSC): Representing FISA on this committee are Dave Loewen, Lesya Balsevich, and Elizabeth Moore. Shawn Chisholm serves in a non-voting role.
- BC School Sports: Rick Thiessen sits on the BC School Sports Board of Directors as a representative of independent schools.
- SOGI 123: Ed Noot and Shawn Chisholm serve on this advisory group and provide an IS voice on how to best support all students, especially those identified as vulnerable, within a diverse and pluralistic K-12 sector.
- Safe Schools Coordinators Meeting and **erase** Bullying: The Ministry of Education has a particular focus on ensuring that all students in BC schools, public or independent, are protected against bullying and school violence. The **erase** Bullying and Safer Schools Together programs strive to protect all students from all aspects of harm through appropriate training of school personnel. Janet Dhanani coordinates *erase* training for independent schools.
- BC Council for International Education: BCCIE is a provincial crown corporation that supports the internationalization of the K-12 and post-secondary education sectors. Shawn Chisholm serves as the chair of the finance and human resources committee.
- Mental Health and Well-being in BC Schools Partnership: In the last several years, an increased focus on mental health, child and youth mental health, and a focus on positive mental health/wellbeing has led to multiple provincial policies and initiatives. Education Sector partners have gathered together to address leadership in the context of supporting mental wellbeing of students at school. The global aim of the partners is to promote and support mental wellbeing for all students, teachers, administrators and school staff.

**POLITICAL LANDSCAPE:**

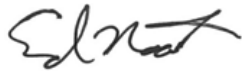
The emergence of the pandemic became the preeminent focus for government, schools and FISA. Throughout the pandemic response, FISA was consulted as a valued educational stakeholder. The sudden election call in September briefly shifted focus. The election result maintains our government and strengthens their position to a majority. As a non-partisan political advocacy group, FISA is committed to working with government advancing the causes of choice in the educational landscape of BC and equitable funding for independent schools.

**THANKS:**

The Board of Directors of FISA BC is comprised of 18 elected representatives from the five associations, three each from the Association of Christian Schools International, Catholic Independent Schools of BC, Independent Schools Association of BC, and the Society of Christian Schools of BC. The remaining six seats are from the AMSofFISABC. To all FISA board members, I express my sincere thanks for their support and diligence in good decision-making. Thank you.

To the FISABC staff, Shawn Chisholm, Executive Director; Janet Dhanani, Assistant Executive Director; Marina Cholakian, Executive Assistant; and Magda Hogewoning, Executive Assistant, I express my sincere gratitude for their hard work in supporting the mission of FISA BC “to enable parents to exercise the right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children and to promote the rightful place and responsibility of independent schools within a democratic and pluralistic society”. The day-to-day operations of the FISA office reflect the active living of this mission statement – thank you for your dedication to the students in the independent schools we serve.

Respectfully submitted



Ed Noot  
President