



June 2021: Issue 232

NEWSLETTER

Dear Independent School Leaders,

I recently asked one of my friends what they had learned from the COVID experience, and their reply was, "I know I don't want to experience a pandemic again!"

While many people would agree with that simple statement, I think most would agree that as a collective society, school sector or community, there have been valuable take-aways from this past school year.

There is a famous quote from Martin Luther King, "The ultimate measure of a man (person) is not where he (they) stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he (they) stands at times of challenge and controversy." This past year has provided a bounty of challenges and controversies, as well as heartaches, heightened levels of uncertainty and anxiety. But through these difficult times I have witnessed immeasurable acts of compassion, commitment, collegiality, and people that have stretched themselves to incredible limits, in service to others and the greater good.

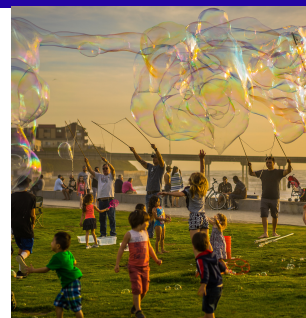
I extend my sincerest gratitude to the school leaders, school staff members, families and to the students that committed to delivering or pursuing their education amidst a myriad of changes meant to keep us all safe.

I also would like to thank my colleagues within the Ministry of Education, the Provincial Health Officers and the other provincial education partner groups for lending their voice to discussions that led to the creation of many iterations of the K-12 Health and Safety Guidelines. While it would be expected that such a diverse group, with sometimes competing advocacy agendas, would experience great difficulty in reaching consensus, we most often did, due to the shared belief that a safe K-12 education system would contribute to the wellbeing of all British Columbians.

During this past school year I have worked most closely with the FISA Board members and FISA staff/team. As the school year comes to a close, and in retrospect, I know I was constantly inspired and supported by my valued colleagues and gratified for the level of service they provided to the FISA member schools. A very special thank you to Janet, Magda, and Marina for how you responded with grace during these challenging and controversial times. An additional special thanks go to the newest members of the FISA team, Michelle Hussey and Jamie Morris, our part-time Mental Health Coordinators. Your enthusiasm is contagious!

Especially after this unprecedented school year, I hope the summer break provides you and your families with the opportunity to disconnect from your work and pursue the things that bring you joy!

Sincerely,
Shawn Chisholm



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Rapid Response Team

In March 2021, the Ministry of Education contracted with FISA to provide COVID-19 support to independent schools through a Rapid Response Team (RRT). This expanded the supports which were previously part of the Independent School Sector COVID-19 Lead (ISSCL) role. Altogether, the RRT and ISSCL aided 183 schools in navigating their way through one or more COVID-19 exposures and participated in over 75 meetings with Health Authority and/or Ministry officials. The team also assisted in ensuring independent school personnel were included in regional K-12 vaccine prioritization programs. Recently, the Ministry announced that the RRT program will continue for 2021/2022, although they have not yet specified the nature of the support to be provided. Nonetheless, the RRT is ready to serve!

Health Authority Regional Liaisons

FHA – Darren Jones
VCH – Andrew Shirkoff
IHA – Art Therrien
NHA – Edgar Veldman
VIHA – Peter Terpstra

Association Leads

ACSIBC – Phil Hills and Stuart Morris
AMS – Kent Dykstra
CISBC – Lesya Balsevich and Sandy Marshall
ISABC – Elizabeth Moore
SCSBC – Ed Noot

FISA Office

Shawn Chisholm and Janet Dhanani

Provincial Outreach and Regional Tour

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic compelled FISA to forgo this year's cherished in-person Provincial Outreach Pro-D offerings and to hold virtual sessions instead. FISA's Mental Health Coordinators, Jamie Morris and Michelle Hussey, did an excellent job at the 6 regional online sessions in showing attendees how FISA's [WellBeing](#) website can easily be adapted for school-based Pro-D learning opportunities. With COVID-19 case counts rapidly declining in BC, we are optimistic that FISA will return to live and in-person Provincial Outreach sessions in fall 2021. Jamie and Michelle will continue to assist schools in supporting student and staff mental health as we enter the "recovery" phase of the pandemic. Furthermore, we are hopeful that the accompanying Regional Tour will also be held in-person. The Regional Tour addresses regulatory and policy issues from the Independent Schools Branch in the Ministry of Education, and advocacy issues supported by FISA. It provides an opportunity for school administrators and Board members to interact directly with Ministry representatives and FISA's Executive Director, Shawn Chisholm. At this time, the Outreach and Tour schedules are being finalized. Registration details will be released in early September.

Middle Years Developmental Instrument (MDI)

In 2020/2021 FISA provided the opportunity for grade 4 students enrolled in independent schools to take part in the MDI. The participating schools have received their reports, and will no doubt find the data valuable and actionable for creating contexts where all children can flourish and thrive. The aggregate data received by FISA will assist in our advocacy efforts to ensure that independent schools are included in ministry mental health initiatives. We are pleased that the FISA Board, through a recommendation of the FISA Mental Health Committee, will expand the scope of the MDI for 2021/2022 by making it available to all grade 4 and grade 8 students. Look for communication from FISA's Mental Health Coordinators, Jamie Morris and Michelle Hussey in the early fall as to how your school can take advantage of this opportunity.

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In the meantime, we encourage you to review the [How are the Kids? Children's Perspectives on their Health, Well-Being and Assets both Before and During a Global Pandemic through the \(MDI\) in BC](#) report which highlights the findings from this year's 38,000 participating students in public and independent schools.

MyEdBC

As you are all aware, the Ministry made a decision in January 2021 that all K-12 schools that are not enrolled in the MyEd Student Information System (SIS) would be charged a per student fee commencing in September 2022, to maintain the Ministry's legacy systems that historically has collected school data. To assist and provide support for schools that choose to enroll in MyEd (and previously BCeSIS), FISA created the iGroup under the leadership of Andrew Smit. FISA has always maintained that independent schools should have the choice to select the SIS that best meets their community's needs. While schools still may choose a non-MyEd system, those schools will have an associated cost for transferring the required data to the Ministry. FISA facilitated several meetings of the MyEd Working Group (MEWG), with representations from each of our member associations, and information sessions hosted by the Ministry of Education and the FISA iGroup. While these sessions provided answers to the MyEd user function questions, some of the more technical questions related to non-MyEd data transfers remain unanswered.

For the independent schools that have chosen to use MyEd, Andrew Smit has been scheduling onboarding and training sessions. Openings for training to accommodate transition to MyEd for the start of next school year are filling up. Please contact Andrew at andrewsmit@bcsupportonline.com to get the latest status on training availability. FISA appreciates the knowledge and expertise the MEWG provided for our discussions with the Ministry and we are grateful for the support Andrew provides to independent schools.

erase

In 2020/2021 the Ministry offered 24 virtual *erase* training sessions, including 4 hybrid Basic Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) / Basic Digital Threat Assessment (DTA) sessions specifically for independent school staff. In addition, a large number of mental health focused sessions were offered for educators, students, and parents. The Ministry plans to continue to provide *erase* training via an online format for the 2021/2022 school year. The *erase* schedule of events is yet to be published. When it is available it will be posted on the [FISA website under the "Pro-D" tab](#). Safer Schools Together, the organization that is contracted by the Ministry to conduct the *erase* training program, also has a variety of training opportunities available on their [website](#). VTRA and DTA training obtained directly from Safer Schools Together meets the independent school inspection requirements. Schools that enrol in Safer Schools Together courses pay any cost incurred. The Ministry sponsored *erase* training opportunities are offered at no cost to participating schools.

District Authority Scholarship (DAS)

Since 1991, FISA has managed the DAS process for independent schools on behalf of the Ministry of Education. In the beginning, this was a relatively easy task as only 20 scholarships, in the amount of \$500 each, were allocated. Over the past three decades the program has grown substantially with a total of nearly \$5M in scholarship funds distributed to over 5000 graduates from independent schools. This year alone, over \$500K was awarded to 435 worthy recipients. The entire process is managed by a small committee comprised of three regional leads: Máebh Carragher – Metro Vancouver, Simon Tuffin – Vancouver Island, and Chris Blesch – Fraser Valley & Interior, along with Helen Bulthuis who provides administrative support. We cannot express enough gratitude to the team for the incredible amount of work that they undertake each year in managing the selection process. The purpose of the DAS program is to recognize excellence. For independent schools this excellence is evident not only in the students who apply, but in the committee members who work tirelessly behind the scenes. Congratulations to the 2020-2021 DAS winners and to Máebh, Simon, Chris, and Helen for managing another successful award cycle.

French Grant

The arrival of the French Grant funds generates a flurry of activity in the FISA office as we had a very short turn-around time between receiving the deposit and disbursing the funds to schools before they closed for the summer. This year \$400,000 was distributed among 206 schools.

The French Grant is a federal program that supports the costs incurred by Group 1 and 2 schools that offer Core French and French Immersion classes. Individual school amounts are calculated based on the school's 1701 submissions. It is imperative that your school accurately reports student enrolment in French classes on your 1701s to access this funding.

Dry Grad

FISA administers the funds raised through the Liquor Distribution Branch Dry Grad community initiative for independent schools. Even in the midst of the pandemic, participating schools found creative ways to hold Dry Grad celebrations. This year over \$14,000 was distributed to 70 schools. An especially generous community resulted in some schools receiving \$64/graduate. This is certainly not the norm, but the independent schools in that region reaped a windfall!

ArtStarts

One of FISA's favourite grants to administer is the Artist in Education (AIE) grant from ArtStarts as it allows us a glimpse at all the amazing artistic endeavours occurring in independent schools. For the 2020/2021 school year, FISA disbursed nearly \$25,000 to schools to support artistic performances, workshops, and residences. We are pleased that ArtStarts has confirmed that the AIE program will continue for 2021/2022 and that independent schools will again receive an allocation of nearly \$25,000. Group 1, 2, 3 and 4 independent schools are encouraged to apply for an AIE grant. AIE application forms are available on the FISA website under the "[Services - Forms and Applications](#)" tab and are due Friday, Sept. 17, 2021. ArtStarts also has a variety of other grants available. See <https://artstarts.com/grants> for a full listing. Popular among independent schools is the Artists in the Classroom (AIC) grant which is intended to provide an extended opportunity for children and youth to engage in hands-on arts experiences under the guidance of professional artists. Selected schools receive up to \$3,500 for small-scale projects and up to \$10,000 for large-scale projects. The AIC grant is awarded through a juried selection process managed by ArtStarts.

Make a Future

Over 150 independent schools are currently using Make a Future for assistance in the recruiting and hiring of qualified staff leading to a number of successful job placements. FISA thanks the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) for extending this opportunity to our sector. Having independent school employers situated side-by-side with public school employers reinforces the importance of having choice in education, both for families to choose the education that their child receives and for educators and support personnel to choose employment that matches their personal beliefs and values. Schools interested in joining Make a Future can contact FISA at info@fisabc.ca for more information.

FISA Membership Fees

The membership fees for FISA will remain at \$6.25/FTE for the 2021/2022 school year. Through its five FISA member associations: Association of Christian Schools International (ACSIBC), Associate Member Society of FISABC (AMS), Catholic Independent Schools in BC (CISBC), Independent Schools Association of BC (ISABC), and Society of Christian Schools in BC (SCSBC) – FISA represents 324 independent schools educating 84,457 students or 13.1% of all K-12 students (FTE) in BC. FISA has an exemplary record of accomplishment and works hard to ensure that independent schools continue to receive due recognition and funding. We are proud to serve you. Please note that your association membership fees are separate from the FISA fees.

FISA Office Closed

To give the office staff a much-needed break, the FISA office will be closed from July 26th to August 13th. We look forward to reconnecting with independent schools in mid-August as we all embark on the fresh new school year.