



# FISA NEWSLETTER

## Dear Independent Schools,

This week FISA is providing you with a Newsletter and Bulletin in addition to our Weekly Update. You may remember that we instigated the practice of regular updates in early March 2020 to provide independent school leaders with succinct and reliable Novel Coronavirus/COVID-19 information pertinent to the BC K-12 educational sector. In those heady days between the suspension of in-class instruction in March to the June 2020 partial restart, we issued daily updates that included information, and equally as important, good new stories exemplifying the creative and heartwarming ways that independent schools were supporting their students, staff and families through the challenging early days of the pandemic. By fall 2020 the situation had settled enough for FISA to move to weekly updates, a practice we have upheld since. When our public health leaders determine that we have moved from a pandemic to an endemic state, FISA will reassess the demand for, and frequency of our messaging to our member schools. Thank you for your faithful readership, but I think I speak for everyone in welcoming a return to a "less news is good news" scenario.

As we have navigated through the pandemic it has reminded me of how dependent BC families are on independent schools. With nearly 90,000 students enrolled in independent schools this year, there are an enormous number of BC families that depend on independent schools to provide their children with a duty of care and an education that focuses on the holistic development of the diverse population of learners that attend independent schools.

The independent school sector has also played an instrumental role in the province's management of the pandemic. Through your efforts, BC is a jurisdiction that has maintained impressive learner engagement throughout the pandemic. Along with our colleagues in the public K-12 sector, schools have supported the greater public good, maintaining continuity of learning so that parents could continue to work and support their families (especially essential service workers). This has not always been easy for schools, as you were forced to resourcefully deal with staff shortages and student absences that impacted the efficient operation of your schools.

School heads have been tasked with continuing to ensure their schools are safe and caring communities in the midst of sometimes polarizing ideological responses to public health orders and Ministry of Education guidelines. Your communities depend on you to balance both the needs of individuals and the wider school community.

Spring is often used as a metaphor for renewal and rebirth - as the cooler winter months give way to milder temperatures and more hours of daylight. The public health environment in BC also is trending towards brighter days ahead as our province transitions to a gradual removal of various public health restrictions. Your school communities will now depend on its leaders to provide direction in a less regulated environment that allows self-management of illness and personal health protection choices. I'm sure it is a welcome shift in focus from monitoring for guideline compliance to promoting respect and acceptance of the personal health choices students, staff and families will be making.

I know many independent schools are about to embark on a well-deserved spring break. I always enjoyed the spring season, especially as a principal, because it meant some time off and perhaps some early seasonal work in the garden and an early start to the golf season – dependent on the weather.



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**Federation of  
Independent School  
Associations in  
British Columbia**

On behalf of the FISA staff (Janet, Marina and Janette) I offer our sincere appreciation for the hard work, creativity and compassion you have gifted the independent school sector with during these extraordinary times.

Sincerely,  
Shawn Chisholm

### Advocacy Efforts

FISA's primary mandate continues to be to protect the right of recognition and funding for independent schools in BC. Over our 56-year history, we have purposefully kept a low profile preferring to work diplomatically behind the scenes to achieve success instead of airing our concerns through public forums. We hope that our commitment to stealth is not misconstrued as FISA being dormant or complacent. One lesson that the pandemic has reinforced is the importance of maintaining our two-pronged approach to nurturing relationships between the civil servants who comprise the Ministry of Education and other Ministries such as Health, Labour, and Children and Family Development, while also connecting with elected officials to keep them abreast of the achievements and challenges within the independent school sector. As listed in the 2021 President's Report, included in this newsletter, FISA has representation on an ever-growing number of ministerial committees. This allows FISA to exert influence on policies and decisions while they are in the development stage, something the FISA founders could only dream of happening. A prime example is the payoff from the hundreds of hours spent in COVID-19 focussed ministerial meetings which not only allowed for the independent school context to be taken into consideration when establishing guidelines, it also strengthened our relationship with ministerial staff and the educational partner groups such as the BCSTA, BCPSEA, BCPVPA, BCSSA, BCTF, etc. Bonds formed in times of stress tend to have a long lifespan. To assist with political advocacy efforts, the FISA Ad hoc Advocacy Committee has contracted Kirk and Co. Consulting to develop a comprehensive plan for keeping elected officials informed as to issues and concerns within the independent school sector.

### Make a Future

FISA is working with Make a Future (MaF) to develop a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which will replace the current one expiring on March 31, 2022. Although the terms are yet to be finalized, FISA member independent schools can expect a rate of around \$4.00/FTE with a minimum payment of \$300/year. Currently, over 150 independent schools use MaF for assistance in the recruiting and hiring of qualified staff leading to a large number of successful job placements. More information will be provided soon for schools intending to renew their MOU and for schools wanting to onboard to MaF.

### FISA Staffing

FISA said a fond farewell to Magda Hogewoning on January 18, 2022. Magda was recruited to the FISA office by former Executive Director, Fred Herfst. Fred promised Magda that it would be a short six-month assignment. Those six months turned into 12 years – to the day. Magda was an Executive Assistant with an eye towards detail, a headful of wise counsel, and a generous heart. We wish her a well-deserved, albeit long-delayed, retirement.

## Rapid Response Teams

In March 2021, the Ministry of Education (MoE) established six Rapid Response Teams – a public school team for each of the five Health Authorities and one independent school team for the province. FISA manages the RRT for the independent school sector (ISRRT). During the height of the pandemic, the ISRRT focused on providing support for schools dealing with COVID-19 exposures. In total, 1,400 exposure reports were received from 220 independent schools. With the shift to self-management of COVID-19 cases in January 2022, the ISRRT helped schools assess attendance patterns and navigate functional closures. Thankfully, only two independent schools reached attendance triggers that necessitated Health Authority action. Ten independent schools experienced functional closures due to staffing challenges, of these seven schools had partial closures impacting a class or division and three had full school closures. The ISRRT will carry on until the end of the 2021/22 school year with a focus on supporting schools with recovery and mental health recovery efforts and a wrap up report that summarizes lessons learned.

### Health Authority Regional Liaisons

FHA - Stuart Morris  
VCH – Andrew Shirkoff  
IHA – Art Therrien  
NHA – Edgar Veldman  
VIHA – Peter Terpstra

### Association Leads

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

## FISA Mental Health

FISA has received a \$472,290 Early Action Initiative grant from the MoE to support the mental health of students, staff, and families in independent schools. The FISA Board has allocated this funding as follows: (1) continuation of the two part-time Independent School Mental Health Coordinator positions until June 2024, (2) offer free access to the Middle Year Development Instrument (MDI) for grade 4 students in 2021/22 and grade 8 students in 2021/22 and 2022/23, (3) distribute \$275,000 in funding to the five FISA associations to create association specific initiatives, (4) update the [wellbeingbc.ca](http://wellbeingbc.ca) website, (5) sponsor a fall 2022 FISA Provincial Outreach, and (6) distribute to schools ready to use newsletter inserts on a variety of mental health topics.

## ArtStarts

Since 1983, FISA has administered the Artist in Education (AIE) grant on behalf of ArtStarts. This year thirty independent schools applied for an AIE grant and they will receive partial reimbursement for the costs incurred to connect students with professional artists through in-school or virtual performances. If your school received an ArtStarts grant and you have not yet submitted proof of payment for the performance please do so as soon as possible.

ArtStarts also has a variety of other grants available. Visit [ArtStarts.com](http://ArtStarts.com) 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. AIC applications close on May 25, 2022. The AIC grant is awarded through a juried selection process managed directly by ArtStarts.

## French Grant

As recently announced by the MoE, the federal government has increased French Language Funding by approximately 15%. Typically, the grant funding is received in the FISA office by late May or early June. FISA then issue cheques to participating schools, as denoted on the school's 1701 submission, per the amount instructed by the MoE.

The federal French grant is special to FISA as we consider it one of our organization's first "wins". In 1970, FISA presented a brief to the provincial and federal government seeking access to the French Language grant funding for BC independent schools. The federal government granted approval in 1973. This precedent strengthened FISA's argument that BC independent schools should receive provincial operating grant funding, which was achieved in 1977.

## FISA BC PRESIDENT'S REPORT November 24, 2021

**We seek harm to none and harmony for all.  
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:  
That even as we grieved, we grew;  
that even as we hurt, we hoped;  
that even as we tired, we tried;  
that we'll forever be tied together, victorious,  
not because we will never again know defeat  
but because we will never again sow division.  
Amanda Gorman – Inaugural Poet**

## STATISTICS:

FISA BC member schools have shown stable enrollment over the past year:

Association*	2019/2020			2020/2021		
	# of Schools	Enrolment	% of Total	# of Schools	Enrolment	% of Total
ACSIBC	23	11,690	13.8	23	12,802	15.1
AMS	143	21,946	26.0	148	21,646	25.6
CISBC	77	22,262	26.3	78	21,677	25.6
ISABC	29	14,330	17.0	29	14,278	17.0
SCSBC	46	14,312	16.9	46	14,132	16.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>84,540</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>84,535</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Schools may be members of more than one FISA association. For statistical purposes a school is counted only once. The FISA office connects with the respective association heads to determine which association will be credited in situations of dual membership.

## Federation of Independent School Associations in British Columbia

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Total number of independent schools in BC	365
Total number of FISA member schools	324
Total membership enrolment	84,535
Decrease in FISA member enrollment	-5
<b>Percentage change in independent school enrollment (FTE)</b>	<b>0%</b>
Total independent school enrolment (HC)	87,189
Total public school enrolment (HC)	568,338
Total K-12 sector enrolment (HC)	655,527
<b>Percentage of independent school enrolment in the K-12 sector (HC)</b>	<b>13.3%</b>
Total independent online students (FTE)	10,430.84
Total public online students (FTE)	11,703.53
Total K-12 online sector students (FTE)	22,134.37
<b>Percentage of independent Online School enrolment in the K-12 sector</b>	<b>47.1%</b>
Total FTE in public schools	547,264.67
Total FTE in independent schools	79,253.73
Total K-12 sector FTE	626,518.40
<b>Percentage of independent school students (FTE)</b>	<b>12.65%</b>
Total operating grants to public schools	\$5,532,733,898
Total operating grants to independent schools	\$359,514,268
Total operating grants to the K-12 sector	\$5,892,248,166
<b>Percentage of total K-12 operating grants directed to independent schools</b>	<b>6.1%</b>

FISA membership and the overall independent school enrolment has remained stable. Provincial Independent Online School (PIOS) H/C enrolment in the 2020-2021 school year increased proportionately to a decrease in brick-and-mortar schools. In 2020-21 independent schools educated 13.3% of BC's student population.

The government increased total operational funding for the BC K-12 Education system from \$5.747 billion (2019-20) to \$5.892 billion (2020-21), for an increase of \$144,574,146. Independent school funding proportionally increased from 6.06% to 6.10% of the total BC education operational budget. The Provincial Budget provided an increase of \$22.68 million in funding allocation to independent schools (including Special Needs funding), for a total of \$479,860,724 for the 2020-21 school year.

Independent schools received welcome news in December 2020, as the Recalculated Per Student Grant increased an average of \$239 for Group 1 schools and \$167 per student for Group 2 schools.

## NEW FISA 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 148 AMS member schools. The AMSofFISABC has its own elected Board of Directors and approves new member schools within the society. In 2020-2021 the AMSofFISABC approved 8 new member schools:

- Balsam School (The)
- Fountainview Academy
- Honour Secondary School
- LaSalle College Vancouver High School
- Living and Learning School
- Pear Tree Elementary
- Shalhevet Girls High School
- St. John's Preparatory Academy Shawnigan

The FISA office took on the administration of the AMS Society of FISABC in 2018-2019 for a fee which is determined annually. This year's (2020-2021) fee was \$40,000.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

At the November 2020 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).

The COVID-19 pandemic precluded the board from meeting in person throughout this year. In January 2021, the Board seated Julius Siebenga, Executive Director, Abbotsford Christian School as an SCSBC Director to cover a planned study leave (January to May) for David Loewen. At the May 26, 2021 Board meeting, the board said farewell to Rabbi Don Pacht. He was seated on the board in May 2006 and served as secretary of the board for many of these 15 years. We will miss him and wish him much success as he and his family relocated to New York in July 2021 where he has taken on the principalship of the school he himself attended as a child.

## GUEST SPEAKERS ATTENDING BOARD MEETINGS:

- September 23, 2020: Jennifer Riddel – A/Executive Director, Online Learning and Educational Resources, MoE; Grant Sheppard – Director/Deputy Inspector, Independent Schools, MoE; Linda Dunn – Director Strategic Initiatives, Online Learning & Resources Branch, MoE; Andrew Smit, IS Helpdesk, FISA iGroup; Jamie Morris – Associate Director, Head of Student Services at Brockton School, FISA Mental Health Consultant (MDI); Michelle Hussey – Director of Schools, KLEOS Open Learning, FISA Mental Health Consultant (MDI).
- October 28, 2020: Jamie Morris – Associate Director, Head of Student Services at Brockton School, FISA Mental Health Consultant; Michelle Hussey – Director of Schools, KLEOS Open Learning, FISA Mental Health Consultant (MDI).
- November 25, 2020: Jamie Morris – Associate Director, Head of Student Services at Brockton School, FISA Mental Health Consultant; Michelle Hussey – Director of Schools, KLEOS Open Learning, FISA Mental Health Consultant (MDI), reporting on the FISA Mental Health Committee's proposal for the \$477K grant allocation.
- January 27, 2021: Marnie Mayhew, Executive Director of Independent Schools, MoE; Grant Sheppard, Director and Deputy Inspector Independent Schools, MoE; reporting on upcoming changes to the Jordan's Principle application process.



- February 24, 2021: The Board minutes reported that Shawn Chisholm, FISA Executive Director, and Andrew Smit of the FISA iGroup met with Christine Lervold (Director of the MoE's Student Information Services) to create a survey to gather pertinent information from IS not presently enrolled in MyEdBC. Also, Shawn Chisholm, FISA ED, and Stuart Morris, FISA Board Director, met with Dwayne Covers, Director International Education for updates on Travel Restrictions for international students.
- May 26, 2021: Kevin Reimer, Executive Director, BC Principals' and Vice Principals' Association, presented information on the membership categories in the BCPVPA.

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:

FISA continues to work collaboratively with the Ministry of Education in all aspects from curriculum development to policy and legislative matters. Our relationship with staff in the Independent Schools Branch remains positive and constructive.

## LEGISLATION AFFECTING INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS:

### (a) 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 remain proud of how independent schools have responded to the challenges of the pandemic, maintain continuity of instruction effectively and complying with all health orders and protocols throughout the year.

## FISA BC ACTIVITIES:

The FISA 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.

- Advocacy for proportional access Provincial and Federal Start Up grants for IS.
- Provincial Snap Election called by NDP on Sept. 21, 2020, with election date of Oct. 24, 2020
- International Student Access to BC Education.
- SOPSOC 3-year averaging.
- Facilitate the creation of a Cash Payment Policy template.
- Facilitate the committee work and the administration of the Mental Health Grant \$477,000
- FISA Ad Hoc Advocacy Committee (FAAC).
- Provide an independent school voice to the creation of the SOGI 123 – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Resource Guidelines.
- FISA's 2017 Strategic Plan Assessments.
- Facilitated meetings with IS, FISA iGroup and MoE personnel regarding MyEdBC (enrollment support, exploring alternatives to MyEdBC, negotiate commitment deadlines).
- Introductory Meeting on January 12, 2021 with Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education.
- Teacher Certification Branch (TCB) Enhancement Tour – provided feedback on their new website to streamline the application process.

- (m) Ed Noot produced and presented FISA's Political Engagement Practice to the FISA Board and school leaders of ISABC, SCSBC and AMS.
- (n) Rapid Response Team (RRT) – FISA applied for funding to coordinate the RRT for provincial independent schools. Janet Dhanani, FISA Assistant Executive Director, manages the reporting requirements/communication with the Ministry of Education.
- (o) COVID Funding Allocation – advocated for equitable and proportional funding for IS.
- (p) Advocated for the opportunity for IS leaders to access BCPVPA Associate Membership.
- (q) Advocated for status quo for the Provincial Operational Education Budget for 2021-2022.
- (r) ISSCL (Independent School Sector COVID Lead)- Janet Dhanani manages this extremely demanding portfolio.
- (s) Facilitated advocacy efforts with the PIOS leaders and met frequently with MoE personnel to address Bill 8 - 2020 implications for Provincial Online Learning Schools.
- (t) Coordinate Provincial District Authority Awards - there were 685 applications submitted from member schools and 435 awards of \$1,250 each were granted to independent school graduates in Metro Vancouver, Fraser Valley/Interior and Vancouver Island.

## PROVINCIAL COMMITTEES:

The leadership of FISA 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.
- Partnership – Foundational Management Training for Education Leaders: Subsequent to the disbanding of the Leadership Development Working Group (LDWG) this group of BC education partner group representatives have surveyed their membership and determined the training required to support BC's education leaders. Independent schools are represented by Elizabeth Moore.
- Independent School Teaching Certificate Standards Committee (ISTCSC): This committee is appointed by the Minister of Education and is chaired by Elizabeth Moore. Dave Loewen and Lesya Balsevich also serve on this committee and Shawn Chisholm serves in a non-voting role.
- BC School Sports: Rick Thiessen (MEI) serves as the President of the BC School Sports Board of Directors. The BCSS Legislative Assembly includes many regional representatives from independent schools and Shawn Chisholm serves as 1 of 10 stakeholder representatives.
- 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. Elizabeth Moore, Kent Dykstra and Michelle Hussey have also represented FISA at the bi-monthly SOGI Collaborative meetings.



## Federation of Independent School Associations in British Columbia

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- FSA Roundtable: Janet Dhanani and Shawn Chisholm represent independent schools, along with representatives from the BC education partner groups, researchers from BC post-secondary institutions and representatives from the MoE. The discussions focus on the future of FSAs (communications, updating the test and use of the data).
- 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. During the pandemic erase is also playing a role with student mental health and wellness. Janet Dhanani coordinates the erase Bullying supports for independent schools.
- Mental Health School Start-up Working Group: This group identifies key principles, strategies, resources and actions to support mental health and wellbeing in schools. The working group's work will continue on during the 2021-2022 school year. Jamie Morris and Michelle Hussey, FISA's mental health coordinators, represent independent schools on this working group.
- Sector Advisory Committee – Online Education: This committee provides a review of proposed online school policies, and is a consolidation of the other online policy issue-specific working groups that met throughout 2020-2021. Gabe Linder, chair of the FISA DL Committee, represents independent online schools on this committee.
- BC K-12 Anti-Racism Collaborative: Ed Noot and Shawn Chisholm represent independent schools alongside representatives from the other BC education partner groups. This collaborative discusses priorities and provides feedback on the MoE's strategy to address racism.
- Learning Advisory Board: Johnny Bevaqua represents independent schools on this board. The LAB discusses a wide range of learning topics including: graduation requirements, assessment, childcare provisions....
- K-12 Steering Committee: This committee meets regularly to review the latest data from the BCCDC and PHO and to provide an education perspective on the K-12 and BCCDC guidelines. Janet Dhanani and Shawn Chisholm represent independent schools on the Steering Committee.
- K-12 Health & Safety Working Group: Janet Dhanani and Shawn Chisholm represent independent schools on this working group. This group meets less frequently than the Steering Committee but is often asked to provide feedback on health and safety topics in advance of a Steering Committee review.
- Provincial RRT Committee: Janet Dhanani, Ed Noot and Shawn Chisholm represent the ISRRT along with the other public school RRT representatives from the five regional health authorities.
- Employee Vaccine Mandate Guidelines ad hoc MoE Committee: Ed Noot represented independent school employers on this committee that created guidelines, in a very timely manner, that outlined a process that school employers should consider if they were to consider an employee vaccination policy.
- BC Council for International Education: Shawn Chisholm serves as the chair of Finance and HR and represents independent schools alongside representatives from public and private post-secondary institutions and three provincial ministries.

**POLITICAL LANDSCAPE:**

The emergence of the pandemic remained the preeminent focus for government, schools and FISA. Despite many hopeful signs in the summer of 2021, the pandemic continued to have a pervasive influence on the education sector. Throughout the pandemic response, FISA was consulted as a valued educational stakeholder. FISA remains a non-partisan political advocacy group, committed to working with government advancing the causes of choice in the educational landscape of BC and equitable funding for independent schools.

**THANKS:**

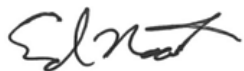
The Board of Directors of FISA is comprised of 18 elected representatives from the five associations, three each from the Association of Christian Schools International, Catholic Independent Schools of BC, Independent Schools Association of BC, and the Society of Christian Schools of BC. The remaining six seats are from the AMSofFISABC. To all FISA board members, I express my sincere thanks for their enduring support, thoughtful engagement and dedicated diligence which has led to robust discussion and wise decision-making around our board table. Thank you.

FISABC owes special gratitude to Magda Hogewoning, who has selflessly served FISA for 12 years, even returning from retirement to fill an office gap. Magda serves with joy and efficiency. Her calm demeanor, industrious work ethic, integrity and administrative capacity have been a blessing to FISA. Magda, we thank you for your exemplary service to FISA and offer our best wishes for your retirement.

We also welcome Janette Cholakian who joined the FISA staff team as an Executive Assistant in October 2021.

To the FISA 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 “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