



FISA NEWSLETTER

Dear Independent Schools,

As we come to the close of the 2021 – 2022 school year we would like to share some reflections on the past year and provide some hopeful thoughts for the future.

We have come to better recognize the level of resilience that resides in the people who take on leadership roles within independent schools. The pandemic environment seemed to illicit two distinct responses; that of fear, anticipating imminent danger - or anxiety, due to a lack of certainty as to how the future will unfold. The fear-based response was often uncharacteristically aggressive, demanding immediate change for more or less prescriptive guidelines for schools. The anxious response sought greater certainty through demands for information from trusted and respected sources. Independent school leaders skillfully managed and maintained their relationships with students, parents and staff who displayed a variety of responses to the directives from Public Health and the Ministry of Education and Child Care (MoECC) to ensure their school communities were safe and enriching learning environments. A true test of your leadership skills and capacity – well done!

The past couple of months has provided us with a sense of what the new school year may bring. The level of school communal joy has increased substantially with the return of in-person graduation celebrations, field trips, sports days, Arts performances, athletic competitions... We are all hopeful that the future public health climate will support a more traditional start to the school year, and there are encouraging indications from public health officials that the school start-up in September 2022 will be focused on supporting the sector to fully return to the practices that best promote learning and wellbeing.

Also deserving of our recognition are the public servants that facilitated a collaborative and supportive environment for the K-12 sector as we navigated through some very uncertain times (the pandemic, floods and fires). We would like to acknowledge them each by name – but the list would be far too long for this newsletter. We have made the effort to thank the teams from the MoECC, Ministry of Health and the BCCDC on behalf of FISA and independent schools.

To those school leaders that are retiring or leaving the independent school system to pursue other opportunities, we offer you a quote from Dr. Suess, “Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory” – I wish you all many future fond memories!

In closing, on behalf of the FISA team: Janet, Marina and Janette - thank you for your support, hard work, patience, wisdom and compassion during the past school year. I am hopeful you will all experience a restful and restorative summer break.

Sincerely,
Shawn Chisholm & Janet Dhanani



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

Rapid Response Team (RRT)

We are happy that the Rapid Response Team initiative will end quietly at the conclusion of this school year as it indicates that the need for COVID-19 support has waned tremendously from when the teams were formed in March 2021. Over the course of the past two school years the RRT processed 1,395 exposure reports, assisted with 199 partial or full school closures, and analyzed 49 activity signal alerts. Incredibly, 114 independent schools did not experience a single health authority confirmed school exposure. The RRT also relayed communication from the five Health Authorities, the MoECC, and the BCCDC, conducted health and safety site inspections following COVID-19 outbreaks, and answered the myriad of questions received as swiftly as possible. This valuable work was done through a robust team consisting of 4 levels of support.

Independent Schools COVID Leads (ISSCL) – Janet Dhanani and Shawn Chisholm
Mental Health Coordinators - Michelle Hussey and Jamie Morris

FISA Association Supports

- ACSIBC – Phill Hills
- AMS – Kent Dykstra
- CIS – Sandy Marshall/Lesya Balsevich
- ISABC – Elizabeth Moore
- SCSBC – Ed Noot

Regional Health Authority Liaisons

- Northern Health – Edgar Veldman
- Interior Health – Art Therrien
- Fraser Health – Stuart Morris
- Vancouver Coastal Health – Andrew Shirkoff
- Island Health – Peter Terpstra

Provincial Outreach Pro-D

After a two-year hiatus, FISA is excited to resume our in-person Provincial Outreach Pro-D series. This year's theme is Mental Health in Schools: The Imperative of Care. Our Mental Health Coordinators, Jamie Morris and Michelle Hussey, will offer practical suggestions on how to prioritize care for students, families, and, most importantly – oneself. After all, selfcare can be seen as a professional responsibility of educators. The first Provincial Outreach Pro-D sessions will take place in the North in early October, with more dates and venues added throughout the year. If your school is interested in hosting a session, please contact Janet at janet@fisabc.ca. The Pro-D section on the FISA website will be updated regularly as dates are added and flyers will be distributed regionally.

Middle Years Developmental Instrument (MDI)

Courtesy of a special grant for mental well-being in schools provided by the MoECC, FISA arranged an opportunity for independent schools to participate in the MDI at no cost. Grade 4 students were invited for 2020-2022 and grade 8 students were invited for 2021-2023. This year's reports have been distributed to the participating schools and contain valuable data that affirms what is working well, and identifies areas where further growth is needed for students to flourish. FISA has received an aggregate report which will assist in our advocacy efforts to ensure that independent schools continue to receive equitable and proportional funding to support mental health and wellbeing in independent schools. Schools with grade 8 can indicate their interest for the 2022/2023 MDI by completing this short [survey](#).

erase

In 2021/2022 the MoECC offered 10 Overview of the Provincial VTRA Protocol and Digital Threat Assessment erase training sessions, 2 of which were specifically for independent school staff. Next year's training schedule will be published in late August. It is unknown at this time if virtual sessions will be offered or if training will be held in-person.

District Authority Scholarship (DAS)

Over the past 30 years, FISA has managed the DAS process for the independent school sector and has distributed over \$5.5M worth of scholarships. This year 427 graduating students were awarded \$1,250 each for excellence in a variety of areas such as community service, ADST, Indigenous Languages and Culture, and Physical Activity. FISA thanks the DAS committee for their exceptional work: Máebh Carragher & Katie Larsen – Metro Vancouver; Simon Tuffin & Ruth McGhee – Vancouver Island; Chris Blesch – Fraser Valley; Mike Campbell – Northern/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.

French Grant

Independent schools that offer French language instruction will receive a one-time increase of 15% in their French Grant funding. However, payments to schools will be delayed due to staffing changes at the MoECC. Participating schools can expect to receive their cheque in early July. 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 which host alcohol-free graduation celebrations. Community donations were significantly less this year – under \$3,000 for independent schools, whereas historically between \$12,000-\$14,000 is available. It is our shared hope with our colleagues from public schools and the BCLDB that the funding for this valuable grant will return to historical levels in 2022-2023. A Dry Grad application form is available on the FISA website under the "[Services - Forms and Applications](#)" tab.

ArtStarts

FISA has received confirmation that the ArtStarts Artist in Education grant program will continue for 2022/2023 with independent schools allotted nearly \$25,000. AIE application forms are available on the FISA website under the "[Services - Forms and Applications](#)" tab and are due Friday, Sept. 16, 2022. 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

FISA is very aware of the hiring struggles many independent schools are experiencing. To assist schools in securing qualified staff, FISA has negotiated independent school access to Make a Future for an additional 3-year term. The cost for FISA members is \$3.92 per student FTE, or a \$300 minimum fee. MaF services include access to post jobs on www.makeafuture.ca, an online applicant tracking system, HR support, and inclusion in MaF marketing efforts. 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 MaF can contact Andrew Jang at andrewj@makeafuture.ca for more information.

FISA Membership Fees

The membership fees for FISA will remain at \$6.25/FTE for the 2022/2023 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 330 independent schools educating 85,818 students. FISA has an exemplary record of accomplishment and works hard to ensure that independent schools continue to receive due recognition and funding. Please note that your association membership fees are separate from the FISA fees.

FISA Transitions

In January 2022, Magda Hogewoning officially retired after serving independent schools for 12 years as FISA's executive assistant. The transition was a seamless one due to the hiring of Janette Cholakian in October 2021, who was able to shadow Magda and quickly understand the scope and importance of the job. Janette's easy adaptation to her role was further helped by the fact that her sister, Marina Cholakian, preceded her in joining FISA. Marina became part of the team in April 2019 as the other executive assistant, thereby giving her the edge on Janette. To add to the confusion that results from two staff members sharing the same surname, the Janette/Janet mix ups are a source of amusement. Janet Dhanani continues in the cherished role that she has held for 5 years of Assistant Executive Director. Luckily, Shawn Chisholm, FISA's Executive Director for the past 4 years, causes no name confusion in the office and is devoted to the FISA mission and independent schools. Behind the office staff lies the amazing leaders of our 5 member associations and our fabulous Board of Directors - 18 hardworking individuals who prioritize the mission of speaking with one voice to ensure that the independent school sector continues to thrive in BC. This year, we say goodbye to one of our long-time Directors, Maureen Steltman. Since 2010 FISA has benefited from Maureen's sage advice and clear thinking. We thank her for her service and wish her well in her retirement both from the FISA Board and from her headship position at Fraser Academy. We welcome Lisa Evans, Head of Collingwood School, as Maureen's replacement.

FISA Office Closed

To give the office staff a much-needed break, the FISA office will be closed from **July 18th to August 12th**. We look forward to reconnecting with independent schools in mid-August as we all embark on the fresh new school year.