

A brand new school year underway

Happy new year to all of the students, teachers, support staff, and administrators in BC's public schools. We wish you a very rewarding year and hope that the joy of teaching and learning inspires and sustains you through the months ahead.

Congratulations to Dr. Dan Laitsch

Dan Laitsch will be stepping down from his role as IPE/BC Chairperson.... for a very good reason. He's recently been appointed SFU's Dean of Education and will be very busy in his new role. IPE/BC has had the good fortune of having Dan as a Fellow, Board Member and Chairperson of the Board over the last few years. His experience, knowledge and inspired leadership has been invaluable to the institute, and we know that the SFU faculty and students, and the education community as a whole will greatly benefit from having Dan as the Dean. While we will miss him greatly on the board, we're very glad that Dan will be staying on as an IPE Fellow and continuing to contribute to the Institute's work. Congratulations and all the very best, Dan!

Welcoming Steve Cardwell, Bryn Williams, Annabree Fairweather and Bill Bruneau

We're very pleased to announce that Steve Cardwell and Bryn Williams have recently joined the IPE/BC Board.

Steve's career in education has included serving as a secondary school teacher, President of his local of the BCTF, Superintendent of Schools in the Delta and Vancouver school districts and Vice-President, Students at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. He was awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2013 for outstanding service to public education and, in 2022, the KPU Foundation created a bursary in his name to support marginalized students.

Bryn is the principal of Leigh Elementary School which has a focus on inclusion, Indigenous knowledge, and restorative justice practices. He has taught in five different metro districts and at the Lynn Canyon Ecology Center. Bryn's educational leadership includes serving as the Executive Director of BC Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and as President of the Coquitlam Principals/Vice Principals Association. Bryn has also served as an IPE Fellow since the institute was formed.

We're equally pleased to welcome Bill Bruneau and Annabree Fairweather as new IPE/BC Fellows.

Bill Bruneau, who joined just last week, began his career in education as a secondary teacher in Calgary, then joined the faculty in the Department of Educational Studies at UBC, where he is now a Professor Emeritus. Bill is a past president of the UBC Faculty Association and of the Canadian Association of University Teachers as well as a former elected trustee on the Vancouver School Board. Bill's published work has dealt with academic freedom and the rise of performance indicators in schools and universities.

Annabree Fairweather joined our cadre of IPE Fellows last May. Annabree has over a decade of experience in post-secondary academic labour. She is the Executive Director of CUFA-BC and also previously served as the ED of the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association. Annabree has teaching experience at both the college and university levels and is passionate about the broader society values of higher education to global citizenship.

Please take a few minutes to read about all of the [IPE Fellows](#) and the [2023/24 Board of Directors](#).

What if the community school model was in place in BC today? Just imagine!

In our [latest Perspectives Blog post](#), David Chudnovsky, IPE/BC Board member, has written about the community school model that flourished in Surrey and other school districts until it fell victim to a budget crisis in the 1980s. This model, complete with a teacher in the dedicated role of community school coordinator, was an excellent way of connecting the neighbourhood school to the community and vice versa. No doubt you've heard the expression that the school is the heart of the community; well, designated community schools truly brought that saying to life. Speaking from his experience as a former community school coordinator, David describes the range of supports and programs the community schools provided and their benefit to the students and community members. It's a model that would serve us very well today.

What are your Hopes and Dreams for Public Education in BC?

The start of a brand-new school year is the perfect time to be thinking about our hopes and dreams for public schools. IPE's Hopes and Dreams community engagement project was initiated last year and will continue throughout this year, with collating, analysis, and a published report to follow. We know there are many challenges in education that need our attention, not the least of which is inadequate funding and support. But we also believe that, from time to time, we need to make space to talk about the values, aspirations, expectations, and ideals we hold for public education. This project does just that and we hope you will join in sharing your perspectives.

If you haven't participated in the project yet, please take a few minutes to learn more about [Hopes and Dreams](#) and [send in your thoughts](#). We'd also really appreciate you sharing this opportunity with your contacts and networks. Thank you!

BC government announcement on letter grades

"Dan Laitsch, a professor with the faculty of education at Simon Fraser University, says the move will help teachers focus on each child's individual skill level. It focuses much more the individual student's abilities, their competencies, their achievements, their understanding, rather than the old system if you really think about it - averages." [CTV News](#)

In late June, the BC government announced that letter grades will no longer be used from kindergarten to Grade 9. This had already been the case in about half of the school districts in BC, as part of a pilot program connected to the new BC curriculum. However, the announcement did spark considerable debate, both in favour and against. IPE/BC will soon be publishing a blog post on the topic, addressing the benefits of the new assessment and reporting model. In the meantime, you might want to check out the links below to read more about the rationale for this change.

[Why BC has ended letter grades for younger students](#)

[BC schools ditch letter grades for younger students. What parents need to know](#)

[BC had ended letter grades. Here's the argument for doing so.](#)

Upcoming AdvoCon Conference

An excellent opportunity to learn, network and advocate for truly inclusive public education is coming up on October 19-22nd. BCEdAccess' ninth annual conference, [AdvoCon 2023- Breaking Barriers Together](#), will feature presentations and workshops in four main streams: Health and Wellbeing, Advocacy in Education, Professional Development, and Systems Advocacy. On behalf of IPE/BC, Christine Ho Younghusband will be presenting "Dreaming Big on Education" and will be engaging with attendees on their hopes and dreams for public education. The event is being held on a hybrid model with the option of attending in person in Surrey or online.

If you're not already familiar with BCEdAccess, you can learn more about the very important and inspiring work the organization undertakes [here](#).

Keeping pace- building schools, recruiting teachers and funding post-secondary to meet the need

Quality public services and institutions can be undermined by design or by neglect. Unfortunately, in either case, the outcome looks very much the same. With public education being key to a strong democracy, we're dismayed by the fact that the teacher shortage, the reliance on portable classrooms and the overcrowding in BC schools does not appear to be a higher priority with government. Quality, accessible and truly inclusive public education depends on the necessary resources and support. Yet, [once again the school year is opening with the system under stress](#).

Last spring, IPE chose to focus on just three [key recommendations to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services](#) in the 2024 Budget consultation:

- addressing the serious teacher shortage that is putting the quality of public education at risk,
- acting on the need to revise the system for capital planning and building in order to ensure a forward-looking approach, and
- meeting the need for increased funding for post-secondary education.

Please help to circulate and amplify these recommendations well in advance of the 2024 budget announcements in February.

We welcome your feedback and engagement.

Is there an issue that you'd like to see addressed in IPE/BC publications?

Are there resources that you'd like to IPE consider developing?

Have you written an article, research paper, blog post, or book that we could include in the IPE/BC Commons?

Would you like to write a post for our Perspectives Blog?

Please don't hesitate to get in touch via info@publicedbc.ca. We'd love to hear from you.

Please share our newsletter and invite others [to subscribe](#) as well.

