



## Leading & the Kingdom of God *by Al Boerema*

Leading in Christian schools is a deeply satisfying and challenging venture which has two central aspects—coordinating the activities of the organization and coordinating those activities in a specific direction. Leading, in general, often focuses on the first aspect, solving problems, taking care of all the large and small tasks that need to be attended to in schools. Often, those school leaders who take care of these details and run a tight ship are respected. But that second aspect, leading in a specific direction may be more fundamental. Because of the Christian nature of the school, that second aspect is seen as serving the Kingdom of God. I frame serving the Kingdom of God in contrast or in opposition to serving the status quo.

By the status quo I mean the state of affairs in which existing power relations, social structures, and economic affairs are preserved. I can imagine working as a politician, or newspaper editor, or banker, or businessman, or educator to strengthen the existing institutions: schools, churches, businesses, and the media, that maintain social and economic structures. Most of the leadership that I see today falls in that category. Frequently, if not always, those social and economic structures benefit someone or some group, and what should be of concern, is that

they harm others, marginalizing some individuals or groups, disadvantaging them, standing in the way of them being who God meant them to be. This makes leadership that works toward maintaining the status quo problematic.

An example of what I am calling the status quo was in the news in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where I live. There is a practice in lower income communities all over the U.S. of offering what are called payday loans. These are short-term loans that people can get to deal with problems they are facing. Community service agencies report that the payday loan practice sucks the economic life out of poor communities by taking a significant portion of the money that should be flowing through the community out of circulation, channelling it to the financial centers of the country. There are numerous storefront companies offering such service, and one of the regulatory failures in the U. S. is not passing laws to limit the effects of these loans. At some level, it is understandable that these outlets exist. If they are not illegal, or even if they are, someone is going to offer this source of money. What troubles me is that major banks in the U. S. have also been participating in this practice, offering easy access to cash and charging interest rates that are effectively between 100-200%.

# Leading & the Kingdom of God

Those interest rates are not legal for banks to charge, so they have been calling the charges they assess for these loans fees rather than interest. This practice, which ultimately hurts customers and communities, makes sense in an environment that focuses on providing the best return for the bank's shareholders. To be fair, recently some of the major banks have decided to get out of the payday loan business as a result of pressure from community groups. But I wondered what caused business leaders in the banking industry, many professing to be Christians, to think that this practice was acceptable?

I think the answer is that status quo thinking, protecting the interests of the powerful, is so pervasive and enmeshed in organizational and leadership practice that it is hard to think about that work in other ways. Actions that support the status quo become invisible, normal, or of seemingly neutral character. Theologian Emilie Townes observed, these are "not individual acts of sin, but . . . systemic evil like anti-Semitism, classism, racism, sexism and more . . . the ways in which a society can produce misery and suffering in relentlessly systematic and structural ways" (2017, p. 27). I am framing this status quo approach as opposition to the Kingdom of God.

But what do we mean by the Kingdom of God? The idea of the Kingdom of God is widely used in Christian literature. The Kingdom of God is an idea that permeates the teaching of Jesus, particularly the first three gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. When I first began exploring the Kingdom of God in a more formal way, it was surprising to me that the Bible does not define the Kingdom of God. We are given similes, metaphors and illustrative stories. But we do not find a set of propositions that gives us its characteristics and rules. The Kingdom of God is not about rules, or behaviours, but rather the direction of one's heart with respect to God. Not that rules and behaviours are not involved, but entering the Kingdom of God begins with a relationship with God, with loving God.

One of the most powerful ways that we come to understand what Jesus was trying to enact in the breaking in of His Kingdom was through the parables that he told. These parables present aspects of the Kingdom of God that are difficult to comprehend, are shocking, and likely to fall on deaf ears.

Jesus uses parables to perplex and provoke, and ultimately to open the message of the Kingdom. To accomplish this purpose the parables of Jesus frequently have three parts: a common scene, a surprising twist, and a shocking truth about the Kingdom or about the God of the Kingdom (Johnson, 2013).

For example, we recognize a regular occurrence when a landowner goes out in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard described in Matthew 20. Since the crop is not coming in fast enough, he hires more workers. This is repeated until just an hour before quitting time. But then the surprising twist: he pays them all the same, starting with the last ones hired, prompting those who worked longest to complain. The landowner responds, "I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" (Matt 20:13-16). In this parable Jesus reverses our normal understanding of merit and our assumption of the scarcity of resources. Jesus is communicating that the Kingdom of God has limitless resources, and receiving them is not based on merit. This challenges the status quo view of the world that shapes our thinking and acting.

While keeping things organized is an important aspect of leading, another one is seeking first the Kingdom of God by challenging the status quo, acting on behalf of the least privileged ones in the community, the marginalized. Robert Greenleaf, who first articulated the servant approach to leadership asked, "Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves?"

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# Protecting Your School's Data: THE IMPORTANCE OF CYBER INSURANCE

by Tracey Yan

Did you know that one in five educational institutions have been targeted by ransomware or malware attacks, most commonly through the unsuspecting download of malware or through phishing attacks?

"Phishing" is a general term for emails, text messages and websites fabricated and sent by criminals. They are designed to look like they come from well-known and trusted businesses, financial institutions and government agencies in an attempt to collect personal, financial and sensitive information. *Canadian Centre for Cyber Security*

Social engineering refers to the increasingly common techniques used to manipulate people into divulging confidential information or taking actions for fraudulent purposes. Think your school is immune? A BC independent school was targeted by a hacker who accessed the personal information of parents, sent out letters advising of tuition increases, and directed parents to send tuition payments to a new bank account. Insured losses amounted to \$80,000. The city of Saskatoon was recently defrauded of over \$1 million by someone impersonating the chief financial officer of one of the city's vendors. Fortunately, most of that money was located in a dozen frozen bank accounts.

Cybercrime is the fastest growing crime in the world, incorporating a wide range of attacks including ransomware, malware and phishing, but also identity theft, hacking, cyber extortion and denial of service attacks. Data is one of a school's most valuable resources, yet the loss of data is not typically covered by a traditional property insurance policy as is the building and equipment. The requirements of Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) can also involve significant expenses related to mandatory reporting, regulatory fines and costs, and legal issues. Additionally, standard business interruption insurance does not typically cover the loss of income and extra expenses resulting from a cybercrime that disrupts operations.

For these reasons, it is important for your school to invest in a cyber insurance policy, providing

protection from losses resulting from a wide range of electronic risks and providing valuable support services during a cyber event. If you don't have such a policy in place, talk to your insurance broker about adding it – the premiums are not prohibitive and will provide significant peace of mind around an increasingly complex area of risk.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada also offers some useful tips for containing or reducing the risks of a privacy breach:

**PREPARE** an inventory of data and map out the processes through which it is collected so you know what personal information you have, and where and when you need to protect it.

**CONDUCT** vulnerability assessments and penetration tests to identify privacy threats. Consider both electronic data and paper forms (e.g. application forms).

**ENCRYPT** laptops, USBs and other portable media in the event of theft.

**LIMIT** the amount of personal information you collect and retain to what is absolutely necessary and protect that information through the end of its useful life, including policies on its secure destruction.

**INFORM** yourself of what is happening in the educational industry so you can learn from the experience of others.

**TRAIN** employees to understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting personal information and limit their access to information on a "need to know" basis.

**UPDATE** all software, especially anti-virus. Use intrusion prevention and detection systems such as firewalls and audit logs and proactively monitor them.

Following these steps will help reduce the risks of your school being affected by cybercrime and having a cyber insurance policy in place will provide the necessary back up if something does go wrong. Given the volume of personal data that schools collect for students, parents and staff, adequately safeguarding it is an important responsibility.

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# THE ADVENTURE OF MEANINGFUL LEARNING

by Darren Spyksma



...not all people who almost kill their boss still have a job 5 years later....

Where have five years gone? It feels like just yesterday, three weeks into the job, that I was standing in the parking lot of a hotel in Smithers, BC. As I pulled the hatch door of the rented minivan down to slam it, the unthinkable happened.

It crashed directly down onto the head of then-boss Henry Contant. In the chaos of the moments that followed, as we tried to talk Henry into getting stitches, I wondered if I would still have a job at the end of the week.

It is amazing how quickly five years pass when you are on an engaging learning adventure. The past five years have been full of changes, excitement, challenges and support. Through all the ups and downs, my greatest privilege is always the opportunity to learn from my interactions with many wonderful educators around the province, continent and world. As I hear stories, see examples and share in passionate dialogue about what is best for students, key themes emerge. Though not exhaustive, I hope that you find yourself in these themes and use them to support you and your teams as you engage more deeply with teaching Christianly and student learning.

## Belonging + Contributing = Becoming

Students need to belong to flourish. Belonging by itself is not the end. A strong Christian learning community understands that Christ's ability to create space for His disciples (read students), to feel like they belonged was never the goal of His stories, activities, words and actions. Christ used a sense of belonging to catapult His students into a state of becoming<sup>1</sup>. Students only belong in order to \_\_\_\_\_? Learning communities who claim the role of Christian in the world, desire to create a place where all students gain a sense of belonging within the school community. Belonging is the foundation of learning, service, faith and a relationship with Christ. As students gain a sense of belonging, they should be nurtured in a desire to help others to belong. When students begin to contribute to the sense of belonging within the community, they are in a state of becoming.

Never underestimate the power of eye contact, a smile and calling someone by their name to increase a person's sense of belonging. Do you have systems in place to ensure that every child receives those gifts every day from their school community?

## Learning that Haunts

Before many students get to the middle years, the draw of the screen, whether it be scrolling and swiping their way through someone else's curated life, or building and blasting an animated self to victory, exceeds the desire to learn in a traditional learning environment. What learning is taking place, what questions are being wrestled with, which in a break in the action in their parent's basement, have students pondering possible solutions and outcomes? Content acquisition for the sake of content acquisition does not meet this objective. Questions which can be answered with a quick google search will not haunt students into their afterschool screen frenzy. How often is learning organized around a question that has more than one right answer? How often is the driving question one that is beyond the learning designer in the room? If you already know the answer, is it a question worth spending much time on?

## Shifting the Starting Point

No Christian schools within the SCSBC community changed their mission and vision as a result of the modernized curriculum. The end is still the same: wholeness, discipleship, Christlike discernment, joyful service, educational excellence, and the shaping of God's world. These elements of a school's mission support the understanding that students are not heads on sticks<sup>2</sup>. Embodied learning practices leading to content acquisition allows schools to pursue their mission with integrity. To do this well, educators must start, "with what do my students need to practice as we engage with these concepts?" It is only then that teachers should be asking: What content do my students need to know to engage and practice well? Each group of students has their interests and areas for growth. To educate students in this way, they must be known and have agency. Not agency for their own gain, agency to improve the lives of others.

## The Answer to "How" is "Yes"

In his book, *The Answer to How is Yes*<sup>3</sup>, Peter Block suggests that positive change and innovation are held back by a group's fascination with and desire for the illusion of perfection. It is the pursuit of perfection and having all the details worked out that encourages organizations to forget about asking the question, "What matters in this situation?" and jump straight to being frozen by the enormity of "How are we going to do this?" The enormity of how becomes an excuse for inaction. By focusing on what matters, organizations are freed to innovate and explore. "Choosing to act on what matters is the choice to live a passionate existence, which is anything but controlled and predictable." As educators step into their Christian identity as leaders pursuing educational improvement, they step forward trusting that God goes before them. In that space, they act with confidence, moving into the unknown using their collective intellect, the stories of their shared history and the organization's mission to guide the innovation they trust will improve learning in schools. Indeed, the answer to "how" is "Yes!"

## Culture Shock

For a teacher who commonly closes the door of the classroom after the bell, doing their own thing and then going home at night, the modernized curriculum is a problem. Secondary teachers, in particular, need to adjust to the reality that all teachers are responsible for being aware of and supporting the development of skills related to literacy, numeracy and career awareness. They need to support the development of competency in the students, give time for reflection, and track this development and reflection across disciplines. The only way this happens well is with meaningful collaboration. Schools focused on student development will blur the lines between disciplines, because organizing learning exclusively by discipline does not support learning, creativity and collaboration. Even post-secondary institutions are acting on this learning innovation<sup>4</sup>. For many discipline specialists, moving from individual or department focused learning to a more life ready interdisciplinary approach to learning, is a huge adjustment. In this moment of grief, educators are encouraged to name the emotions that come with change, reminding themselves that education is about the student.

## Habit Stacking

Change is hard. There are already many good learning experiences in Christian schools across BC. The modernized curriculum is not a call for the elimination of everything that has gone before. It is a call to continuous improvement focused on learning, awareness of the marginalized, and support for the learner. The changes represented by the modernized curriculum are about reorienting educator practice to focus on the impact of pedagogy on learning. James Clear, in his book *Atomic Habits*<sup>5</sup>, suggests that it is small adjustments to habits that result in significant improvement over time. He suggests that anyone's trajectory, rather than their current results matter and that commitment level determines progress. A positive trajectory is created through "habit stacking." For an educator, that means inserting a new habit into the lesson planning routine. Before moving from the creation of the learning target to "the hook" which starts the lesson, educators would be encouraged to ask themselves, "which Core Competency Facet do I want students to practice today?" By adding this one question to the habits of planning the educator improves the focus of learning for students.

## Conclusion

Meaningful learning is an adventure. Some days will feel like you've been cracked on the head by the hatch of a minivan. Hopefully, in moments like that, you know that the worthwhile things in life take effort. There will be setbacks. On the days where you find yourself rubbing your head, remember that what matters is that you are on the journey prioritizing what is best for student learning.

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- 3 Peter Block – *The Answer to How is Yes: Acting on What Matters*

- 4 Cheryl Mahaffy – *Weaving a Tapestry of Learning: Introducing the King's Common Curriculum*
- 5 James Clear – *Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results*

# Rethinking Pro-D to Support Learning & Well-Being

by Jenny Williams

As we embark on a new school year, SCSBC is pleased to announce the launch of a new educator resource that is focused on building the well-being of both students and adults: the Well-Being BC website (launched early October 2019) [www.wellbeingbc.ca](http://www.wellbeingbc.ca)



Well-Being BC

## What is well-being and social-emotional learning?

Well-being is defined as the experience of feeling happy and healthy, both mentally and physically. Well-being is strongly associated with having safe and caring relationships with others, a sense of purpose or meaning, and generally feeling satisfied with life.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is critical to “developing the skills and competencies related to recognizing and managing emotions, developing care and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, setting and achieving positive goals, and handling challenging situations constructively.”<sup>1</sup>

## What is the importance of fostering well-being?

Research suggests that children who experience a greater sense of well-being are more able to learn and assimilate information in effective ways; more likely to engage in healthy and fulfilling social behaviours; more likely to invest in their own and others’ well-being and in the sustainability of the planet, as they take up their social, professional and



leadership roles in adulthood.<sup>2</sup> There is a significant relationship between spiritual, mental and emotional well-being and mental health. We also know that effective prevention and early intervention can help to significantly reduce the prevalence of mental health issues.<sup>3</sup> When children learn about healthy attitudes, thinking and behaviours at a young age, they are better equipped to deal with challenges that they may experience later in life. At the same time, as a society, we need to ensure that people have access to resources and support at every stage of life, including during the school years.

## What is Well-being BC?

The purpose of the Well-being BC website is to provide a FREE professional development resource to build the capacity of educators within independent schools to support the social and emotional well-being of students and staff. This resource will also be shared publicly, to support the well-being of children and adults everywhere.

The Well-being BC website contains a variety of resources, including:

1. Instructional Videos that introduce key concepts related to well-being and SEL, and feature interviews with local and international experts.
2. Video Viewing Guides that contain a summary of the video as well as reflection questions, are provided as an adult learning tool.
3. Infographics that provide a visual representation of the key messages from the videos.
4. Assessment & Growth Plan Toolkit to promote Schoolwide Well-being and SEL.

For example, video interviews with internationally recognized experts such as Drs. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, John Ratey, Stefanie Jones and Mark Greenberg, will connect SEL to

topics that are important to educators in supporting well-being, including: physical health (e.g., sleep, healthy eating, exercise), service-learning, school climate, and strategies to support staff well-being.

In addition, brief instructional videos show local educators demonstrating specific SEL practices, such as building a classroom charter, increasing student’s attention and focus through daily exercise, and measuring student’s emotional well-being using a Mood Meter.

## Rethinking Professional Development:

### Ideas about how to use the Well-being BC Professional Development Resource:

Well-Being BC is designed to be a flexible professional development tool that can be used in a variety of different ways. Users can decide on the order of topics, frequency of use, amount of time devoted to each topic and the number of educators in the group.

Be creative! Here are a few ideas to get you started:



### Self-guided Individual Study:

Educators can use the resource independently to learn about SEL, reflect on their practices and implement the strategies demonstrated in the school-based videos. Many of the strategies illustrated in the videos can be implemented in 10 minutes during the school day.



### Professional Learning Communities:

Staff can get together in professional learning communities to focus on a common area of interest.



### Collaborative eLearning Group:

Conduct meetings through e-learning to collaborate with like-minded educators from other schools.



### School Staff Meetings:

Administrators and learning leaders can choose a topic of interest to focus on for 15-20 minutes during staff meetings.

### Special Acknowledgment:

The [wellbeingbc.ca](http://wellbeingbc.ca) website would not have been possible without the contributions of the experts and the school staff, parents, and students who are featured in the videos. By sharing their personal stories, passion and expertise, they helped create a resource that can be used to translate our vision of promoting childhood health and well-being with other educators throughout the province of BC and around the world.

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# NEWS & EVENTS



## West Coast Christian School

Join us in welcoming a new member to SCSBC: West Coast Christian School!

West Coast Christian School opened its doors in January 1993 with 17 students. Since then, the school has grown to accommodate approximately 140 children from Kindergarten to Grade 12. It is a part of West Coast Christian Fellowship and it is a resource to families across the Lower Mainland.



20<sup>th</sup> Annual Leadership Conference  
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Business & Development  
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Christian Schools Canada 2020,  
National Conference  
ft. Miroslav Volf,  
Vancouver • **September 28-30**

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