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I HAVE  
A VOICE

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# Never Waste a Crisis

*Never waste a good crisis – now more than ever this leadership mantra offers us a chance to address vulnerabilities and myths that have been exposed by our current circumstances.*

**N**EVER WASTE A GOOD CRISIS was the title of a 2009 report written by Andrew Wolstenholme on the British construction industry's performance. The title of that report has become an oft quoted leadership mantra; and rightly so, for a crisis provides unique leadership opportunities that ought to be seized.

Perhaps the quote has never been more appropriate than in 2020 – when the world finds itself

gripped in multiple crises, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

A crisis has a way of exposing vulnerabilities and myths. Our pre-pandemic way of living included inexpensive and readily available travel, worldwide economic, social, and cultural interconnectedness. The Novel Coronavirus has exposed our collective vulnerability! Few could have imagined the exten-



sive impact a virus such as COVID-19 would have on our lifestyle and economy. Statements that refer to God's sovereignty, such as in the Canadian national anthem (God keep our land, glorious and free) or on US currency (In God We Trust), ring hollow as our leaders put their trust in science to find a way through the pandemic. Trust in science and God are not mutually exclusive, of course, but a crisis has a way of exposing myths in our culture.

The BLM movement has exposed our limited societal commitment to moral imperatives articulated in our foundational documents. The famous (or perhaps infamous) line in the US Declaration of Independence states, *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.* The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms contains parallel language, stating, *Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.*

The BLM movement has exposed the reality that our lofty foundational principles do not always match the lived experience of those who call our lands home, causing us to ask if our principles are mythical hopeless ideals or foundational principles that we embrace and actualize.

As leaders in Christian education, let us not waste the crisis that we are experiencing in 2020. Astute leaders will use these crises to evaluate our vulnerabilities and to expose our own myths.

The pandemic arrived suddenly causing a very rapid worldwide shift to online learning. Online learning is not a new concept and many educa-

tors have dabbled with it in the past; however few have fully embraced it. The pandemic resulted in a sudden shift towards online learning that many schools were ill-equipped to handle. This shift exposed a vulnerability in our technological

understanding and infrastructure. It also exposed the myth of our pedagogical prowess and flexibility. Many schools like to frame their commitment to 21st century learning – but the pandemic causes us to pause and ask, have we embraced 21st century learning or merely dabbled with it while operating almost entirely out of a very traditional pedagogy and school structure?

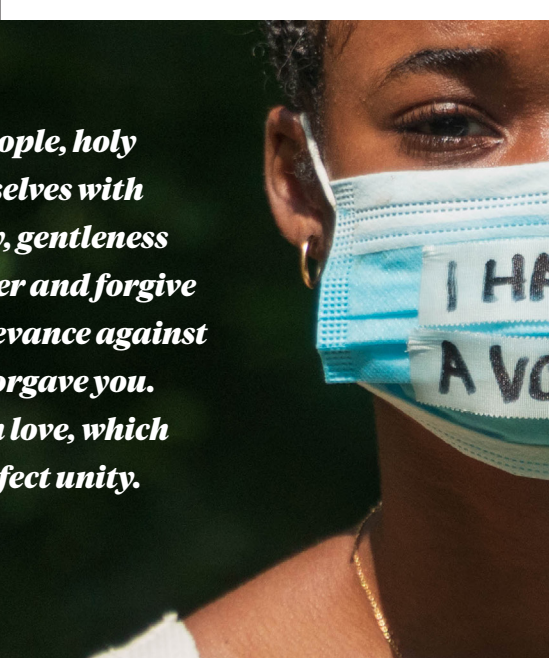
During this pandemic, we have also seen the Black Lives Matter movement continue to spread worldwide. I trust that this movement has the attention of Christian school leaders. The movement seeks to expose racism that is embedded in society and our institutions, including Christian schools.

BLM has already exposed the vulnerability that some students in Christian schools face in light of implicit and explicit racism. May we have the courage to respond with grace, compassion, and an unrelenting effort to dignify all who bear the sacred image of God.

Courageous Christian school leaders will also ask what organizational myths BLM exposes. Many of our schools include mission, vision, or admissions statements indicating that all are welcome, and all are cared for. Do we have the courage to ask our students, parents, and staff if this statement rings true with their lived experience at our school? And if the response exposes these statements as organizational myths, will we have the fortitude to initiate change?

Many Christian schools also indicate that they

***“BLM has exposed the vulnerability that some students in Christian schools face in light of implicit and explicit racism. May we have the courage to respond with grace, compassion, and an unrelenting effort to dignify all who bear the sacred image of God.”***



***Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.***

COLOSSIANS 3:12-14

equip students for lives of service, empowering them to engage culture with the transforming power of Jesus. BLM will cause bold leaders to pause and ask if this statement is myth or reality at their Christian school.

How is service and cultural engagement shaped by the ugly truth that BLM has exposed? How are Christian schools serving the vulnerable and engaging with a view to a society that values all humans, because all bear the sacred image of God (Gen. 1: 26-28). How do our Christian schools reflect the radical inclusivity of Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11? How do we comport ourselves as Paul teaches in Colossians 3:12-14?

Since we embrace a vision of radical compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience bound together in love, we are compelled to ensure that these values are reflected in our school community. We are further compelled to find authentic ways to share this radical vision with our neighbours, fellow citizens, community organizations, and policy makers, thereby being a transforming influence on those around us.

Since the pandemic has restricted travel, and likely will for some time in the future, perhaps now is the perfect time for Christian schools to redirect energy and funds earmarked for international service projects towards local needs, so that increasingly our schools are engaged in parts

of our local communities, serving those in need, and advocating for justice for those who are marginalized and oppressed.

Never waste a good crisis – now more than ever this leadership mantra offers us a chance to address vulnerabilities and myths that have been exposed by our current circumstances. James Gimbel, President of Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta provides us with a useful framework for processing change during a crisis. He suggests that we:

***Reflect*** on what is most important

***Release*** what is unnecessary

***Retain*** what is most needed

***Retool*** for what is essential in our mission

(James Gimbel – Paradigm Shift 2020, p. 19 in Beyond the Pandemic, *In Trust*, Summer 2020, found at [www.intrust.org](http://www.intrust.org))

Faithful Christian school leaders dare not turn a blind eye to what has been exposed. We must commit to authentic engagement, ensuring that our schools limit organizational vulnerability and operate in harmony with our core mission and the radical biblical imperative to love neighbour as self. 🌸

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# Duties and Responsibilities of Employers

**A**S THE WORLD'S ECONOMY dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic over the last six months, one of the key learning points for businesses has been to fully understand their duties and responsibilities as employers. When staff are hired, employers obviously want them to work hard and earn profits for the business, but employers must also understand their legal obligations towards those employees.

In particular, the pandemic has highlighted the obligation of employers to provide a safe and healthy working environment, and their duty to accommodate employees with certain health or family situations so that they are able to continue participating in the workplace. Let's look at each of these in more detail.

## **Health and Safety Obligations**

Every employee has the right to a safe and healthy workplace, and employers are responsible for providing this by having an effective occupational health and safety program in place. The program should identify and control potential workplace hazards, help prevent injuries and disease, and promote a positive health and safety culture by having proper processes and policies in place. Safe work

procedures, adequate training, and clear reporting processes all contribute to an environment where employees feel safe and secure.

Schools should especially be aware of the necessity to have a joint health and safety committee in place if they have more than 20 employees. The joint committee brings together employer and worker representatives to identify and help resolve any health and safety matters in the workplace. Schools with fewer employees can have a single worker health and safety representative.

WorkSafeBC provides some excellent resources on its website which can help schools ensure they have all the necessary pieces of their health and safety program in place. Boards and finance committees should verify that schools are following through on these requirements as part of their risk mitigation responsibilities.

## **Duty to Accommodate**

In some circumstances, employers have an obligation to adjust policies or practices to allow their employees to fully participate in the workplace. The most common situations schools encounter are accommodations for physical and mental health issues, gender and family status. If a school



in the discussion, be open to ways their needs can be accommodated, and stay in touch with employers while they are away from the workplace. Accommodation is also not unlimited – if employers would experience undue hardship because of the changes, then their duty may be fulfilled. Inconvenience or some extra expenses are not considered undue hardship, but significant costs and program disruptions may qualify. Schools are encouraged to exercise extreme care in terminating employees in these circumstances, and to consult with legal counsel before proceeding, because of the human rights issues that may be triggered.

Being an employer in today's world is a complex responsibility. As schools grow larger, effective support and management of human resources becomes even more important and knowing your obligations as an employer is the key first step. When school staff feel safe and secure, and their needs are addressed in a consultative way, they will hopefully be more committed to the school, help foster a healthy workplace culture, and be more flexible to meet school programming needs. The end result will be better outcomes for students, families, staff, and the school as a whole. 🌸

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has a staff member with a disabling condition or certain family obligations (such as pregnancy, child care, elder care, etc.), then the school must consider what can be done to maintain the employment relationship before terminating the employee. Accommodations might include modified work hours or roles, adjustments to the work processes, working from home, or temporary leave.

Accommodation is a two-way street: employees must provide medical information, participate

### Resources for Employers

The BC Employment Standards Act is a key starting point for many employment related matters:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice>

WorkSafeBC has many resources related to health and safety programs:

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en>

WorkBC offers some valuable HR resources for small employers:

<https://www.workbc.ca/Employer-Resources/Your-Workforce/Support-your-workforce.aspx>

The BC Human Rights Code provides various protections for employees:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/human-rights/human-rights-protection>

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# Distinct: Readily Distinguishable by the Senses

*What would you say makes your school distinct?  
Would a visitor sense a difference as they walked  
the halls during a school tour?*

**W**HAT MAKES A CHRISTIAN school distinct? In an era where every action is defined by school safety, by responding to safety guidelines in order to prevent the spread of a pandemic, by minimizing physical contact in some groups and ensuring physical distancing in others, creating a distinct program may cease to be a priority. When you add in the element of fear that is prevalent in many households this fall, without tenacious persistence, the distinctive nature of Christian education may disappear as a by-product of educating during a pandemic.

What would you say makes your school distinct? Would a visitor sense a difference as they walk the halls during a tour? When asked what makes a Christian school distinct, school staff and students regularly offer three quick responses, “We pray,

we go to chapel, and we do service.” To explore a school’s ability to maintain and develop its distinctiveness, leadership only need look at the impact of the most prevailing competing stories of the day. As we work to live in God’s story, we are all impacted by the prevailing competing stories of individualism, narcissism, and materialism. To be distinct is to actively work against the competing stories as we step faithfully toward a better story.

## **A Distinct Institution**

In the face of a comprehensive focus on individualism, a distinct institution prioritizes collaboration, collective goals, and unwavering resolve in focusing on the essential. Do all levels of leadership and staff collaborate on, and aim toward, the same goals? Do the stories the school tells the broader community reflect these goals? Are staff intentionally supported





Photo: Kevin van der Leek

and scheduled to work in collaborative teams, thus reinforcing the communal nature of God's design for interdependence in Christian community? Is contributing to tuition relief an expected outcome of being blessed financially? Are the awards and celebrations at school focused on individual teacher and student achievement or collective achievements? As schools reflect on their present systems, rather than allow them to roll from one year to the next, they ensure that each system aligns more intentionally with the distinctive nature of a Christian institution.

### **A Distinct Classroom**

Is classroom design neutral? A distinct classroom explores who God is through the exploration of creation, community, and self. God is the Creator, commissioning humans to bear His image as they live in the world He created. All learning orients itself

in, and revolves around, God and His developing story. It is not enough to pray and worship. Though cultivating spiritual disciplines is important, all practices within the classroom should aim to root a person's identity first in God. Extending out of this identity, staff and students participate in practices that develop a heart for others, increase the capacity for leadership, foster genuine relationships, all in order to respond in gratitude to Christ. As an elementary teacher intentionally includes six places within the classroom jobs list for students to look out for others who may need help with their classroom job, they are intentionally showing students that their role at a Christian school includes helping others, not just focusing on themselves. Thirteen years of connecting practices to living as an image bearer of Christ prepares students for ongoing engagement in God's story.

### **A Distinct Learning Plan**

God created all things good. The impact of sin tainted all of creation. God's plan as represented in Christ's sacrifice was for all creation. We look forward to a time when all of creation is restored; until that time all humans have a role to play. A distinct learning plan has a rhythm, that over 13 years of Christian education, encourages students to view life critically, thinking and reflecting on how God's story speaks into their situation. Educators pursuing faithful learning plans create lessons and units which reflect the rhythm of God's story.

Teaching Christianly includes creating learning plans which aim to consistently answer key questions: How was this aspect of creation created good? How were these skills intended to be used for good? How has the reality of sin impacted what we are learning about? How are these skills being used to promote selfish independence or other competing stories? Now that we know this information, what does it mean for our own habits and practices? What is our responsibility in the world now that we know this?

A distinct learning plan reflects a reality that the acquisition of new skills and knowledge comes with responsibility. Responsibility to reflect on whether our new knowledge and skills should impact our own habits and behaviour while also looking to support others with the newly acquired skills and knowledge. Thirteen years of reflecting on and responding to needs as a result of acquiring skills and knowledge will shape students, with the Holy Spirit's help, solidifying their identity in Christ.

### **Distinct in a Pandemic**

Living during a pandemic is an invitation to live in fear. Emotions are an invitation to reflect on where we find hope. As you lead learning during this pandemic, know that each staff and student

experiences the pandemic in a deeply personal way. For many, the pandemic has forced introspection and disrupted their view of God, faith and what it means to believe. Educators are invited into this reality, curating a space where colleagues and students can ask some of the challenging and mysterious questions of faith. *Did God cause this pandemic? Are the people who die from this pandemic and who aren't Christians going to hell? Why do bad things happen to good people?*

These questions are mysteries that need to be discussed. Encourage staff to wade carefully into these types of questions. Reflecting on the pandemic as a staff and as a class gives Christian educators the opportunity to practice looking to scripture,

avoid easy answers, and foster the ability to ask hard questions and not necessarily come up with quick answers.

Responding to the pandemic in a way that is readily distinguishable by the senses is the goal for all Christian schools. As we focus our hope and trust in our Creator and commit to a life of interdependence as a community, we model what it means to live distinctively in these challenging and ever evolving times. May the peace of Christ dwell in you as you walk faithfully into today. ✨

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***“Reflecting on the pandemic as a staff and as a class gives Christian educators the opportunity to practice looking to scripture, avoid easy answers, and foster the ability to ask hard questions and not necessarily come up with quick answers.”***

Jenny Williams

# Seeking Well-Being

## A Schoolwide Approach to Promoting Well-Being, Social-Emotional Learning, and Positive Mental Health

*Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them.*

I Peter 5:2 (NIV)

**T**HERE IS A HIGH importance during the worldwide pandemic to focus on the social and emotional well-being of all our children and youth. The pandemic brings with it an increased concern about mental health and other factors that affect the well-being of children, including levels of heightened stress and anxiety. We know that one in five children suffer from mental health disorders<sup>1</sup> and yet we also know that many of the problems associated with these disorders can be prevented.<sup>2</sup> Social and emotional learning is foundational to the promotion of positive mental health, success in school, physical health and overall well-being. The long-term effect of social-emotional learning in schools is reduced mental health disorders and better educational and economic achievement.<sup>3</sup> Research demonstrates that well-implemented social-emotional programs promote positive development, reduce problem behaviours, and also improve students' academic performance, citizenship, and health-re-

lated behaviours.<sup>4</sup> We also know that social and emotional skills are malleable and can be taught.<sup>5</sup>

These skills underly all aspects of human functioning and help us to be more successful in school and in life.<sup>6</sup> The development of strong social and emotional skills leads to well-being.

### **Social-emotional skills include being able to:**

- manage stress
- identify emotions
- control your behaviour
- have empathy for others
- put yourself in someone else's shoes
- make and keep friends
- manage conflicts with others
- build relationship skills
- be aware of your strengths and weaknesses
- have optimism
- make responsible and ethical decisions







## Seeking Well-Being

Well-being involves people's perceptions about their quality of life. Positive well-being is the perception that their lives are going well physically, socially, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. It allows people to realize their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully and able to make a contribution to the community.<sup>7</sup>

### Outcomes of Strong Social-Emotional Skills

Social and emotional factors have long range implications. Children with strong social and emotional skills not only do better in school; they get along better with others and have more happiness and well-being. They also predict several long-term life outcomes. Children with stronger social and emotional skills are more likely to have stable employment, graduate from high school, finish post-secondary education, and have better social and emotional mental health in adulthood.

### Developing a Schoolwide Systematic Approach to SEL

Any social and emotional learning approach needs to have more than just a one-time focus. It requires

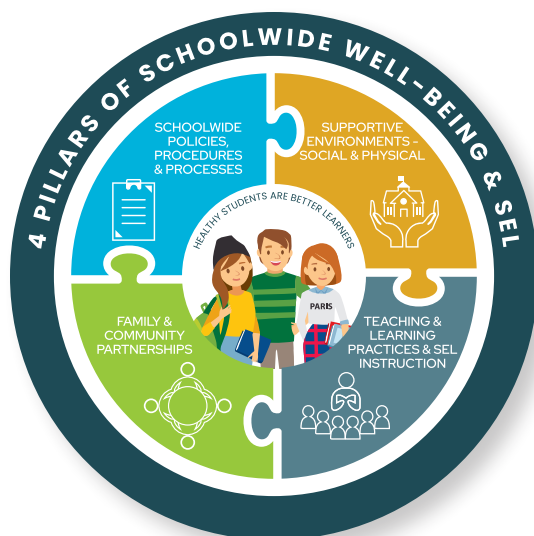
### Systemic Social-Emotional Learning

Systemic SEL is an approach to create equitable learning conditions that actively involve all Pre-K to Grade 12 students in learning and practicing social, emotional, and academic competencies. These conditions require aligned policies, resources, and actions at state and district levels that encourage local schools and communities to enhance the personal and professional capacities of adults to: implement and continuously improve evidence-based programs and practices; create an inclusive culture that fosters caring relationships and youth voice, agency, and character; and support coordinated school-family-community partnerships to enhance student development.<sup>8</sup>

a schoolwide approach where everyone has an opportunity to give their input for developing systematic ways to approach the social and emotional learning and well-being of students. What we need to do is have a schoolwide approach and not just one program, but everyone together thinking about systemic ways to approach social and emotional learning and well-being of students. This includes a focus on schoolwide processes and policies such as discipline approaches and embedding social and emotional learning in the doors and the floors, and the pores, in every aspect of the school. We need to pay attention to creating a supportive school and classroom environment so children and adults feel safe, that they feel that they can participate and have their voices heard.

### Assessment and Growth Plan for Well-being and SEL

[The Assessment and Growth Plan Toolkit for Well-being and Social-Emotional Learning](#) was developed by Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl and Jenny Williams and published in 2020. It provides an easy-to-use and flexible assessment and growth plan for schools that took a systematic approach. This will allow schools to move forward a social



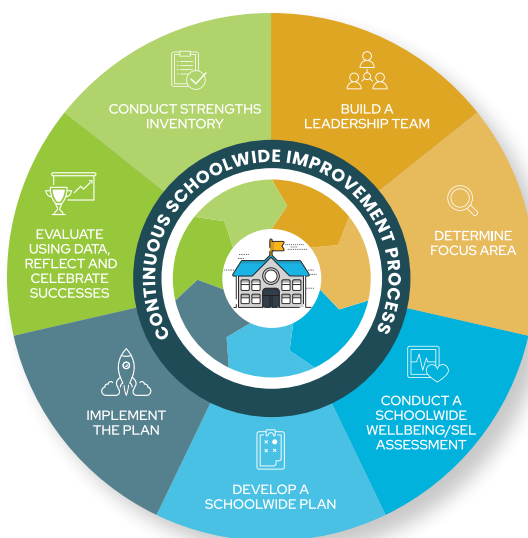
## Seeking Well-Being

and emotional learning plan with intention. They wanted to include resources to draw from research and experts in the field. The goal was for the Toolkit to help schools to develop healthy behaviours, relationships, and choices in children and youth and adult educators that will continue throughout their lifetime. The Toolkit facilitates a systematic rather than piecemeal approach to schoolwide well-being and social-emotional learning improvement. The diagram (page 13) shows the four pillars of schoolwide well-being and SEL in the Toolkit.

### Process for Schoolwide Change and Growth

The process for schoolwide change and growth involves change management and the conditions that we know we need to have in place before a school brings about change. It is important to be intentional about taking a system-wide approach to social and emotional learning and well-being. For people to work together there needs to be a high degree of relational trust and an ability to listen to one another in the whole school community, including the students, staff, families, and community partners.

It is essential to begin this process by hearing from everyone, developing an awareness of the process, and going through the Toolkit to let parents, teachers, and students know that this process is going to take place. It involves developing a school leadership team and establishing how progress is going to be communicated, as well as creating the space for everyone to contribute. Everyone will be



affected by the change so everyone should have a stake in it. This graphic illustrates the seven phases of the continuous schoolwide improvement process. Begin with building a leadership team and progress through each of the phases.

When schools make a commitment to developing the well-being and social and emotional learning of their students, it is prudent to check on how much buy-in there is in this process. Develop a plan to involve the whole school community, including parents and community members, in the process that is collaborative and allows opportunities for feedback. It is helpful to build in time in this process to allow for reflection and gaining feedback from staff, students, and parents/guardians on how things are going. Consider ways to sustain the growth and celebrate successes along the way. The Toolkit will allow schools an easy way to start and sustain growth that will have ongoing impact. 🌸

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The Assessment and Growth Plan Toolkit for Well-being and Social-Emotional Learning, can be accessed at the following link on the Well-Being BC website:

[www.wellbeingbc.ca/school-toolkit](http://www.wellbeingbc.ca/school-toolkit)

*"Relational trust is the most important factor for school reform."<sup>9</sup>*

*"To the extent that the effort at change identifies and meaningfully involves all those who directly or indirectly will be affected by the change, to that extent the effort stands a chance to be successful."<sup>10</sup>*

ENDNOTES: please visit the online version of *The Link* to view the endnotes to this article ([newsletter.scsbc.net](http://newsletter.scsbc.net))

# News & Events

**construct**  
**cultivate**  
**create**

JEREMIAH 29:4-7



*engaging society  
for the common good*

**SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS  
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA  
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE  
Saturday, October 31, 2020**

The Society of Christian Schools in BC invites you to the 21st annual SCSBC Leadership Conference for Christian school board and committee members and administrators on Saturday, October 31, 2020.

*We hope you will be able to join us for this dynamic day of learning, networking, and inspiration for Christian education leaders.*

Our theme this year is *Construct, Cultivate, Create: Engaging Society for the Common Good*. We are very pleased to welcome special guest, Dr. Mark Husbands, President of Trinity Western University, as we explore what it means to engage society for the common good.

## wisdom4

**WISDOM 4 THE WAY**  
*Relational and  
Emotional Flourishing*

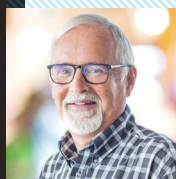
Videos series featuring  
**Dr. Rod Wilson**

This video series focuses on the well-being of all those who participate in the Christian school movement, whether they receive remuneration or function as a volunteer.

Each video will be 5-7 minutes in length and will be available on the 2nd and 4th Monday of every month from September through June.

The topics will have both an individual and communal orientation, with an underlying emphasis on lived experience.

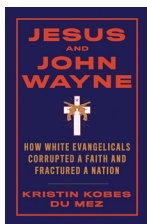
**Contact the SCSBC office  
for more information:**  
[contact@scsbc.ca](mailto:contact@scsbc.ca)



**Rod Wilson** served as President of Regent College from 2000–2015. Originally trained as a clinical psychologist, Dr. Wilson has been involved in the field of counselling and consulting for over 30 years. He is currently Teaching Pastor at Capilano Christian Community, as well as Senior Advisor with A Rocha Canada, and consultant with various organizations, including SCSBC.

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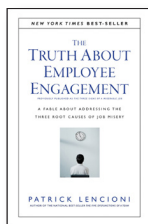
# Recommended Resources



## **Jesus and John Wayne**

Kristin Kobes Du Mez

*Jesus and John Wayne* is a thought-provoking analysis of the intersection of Evangelicalism (white) and politics in the US over the last century. Students of history and politics will enjoy the chronicle, while those who contemplate the interplay of Christ and culture will appreciate the investigation. Kobes Du Mez provides ample historical evidence while keeping the narrative moving. A compelling read for Christians in leadership positions.



## **The Truth About Employee Engagement**

Patrick Lencioni

It may be worth revisiting one of Lencioni's popular books right now to examine his simple model for making any job more rewarding, whether you are a leader trying to motivate your staff, or an employee looking for job fulfillment. Told through an engaging story, Lencioni suggests that being known, feeling relevant, and being able to measure individual success, are the three keys to building a culture of engagement in your organization.

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