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**AMANDA BROADWAY
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*The word “flourishing”
has become a bit of a
buzzword in Christian
schools. What do we
mean when we talk
about flourishing in
Christian education?*

WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT FLOURISHING?



BY THE TIME YOU are reading this, SCSBC hosted its 24th annual Board Leadership Conference, centred on the theme “flourishing,” with keynote speaker Lynn Swaner, coauthor (with Andy Wolfe) of *Flourishing Together: A Christian Vision for Students, Educators, and Schools*. We also launched our Professional Support Networks around flourishing and use Lynn and Andy’s book as our guide. A few years ago, SCSBC published *Guiding Schools to Flourish*, coauthored by Henry Contant and Ed Noot. So, the word “flourishing” is very much on our minds, and I think it has become a bit of a buzzword in Christian education. I believe this to be a good thing. But what do we mean when we talk about flourishing in Christian education?

In Lynn and Andy’s book, they tie the idea of flourishing to the use of the Greek word *zōé* in the book of John. Simply put, *zōé* means life, but a more fulsome definition draws out the idea of not just life, but life in abundance – a flourishing life. The Gospel of John highlights this idea of abundance as the theme runs throughout its chapters. There is abundant fish and bread and abundant (and high quality) wine at the wedding. John chose only seven miracles of Jesus to include in his gospel, and I suggest they all have to do with “life.” Most explicitly, however, is Jesus’ proclamation, “I have come that they might have life

and have it more abundantly!” (John 10:10)

But what does it mean to live a life of abundance as followers of Jesus? I believe the idea of abundance in Scripture is directly tied to Paul’s oft-repeated phrase, “in Christ,” or *en Christo*, which calls us to live our lives as a people who are in Christ both individually and corporately. But even that phrase needs unpacking.

I see life in Christ as synonymous with flourishing. And for me, human flourishing is a life filled with an integrated rootedness in the corporate spirituality of the cross. As followers of Jesus, we are, by definition, people of the cross; people who, in Christ, are called to align ourselves with Christ in his victory, but also in His suffering (1 Peter 4). Because the work of the cross supersedes our current situations and is centrally linked to God’s work in the world, we are invited to play a part. The cross is quite literally the crux of the story! The late John Howard Yoder (1988) framed it this way, “people who bear crosses are working with the grain of the universe.” (p. 279)

We must be people of the cross instead of individuals of the cross. The salvation afforded by the scandalous love of Jesus is personal, but never private. Salvation is offered to all of creation and is embodied fully in community. We are literally invited to be *in Christ* as members of the body of Christ. We manifest

the redeeming love of Jesus in the world by participating in the body of Christ. We are to be known not by our amazing individual acts of spirituality, or by our outstanding individual faith, but by our love for one another. This is the corporate part of an integrated rootedness in the spirituality of the cross. We are never free to cancel, vilify, or dehumanize another – even if we disagree with them. A sound theology of the cross affirms a sound theology of image-bearing. The unifying power of the cross is far too strong to allow our petty bro-



kenness to break its work in the world, as much as we try. In our current cultural moment, we need to remember who we are in Christ *and* how we have come to belong to the people of God. This corporate followership is central to our human flourishing, and it runs counter to the careerism, power, status, ego, individualism, and self-promotion that define our times and vie for space in our imaginations.

A fully integrated life is a full understanding of rootedness in the cross, of being fully alive in Christ. It is easier to apply the way of the cross to our faith and then to our families – a fragmentary or partial life in Christ. An integrated life of the cross applies what NT Wright calls “Messiah-thinking” to all of life, including our politics, consumption, recreation, and even our discourse patterns. Late Biblical scholar Ernst Käsemann (1971) argued that “the catchword about the ‘theology of the cross’ loses its original meaning if used non-polemically” (p. 35). If we annul and abuse the stark truth of the cross so that it no longer critically attacks dominating interpretations, our Christian sensibilities, and our comfort levels, our lives are no longer rooted in Christ. We guard against its diminishment via pop culture iconism, its elimination from authentic Christian discourse, and even its abuse to justify violence on the side of the oppressor. Ironically this is the opposite of its intended message in a time of the *pax romana*, the peace of Rome enforced with unfettered violence. Instead, we submit to its all-pervasive influence, constantly shaping and reshaping our lives and communities.

Finally, flourishing is fully realized in the spirituality of the cross; a spirituality that permeates all areas of our theology, a complete rearrangement of our values and priorities. A spirituality of the cross challenges our habits of compartmentalizing

and routinizing our lives. It is anything but static and goes far beyond personal morality and, by the work of the Spirit, inspired a constant rethinking and reshaping of our life. I believe it also requires an active imagination, or a baptized imagination

of constantly seeking how to live in the way of the cross. As Michael Gorman (2001) poses the question, “In what part of our life story is the story of the cross not being, or not being faithfully told?” (p. 382). Gorman highlights the creating reality of a spirituality of the cross. The “cross creates a new horizon, a new world” (p. 383), a world “characterized by stranger reversals” (Brown, p. 93). A spirituality rooted in the cross is both inspired by the cross and critiqued by it.

May we be profoundly mindful that this flourishing in us is a complete devotion to the way

of the cross. May we be inspired by the spirituality of the cross, constantly conforming to the image of the one “who loved us and gave himself up for us.” 🌈

DAVE LOEWEN

SCSBC Executive Director

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*How does your school save for the future?
Do you need a new reserve fund policy to provide clarity?*



BUILDING YOUR

THE QUESTION OF HOW much funds a school needs to hold in reserve is a common one. “How much cash should we have on hand for emergencies? Should we set up a capital reserve for building repairs, or should we just pay down our mortgage? When should we start saving for our future expansion project?” The answer to these questions is always “It depends.”

There are typically three types of reserves a school may need:

Operating reserves are the typical rainy-day savings that organizations hold to pay bills and meet payroll when unexpected events happen. These emergency reserves should be distinguished from the normal cash flow management that covers seasonal fluctuations in the timing of grant and tuition payments over the year. Operating reserves are usually held in cash or liquid investments so they are available quickly. The oft-cited rule-of-thumb is that these reserves should equal at least three months of normal operating expenses (excluding amortization



NEST-FEG

THE ART OF RESERVE FUNDS

expense), but this benchmark may be different for schools with other contractual commitments or new project campaigns. In some circumstances, schools may want more readily available cash. Other schools may have managed to function for many years with minimal emergency funds because their revenues and expenses are very stable and predictable, or perhaps by relying on a line of credit for unexpected expenses.

Capital repair reserves are held for non-routine maintenance and repair of long-term assets. The roof may spring a leak or the school bus is finally beyond repair, and there is often not enough money in the annual budget to fund these large expenses. A capital replacement plan or depreciation report can help manage the timing of some of these costs, but others will be unexpected, and money will be needed in either case. A school that includes at least a portion of amortization expense (a non-cash expense) in a balanced budget can dedicate this cash flow to a capital repair or replacement reserve with relative ease.

Future opportunity or capital replacement reserves are monies held for bigger future projects such as adding classes or replacing the school building. These reserves are often tied to goals set out in the strategic plan and a large portion may come from donors, so they are best kept separate from the usual capital repair reserves due to the external restrictions on the use of these funds.

Having the appropriate reserves in place is important for several reasons beyond the simple management of cash flows:

- Cash reserves allow school administrators and the board to remain focussed on delivering the

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- Reserves can be used when strategic opportunities arise that otherwise would be missed.
- Schools with funds in reserve are more likely to get favourable borrowing terms from lenders when the time comes for a big capital project.
- Schools with sufficient reserves may be able to tolerate slightly more risk in their investment portfolios, and therefore generate a higher rate of return.

Should a school accumulate reserve funds when it has a mortgage to pay off? Again, the answer is usually “It depends.” Some form of operating reserve



is always a good idea and is largely separate from the capital reserve/mortgage trade off. Schools with new buildings may not need money for large capital repairs in the near-term and can safely devote more funds to pay down their debt and reduce borrowing costs as quickly as possible. Schools with older buildings and a smaller mortgage balance may be wise to allocate more funds to reserves in preparation for major repairs or capital projects. Comparing the rate of return on invested reserves to the interest rate on the debt is also key to this decision.

If they haven't already, school boards should develop a reserve fund policy setting out:

- which types of reserves the school will have,
- why each type of reserve is necessary,
- what the target reserve amounts are,
- where the money will come from,
- who has authority for using reserve funds,
- how reserve funds will be invested, and
- how reserve funds are reported to the board and membership.

It is important for the society membership to understand why reserves are necessary and how the school is using them to meet its financial needs. Some charities believe that having too much cash on hand will reduce donor support, and schools may feel that raising tuition to increase reserves is not palatable for parents. However, transparency around the reserve fund policy, along with clear ties to capital and strategic plans, may actually improve buy-in from parents and donors as they see strong stewardship and are more assured of the financial resilience of the organization. 🌱

TRACEY YAN

SCSBC Director of Finance

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DO YOU HAVE

How do you perceive time? How does your team engage in discussions about time? Who has the authority to determine how time is utilized in your school?



If you were to ask a teacher what they need most, they would likely respond with, “I require more time” or “Please grant us more time.” Although time is a finite resource, our perspective on it greatly influences how we make use of this crucial asset.

Could it be that institutional inertia has led your school to let the weekly schedule or the September-to-June school year dictate how you regard time? What if leadership teams started treating time as a resource rather than a constraint?

In British Columbia, schools are mandated to adhere to the provincial curriculum, which specifies a set number of instructional hours per year. Schools are encouraged to craft learning experiences that align the provincial curriculum with the local context and the needs of the learners. Is it conceivable that we continue to allow outdated time restrictions to shape our schedules even after the restrictions have evolved?

Effective learning is comprehensive, engaging more than just the learner’s intellect. Quality learning doesn’t have a fixed end-point determined by the clock; reflection and ideation persist well beyond scheduled work hours.

Adjusting our timetable away from a small block, subject-focused paradigm is a formidable task. It conveys to learners that the work being done is significant enough that schedules should adapt to accommodate it, instead of the other way around. Suddenly, learning takes on a new level of importance, transcending mere means to an end.

Schools that adhere rigidly to a time-based mindset tend to overbook time slots, creating the illusion of efficient learning. Overly regimented timetables, originally intended as guides for teachers, have now become constraints hindering teachers and disrupting the learning process.

Taking a moment as a leadership team to contemplate time encourages essential conversations about how time is allocated. For learners in preschool through grade 9, local communities can design schedules that suit students' needs because provincial time constraints are limited. These schedules are tailored to promote holistic learning, affording teachers the flexibility to adjust classroom schedules to cater to

their students. Subject areas serve as guides rather than rigid structures for timetables. Literacy and numeracy instruction gain context by practicing skills and competencies across all learning opportunities, irrespective of subject area. Learning design prioritizes multidisciplinary approaches. Projects, community service, and other learning initiatives prompt students to apply direct instruction in new ways, demonstrating mastery through the ability to transfer skills and understanding. Educators monitor students' competency development across various disciplines, without being overly bound by the taxonomy initially designed for tracking content acquisition.

In contrast, for grades 10-12,

known as the Graduate Learning Years in BC, many schools persist in using time much the same way as their predecessors did two decades ago. Some courageous schools attempt to implement new structures that align with our current understanding of learning – that it thrives when it's engaging over an extended period, has real-world applications, and serves a purpose greater than personal achievement. These schools endeavour to create schedules that support deeper learning, but often, the effectiveness of these new structures diminishes over time due to resistance against the inertia of “the way things have always been done.” These innovative structures do not align with how teachers were taught



when they were students, which remains a strong determinant of their teaching methods. Amid the hustle and bustle of the weekly schedule, many teachers revert to their own educational experiences, rather than the training they received. The teachers who can overcome this barrier in the Graduate Learning Years should be enlisted to enhance learning design across the entire system.

Adjusting our timetable away from a small block, subject-focused paradigm is a formidable task. It conveys to learners that the work being done is significant enough that schedules should adapt to accommodate it, instead of the other way around. Suddenly, learning takes on a new level of importance, transcending

mere means to an end. Learners become engrossed in the process of learning, and it is the professional educator's responsibility to monitor their progress, aligning it with the curricular requirements for a specific grade level. Although a timetable structured by subject areas may be more convenient for teachers and the system, it does not represent a time usage that prioritizes learning. Traditional timetables continue to reinforce a content-focused paradigm rather than one centered on building competencies.

We must refrain from piling on new initiatives without relieving educators from tasks that no longer contribute to overall learning goals. Have you reviewed your routines and considered whether

there are any tasks that deprive students from valuable learning opportunities? Who is responsible for decorating the classroom? Who takes attendance in the morning? Who organizes the classroom library or sets up learning centers during breaks? Who ensures that each lab station is prepared for the upcoming class? There are numerous daily tasks that, if delegated to students, would not only ease teachers' workloads, but also empower students to develop life skills that go beyond the curriculum, encompassing a holistic view of human development. 🌍

Darren Spyksma
SCSBC Associate
Executive Director



Photo illustration by Cavan Images / iStock

Inclusion at the Pumpkin Patch

It can be easy for us to respond to new ministry requirements and recommendations through the lens of compliance. Is it possible, however, to take a different view? Could these initiatives be an invitation to our school communities to reflect more deeply on what it means to be learners who follow the way of Jesus?

OVER THE THANKSGIVING WEEKEND, I (Amanda) was with my family at the Coastal Black Pumpkin Patch in my hometown of Black Creek. It is a Broadway family Thanksgiving tradition to walk through the pumpkins and participate in fall festivities such as tractor rides, hay and corn mazes, and warming by a bonfire. After the two-hour drive, all of us females (six of us) and my little son lined up for the bathroom. Standing there, I watched my international student, who is on the autism spectrum, walk past all the females in the lineup and enter the bathroom. I was mildly amused and, as a Board-Certified Behaviour Analyst, very curious about her thought process. Lining up for the bathroom is an unspoken social norm, and as I studied the situation more, our lineup was not a lineup, but several clusters and the clusters of females were chatting with one another. When I asked my student why she did not stand in line, she said, “What line?” Yes, that was what I thought! She

then went ahead to enjoy her time at the pumpkin patch. I was now thinking about clear expectations, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the Accessibility Act, and the Reporting Order and what they all have in common – inclusion.

It can be easy for us to respond to new ministry requirements and recommendations through the lens of compliance. When examined through this lens, the new Accessibility Act and reporting order are just two more hoops to jump through to keep a good standing with the government. It is possible, however, to take a different view. Could these initiatives be an invitation to every member of our school community to reflect more deeply on what it means to be learners who follow the way of Jesus?

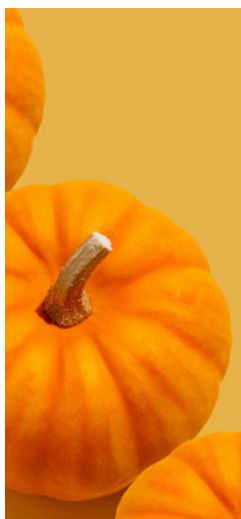
Our Saviour was notorious for drawing near to those on the fringes of society in the ancient Near Eastern world. Even as he made his cosmic mission clear, he came alongside individuals and invited them to join this mission. Through their encounters with Jesus, marginalized people were seen and heard

in new ways. He challenged societal views about children by interacting directly with them. He stated unequivocally that disability is not a punishment for sin and reached out, literally, to touch those who were considered untouchable. But he went much further than this. His healing encounters with the disabled gave them agency and invited them to reveal God in ways that challenged onlookers. All who participated in these interactions went away with a deeper understanding of God's love.¹

Inclusion in the school and classroom is a principle that fosters a supportive and enriching educational environment for all students. It goes beyond physical presence and includes the active involvement of students regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or differences. Inclusive education recognizes students' unique strengths and perspectives in the learning community. It promotes a sense of belonging, equity, and respect. As educators, we play a pivotal role in an inclusive classroom by implementing diverse teaching strategies for the flourishing of students with varied abilities.

Universal Design for Learning is a framework within the tier 1 system of support, which helps us to provide all students with a path into the learning journey.² One way to start with UDL is to make a class profile of the learners' strengths and stretches, list the supports needed, and offer them to everyone. It can be challenging to offer support once a student starts struggling, and it is also exceedingly difficult to remember who needs what specific support and when based on student learning plans or IEPs. Many students are uncomfortable asking for help or lack the skills to do so. If students have not developed resilience, they will disengage once they start to struggle with a task. Helping those students to re-engage takes more effort than proactively planning for supports and offering those supports in the first place. Even more importantly, this approach helps students to build self-awareness and agency.

The Accessibility Act in BC is another tool we can use to create a place of belonging for all members of the learning community. The act aims to identify and implement goals to reduce and eliminate bar-



riers for those entering our school building. It looks at ensuring architectural accessibility, such as automatic door openers, but goes beyond this to look at removing barriers to learning and finding access points for all students at a tier 1 level. Building an Accessibility Plan is an excellent opportunity to get everyone involved and invested in finding ways to include those who are marginalized. This task

has often been left to "special education" staff but should be owned by each member of the school community.

The *K-12 Student Reporting Policy* highlights universal assessment practices and supports. Pages 11 to 17 of this reporting policy connect closely to the UDL framework and suggest ways to support all students through assessment and reporting. At the secondary level, this includes students on a Dogwood Diploma who need targeted supports and those on an Evergreen Certificate who need more individualized supports. The policy begins by stating the importance of "[b]eing transparent about learning intentions," and "[s]etting goals and expectations and clearly communicating them."³ This brings us back to the pumpkin patch and the international student who did not intend to be rude and cut in front of everyone because she did not see the lineup. Is it possible that letting her go ahead is not that big of a deal? If waiting in line is the goal and a big deal, then signals, cues, and expectations are essential supports which should be taught in advance. The new reporting policy invites us to provide both formative and summative assessment that supports the learning of each student.

As Christian schools, we have worked hard to build inclusive learning environments and have put

many resources into this pursuit. As we refine our practice, let's imagine classrooms in which every student has a way into the day's learning. Let's imagine schools in which each community member owns their role in creating a welcoming place. And let's imagine assessment that focuses on learning rather than grades and highlights the strengths and progress of each student. On our journeys toward Christ-like inclusion, here are some questions that can help us reflect on and deepen our practice:

- Are students in my classroom offered multiple ways to learn and show what they have learned, or do they need to struggle before I provide support?
- Are students and staff in our school invited regularly to play an explicit role in seeing and welcoming peers and colleagues who seem isolated or excluded?

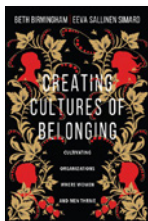
- Does my assessment and reporting highlight student strengths and needs in a way that leads to deeper learning? 🍂

AMANDA BROADWAY & KRISTIE SPYKSMA

SCSBC Associate Directors of Learning

1. Calli Micale & Evan Rosa, "How Disability Reframes Humanity: Three Bible Stories to See Disability as the Site of Divine Revelation" *For the Life of the World* (podcast). Episode 155, October 7, 2023
2. "Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines," CAST, 2023. <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>
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Recommended Resources



Creating Cultures of Belonging: Cultivating Organizations Where Women and Men Thrive
Beth Birmingham & Eeva Sallinen Simard (InterVarsity Press, 2022)

In *Creating Cultures of Belonging: Cultivating Organizations Where Women and Men Thrive*, authors Beth Birmingham and Eeva Sallinen Simard explore the challenging topic of gender diversity in senior leadership positions in faith-based organizations. Through the lens of belonging, they invite organizations to reflect on the impact of culture and policies on the gender composition of leadership teams.

Birmingham and Simard use stories and examples from various organizations to explore some of the barriers to women in senior leadership. They go on to offer specific and helpful guidance that points both women and men to courageous

leadership. For the authors, courageous leaders bring together three qualities: the ability to lead from who they are, the conviction that discomfort is necessary to moving forward, and the discernment to know when they are called to step out and when they are called to step back to centre someone else's voice.

This book is worthwhile reading for anyone who wonders why there are so few women in senior leadership positions. It is equally valuable for leaders who seek to build hiring and retention practices that reflect a theology of belonging and participation.

— Kristie Spyksma



The Residency serves to equip Christian educators with practical professional development with the anticipation that these practices will lead to deeper learning opportunities for students. ■ Over one week, teachers participate in a growth track of their choosing and work with educational coaches and mentors to design learning opportunities catered explicitly to their current practice. ■ We offer small coach-to-participant ratios to ensure all participants leave equipped and confident in introducing or continuing their deeper learning practices in their schools. ■ Participants choose a professional or covenant track depending on their individual or school-based needs. ■ In partnership with academic graduate institutions, participants choose to use their Residency experience as a scaffold to a Master's program and receive program credits. ■ We are committed to working alongside schools, administrators, and teachers to ensure that their professional growth fits the needs of the individual and the strategic priorities of their school. ■ In partnership with SCSBC and CEBC, we are committed to offering professional development that meets the contractual obligations of Christian educators in British Columbia.

Residency
A PLACE FOR CHRISTIAN DEEPER LEARNING





Residency2023



"The coaches were so helpful and encouraging and full of ideas. There was a good balance of getting up for movement and brain breaks."

"Loved the scope of the week and the expansion of understanding that we all experienced. Loved interacting with the coaches, making connections, and getting support."

"Very thankful for the coaches and the wisdom they shared with us. They listened well, answered questions to the best of their ability, and inspired us to consider how our teaching can fit into God's story."



News & Events



God's Sustaining Work—And Ours

Mark your calendars! The annual SCSBC Navigate Conference for Advancement and Finance will be held April 8-9, 2024 at the Coast Tsawwassen Inn in Delta, BC.

Our plenary speaker will be Dr. David Robinson, who teaches Marketplace Theology and directs the Master of Arts in Leadership, Theology and Society (MALTS) program at Regent College in Vancouver. The conference will also offer a variety of workshops and discussion and networking times with fellow attendees.

Registration details and a full conference schedule will be posted in early 2024. This is a key professional development opportunity for advancement and finance staff, administrators, and board members – don't miss it!

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