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## ***The Character of Leadership***

**DAVE LOEWEN**

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## ***Leadership and the Shaping of a Giving Culture***

**CATHY KITS**

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## ***Each, Not All: Variability as the Norm***

**DARREN SPYKSMA**

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## ***Teatime: The Power of Intentional Hosting***

**SARAH EDGAR**

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“The more power one has in **leadership...**

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... the more we see their **character."**

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# The Character of Leadership

*What is the connection between character and leadership? The more power one has in a leadership position, the more clearly we see what they value and how they respond to competition, conflict, and temptation. The more power one has in leadership, the more we see their character.*

**R**ECENTLY, CATHY KITS, Director of Advancement, and I led a school through a strategic planning weekend. The board raised the importance of student character development. They desired the kind students who had the character to discern right from wrong and dare to stand up for what is right. During a break in the retreat, this idea spun into some interesting side conversations where one board member, now retired but who worked with people of “significant means,” commented to the effect of “money exposes character. The more money someone has, the more you can see their character by their decisions around that money and what they do with it.” As someone who thinks a lot about leadership, this made me think deeply about the connection between character and leadership.

As I see it, leadership creates and exposes character. Some challenges we face as leaders push us to discern our values, our views of humanity and creation, and how we want to walk in this world.

The crucible of leadership, where people watch us, often exposes the same thing it shapes. When there are competing values in a decision, such as

when a community member has made a mistake, we are forced to clarify what justice, mercy, and reconciliation look like in the kingdom of God. And with leadership comes power: the power to influence people and organizations in a direction. This power is manifested daily and in many ways in our schools. For example, leaders influence what gets on the agenda at meetings and what doesn’t, who speaks and who doesn’t at meetings, what is communicated to boards and parents and what is left out, who we invest our time with, how we deal with those we disagree with, who gets promoted to key positions, where we spend the school’s money, what we take credit for and who we honour, and how we tell the stories of the successes and failures of our schools. These all put our values on display, often in a very public way. The more power one has in a leadership position, the more we see what they value and how they respond to competition, conflict, and temptation. The more power one has in leadership, the more we see their character.

Amid so many stories of Christian leaders who have publicly experienced failures of character in the past few years, I strongly suggest that our

Christian schools need leaders of high moral fibre who speak the truth, care for the members of their community, admit failure, and seek the good of the other. These leaders avoid the temptation to make themselves look good, are honest and vulnerable with their team and board members, strive to grow in their capacity, and come to school centred on their true purpose—following Jesus and enabling those around them to flourish in that same following.

With that in mind, a few guidelines can help us become godly Christian leaders.

1. *First, we need to be people who pray and read Scripture.* Devotional books are good but are not the same as reading the Bible. Listening to Christian radio can be good, but it is not the same as reading the Word of God. In seasons where this did not come easily for me, I had to find different ways into prayer and reading the Bible. Thankfully, we have many other options for how to engage with Scripture, such as great apps focusing on prayer and Bible reading (Lectio 365 is one of my favourites), a rich history of the written prayers of the saints who often give us language for what we oft cannot express ourselves, varied translations and paraphrases of the Bible, and friends who also love Jesus. Currently, I'm taking Biblical Scholarship and Theology courses, allowing me to engage more deeply with Scripture. We need to make time for prayer and reading Scripture to be continually well-formed.

2. *Secondly, we benefit from flattened leadership structures.* These do two things: 1) They help minimize the temptation to foster a cult of personality in our schools where the leader's charisma

is more important than their character. 2) They provide more voices at the table, more people who discern what is right, true, and beautiful in each moment, and more people who ensure that budgets, human resources, and administration

time aligns with the school's mission and vision rather than meeting personal aspirations of careerism, esteem, or self-satisfaction.

3. *Thirdly, we benefit from intentional accountability practices to protect our integrity.* This includes ensuring there is another leader other than the head of school at board meetings, having any expenses incurred signed off by someone who can do so without the influence of the spender, allowing others to present on school successes other than the head of school, and finally, having a mentor or critical

friend who knows our strengths and weaknesses and has permission to nudge us when the latter starts to appear again.

What our schools desperately need (and our students need to see) is leaders of great character who make decisions and establish systems that cause flourishing and that live on beyond their specific leadership season. These are leaders who are leading for others. You might call them self-sacrificial leaders, or you might call them leaders like Jesus.

In 2024, may we follow Jesus so passionately that His love for others inspires us to lead for others. May the character of our leadership continually grow towards being aligned with the character of Christ. 🙏

**DAVE LOEWEN**

*SCSBC Executive Director*



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# Leadership and the Shaping of a Giving Culture

**T**HE FLOURISHING OF CHRISTIAN schools in BC is a testament to the dedicated and visionary work of school leaders and boards. As a result of your leadership, our Christian schools are equipping students to impact their communities positively and be a faithful presence in the world.

Beyond academic and spiritual development, leadership extends to your school's long-term financial sustainability. This sustainability includes an often-overlooked aspect of leadership: its pivotal role in your school's giving program. A robust leadership-driven approach to giving ensures that fundraising aligns with your school's mission and vision, core values, and community aspirations embedded in your strategic plan.

In this article, we will explore:

1. the role of the board and school leadership in developing a giving plan,
2. establishing a culture of giving in the school, and
3. leading by example.

Does your school's current giving program align with your school's mission, vision, and core values? Do you have a long-term plan for giving that will move the school's mission forward, or are your fundraising efforts focused simply on meeting

current needs? While unexpected situations may arise, the "current needs approach" does not inspire people to become life-long donors. Consider your giving experiences: what inspires you to give and continue giving to an organization? Do you want to know where they're going and how your giving will move their mission forward? A well-thought-out plan rooted in your school's mission, vision, and values helps inspire donors to partner with you long-term.

Beyond the relationship you build with donors, a comprehensive plan will lead<sup>12</sup> to impactful change and help ensure your school's financial sustainability. While your school may have staff who carry out the giving program, setting the giving priorities rests with school leaders. Owning and guiding the giving program sends a powerful message that you are invested in the school's future. And, by giving your community a vision for the impact your school desires to have on those you serve, you are fostering the beginning of a culture of generous giving. What strategic priorities will your school have for the next 1-10 years that will only be accomplished through giving?

Establishing a forward-looking plan for giving is critical. It is also essential to evaluate your fundraising approaches. How is your school currently fundraising? Are you engaging primarily in a transactional approach to giving, relying on events

and product sales that are limited in their ability to raise real money for the school? While “events can be great entry points to invite people in, they are a one-time deal, lacking in actual relational development.”<sup>1</sup> Consider whether by virtue of multiple small asks throughout the year, you are in danger of “turning people into wallets.”<sup>2</sup>

If you haven’t already, I encourage you to shift the focus from a transactional approach to a transformational one. A giving program rooted in authentic connection and mutual understanding fosters a sense of partnership and shared purpose. By nurturing giving relationships, you will establish a sustainable foundation of support where donors are not merely contributors to an immediate need but are valued members of a community dedicated to the growth and flourishing of Christian education. This transcends one-time donations, creating enduring partnerships: donors become stakeholders in the school’s journey, who will enrich your student’s educational experience as you fulfil your mission. This approach will not only grow giving significantly over time and ensure a flourishing and sustainable future, but just as important, it demonstrates your commitment to care for and steward people in a God-honouring way.

To ensure your ownership and guidance reflect servant leadership, leaders must actively participate in the giving program. This will set the tone for the entire school community and demonstrate a dedication to the values of generosity and support. It is also vitally important that you commit to giving first, to be the lead donors. When the leadership team is visibly engaged, contributing meaningfully to the giving program, it inspires confidence in the

school and fosters strong community support and engagement.

Principals and heads of schools need to be involved on a deeper level, assisting with developing a prospect list, meeting with current and prospective donors to share the school’s plan, inviting them to give, and nurturing these relationships moving forward. Board members may also be involved at this level but are also highly effective in the role of thanking donors. A phone call, made as soon as possible after a gift is received, is the most important thanking you can do and will set you apart from most other organizations. This shows true appreciation for the donor and their gift. One philanthropist I met recently remembers the one organization who thanked her personally after every gift. She still gives to that organization.

When someone makes a gift to your school it reflects a desire to see you faithfully living out your mission and vision. As school leaders, you are uniquely positioned to create a longing for the school’s envisioned future through visionary planning that invites donors into a space where they are known as authentic and valued partners in your school’s story. By championing the giving program, you set an example for the entire community, inspiring them to embrace giving as an integral part of your school’s culture and heritage. 🌍

**CATHY KITS**

*SCSBC Director of Advancement*

1. Zach Clark, Development and Leadership Coaching, “Growing a Culture of Giving”
2. Peter Harris & Rod Wilson, *Keeping Faith in Fund-raising* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2016)

***By nurturing giving  
relationships, you  
will establish  
a sustainable  
foundation of  
support where  
donors are not  
merely contributors  
to an immediate  
need but are valued  
members of a  
community...***







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This year the Residency will be offering four courses: **Project-Based Learning**, **Teaching for Transformation**, **Christian Deeper Learning: Worldview** and **LOP Support: Teaching Christianly IOI**. Each of the courses feature a low coach-to-participant ratio. Participants will leave with a practical understanding of a deeper learning framework that can be immediately incorporated into their learning practice.

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Registration is now open for August 19-23, 2024.

Visit [residency.scsbc.net](https://residency.scsbc.net) for more information

Contact us: [residency@scsbc.ca](mailto:residency@scsbc.ca)



PROJECT-  
BASED  
LEARNING

CHRISTIAN  
DEEPER  
LEARNING:  
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TEACHING  
FOR TRANS-  
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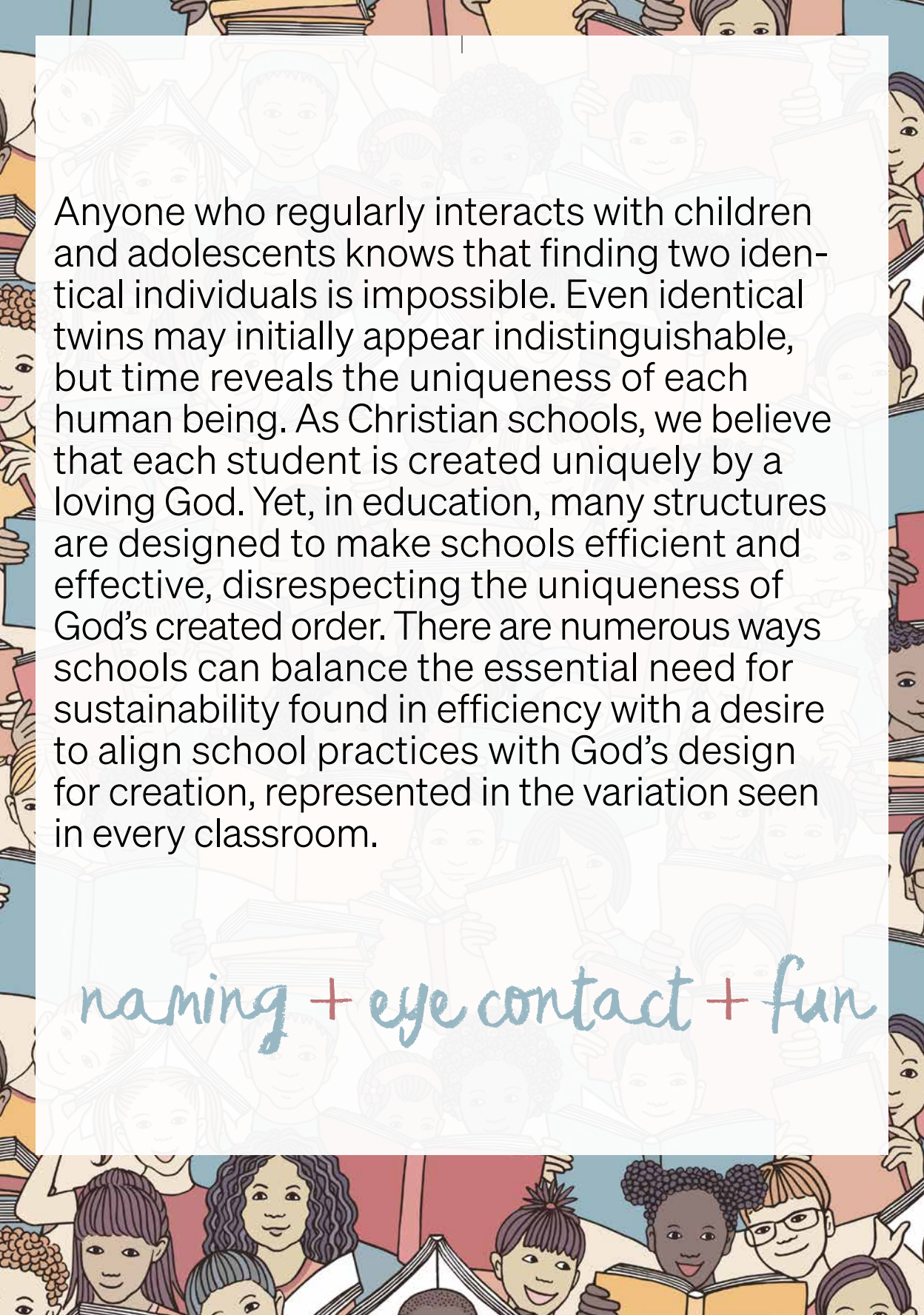


## Partners



Institute for  
Christian Studies



The background of the entire page is a colorful illustration of a large group of diverse children of various ethnicities and ages. Many of the children are holding open books, suggesting a classroom or library setting. The illustration is rendered in a soft, painterly style with a warm color palette. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular area in the center of the image.

Anyone who regularly interacts with children and adolescents knows that finding two identical individuals is impossible. Even identical twins may initially appear indistinguishable, but time reveals the uniqueness of each human being. As Christian schools, we believe that each student is created uniquely by a loving God. Yet, in education, many structures are designed to make schools efficient and effective, disrespecting the uniqueness of God's created order. There are numerous ways schools can balance the essential need for sustainability found in efficiency with a desire to align school practices with God's design for creation, represented in the variation seen in every classroom.

*naming + eye contact + fun*





Darren Spyksma

# Each, Not All

## Variability as the Norm

**A**s a staff team at Nanaimo Christian School, we lived by the saying, “You don’t just teach grade 2; you teach primary,” and “You don’t just teach grade 6; you teach middle school.” The message was that each teacher should know every child’s name in their division. It was acknowledged that a student might not connect with their classroom teacher, but they could find a connection with other adults in the division. As the administrator, that meant I needed to know the names of all the students

in the classrooms from kindergarten to grade 8. Memorizing hundreds of names was not easy for me, but if I believed that each student was a unique image-bearer of Christ, it was the least I could do. I needed a plan to make this happen.

Naming (or at least trying to) each child as they came off the bus during daily parking lot duty was a start, but instituting “Sour Key Fridays” made the difference. As a teaching administrator in middle school, naming middle school students was not the

problem. Any student in K-5 could find me after school on Friday for a candy. I had to give them two candies if I could not immediately name them. If I was going to prevent making candy a personal budget item, I needed to learn names. I knew it was having the desired effect when, with a laugh, a mom of identical twins let me know that they were late for school on a Friday because the students had to ensure that their wardrobe was identical to try and secure double the candies.

= relational connection



## Each, Not All: Variability as the Norm

It is easy for a teacher to diagnose learning challenges with phrases such as “This student reads below grade level.” Framing learning challenges as connections to learner identity impose a system on a learner rather than ensuring that the system adjusts to meet the learner’s needs. A learner-oriented learning environment takes “reads below grade

level” and does the hard work of acknowledging that the barrier is not in the student’s identity but in the design. Proactive planning ensures that the text is not too difficult for the student to access, using generative AI to adjust non-fiction texts to meet students’ reading level. Does using a single text, accessed in a single way, create a learning environment that

reflects God’s created variability in His image-bearers?

Past performance is often said to be the best indication of future performance. Echoes of this sentiment often become part of student conversations on secondary campuses, explaining away learning challenges with phrases like “they had low grades in science last year.” When learning design and

re-storying challenge  
+ proactive planning





## Each, Not All: Variability as the Norm

educator attitude see the student as the limiting factor, secondary students often meet expectations. What if we start secondary learning conversations with the idea that the barrier is found in the design? We increase our scaffolding of content and skills and use tools like interest surveys to learn more about the learner. We commit to using pre-assessments

to ensure that we are starting with student ability, not a general expectation implying that every student should be learning at the same rate at the same time.

Christian schools believe in a God who creates, a God who loves, and a God who is revealed in the interdependence, resilience, and variation of creation. As Christian schools, we must continue pur-

suing structures that reflect this reality. Rather than asking unique image-bearers to conform to a model built for the average student, education structures should be adaptable to meet the needs of each unique learner. 🌈

**Darren Spyksma**

SCSBC Associate  
Executive Director

= vibrant learning environments  
for each student



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# Teatime

## The Power of Intentional Hosting

*Is your school facilitating relational activities like teatime to encourage conversations among your domestic and international students? No matter the time or place, sharing is crucial for building trust and fostering a sense of belonging in your school community.*

**T**HE POWER OF A STORY has the potential to offer more insight and depth on a topic rather than a direct explanation. We find Jesus' teachings more relatable when reading Biblical parables. It is ingrained in us that we should be hospitable and welcoming as part of a church community, and we are taught how to "seek to show" hospitality while avoiding grumbling in alignment with our calling as followers of Jesus. As such, I would like to explore the diverse and unique ways we host our international students in our schools.

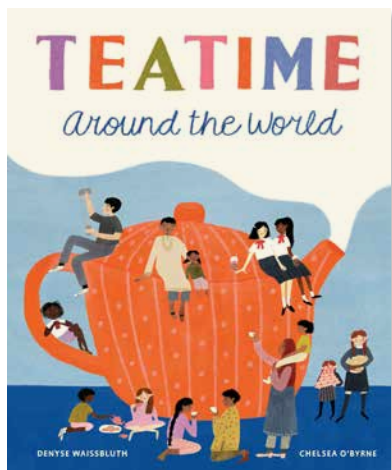
International families often express gratitude and well wishes by sharing or gifting tea or coffee from their hometowns, prefectures, or regions. It is a way of demonstrating appreciation for supporting their children throughout the year. Just as they continue to thank us for the work they see in our Christian schools, we can explore new ways of hosting to demonstrate our gratitude as we come together.

The children's book *Teatime Around the World* by Denyse Waissbluth, provides insight into the different approaches to having tea in at least 25 countries. Poured over yak butter or as thick as soup, some of the simplest practices can serve as important reminders of the commonalities rather

than the differences. The act of having tea can be simple or complex, but it centres around the intentionality of the host. I take great delight in hosting, which requires a certain level of responsibility and the appropriate time to do it well.

I often find myself favouring the rich flavours of a bold chai tea, which boasts eleven ingredients with comforting aromatics and robust notes of cardamom, cloves, and chicory root. Elevating my beverage to enrich the flavours, I experiment by combining almond milk, leftover coffee, and honey. Sometimes it works; sometimes, it does not. The full-body flavour is unique every time. Comparatively, as international coordinators, we bring diversity to our student body and regularly adapt and develop opportunities to facilitate new hosting potential. We are seeking to encourage our students with whole-person experiences in mind. As we learn, we share and celebrate what we discover while building stronger and fulfilling programs.

When determining the perfect tea blend, one must first consider purpose, flavour profiles, steeping process, setting, and company. Similarly, finding a good *blend* for your program requires careful consideration and proper planning. Our International Program and Homestay Coordinators, ELL special-



ists, and EAs, meet quarterly to discuss common trends, concerns, funding models, and resources. As early as the previous October, we are planning and developing immersive programs for new and returning students. Considering “the size of a gathering shapes what you will get out of people when you bring them together,”<sup>1</sup> we must also be mindful of the fiscal responsibilities when we provide the scaffolding students need to succeed in the Canadian education system. We must consider balancing our resources, spaces, and services with the composition of each grade for a balanced class. It is also crucial to find joy in what we create, even when the finances are a significant part of the conversation, while often working as core teams. As a larger group, we look at our common goals and then return to our school to blend the overarching goals with the purpose and vision reflected in our school cultures. This repetitive practice leads to deeper questions and vision planning at our respective institutions—likely over a stronger cup of coffee.

Just as your favourite tea blend often requires you to explore beyond your comfort zone, so does building diverse international programs; both often

require guidance (especially after you have burnt your third bitter cup or worked with the wrong agent). I see the various aspects of thoughtful and intentional programming after seeing how our schools’ coordinators and ELL teachers host students. From admissions to course selection, agent to family relations, counselling to homestay services, intercultural to academic advising, and after-school clubs to Bible studies, we host with robust and distinctive *flavours*. Staff and students work together to support minorities and Indigenous departments, alongside intercultural departments. Therefore, we should be considering ways to build more connections moving forward. What is the right *blend* for each school as well as the network of Christian schools? How can we work together to achieve a healthier system?

At the classroom level, relational activities like teatime can be utilized to make conversations more accessible for domestic and international students alike. No matter the time or place, sharing is crucial for building trust and fostering a sense of belonging within the constructs of a safe space. While in Japan, I enjoyed watching how incredibly engaged Canadian students were when participating in a traditional tea ceremony club and a karate club at our hosting sister schools, Miyagi Gakuin

1. Parker, Priya. *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters*. Penguin Books, 2018.





and Hyogo Kokusai. Our students are encouraged to be vulnerable and open while learning about another culture with hands-on activities. They see how activities can require cultural knowledge, patience, and practice. In general, our students have transformative experiences based on how we create events and invite members to gatherings of any size.

Within ELL programming, we adapt resources while fostering accessibility for our students with Universal Design for Learning in mind. Several of our tools and awareness activities are utilized in mainstream classes as teachers see the everyday needs and embrace the ways that, as Priya Parker mentions in *The Art of Gathering*, demonstrate that “diversity is potentiality that needs to be activated” rather than “just be[ing] there” in the classroom. After careful and deliberate consideration, we invite students to recognize that they are part of a system. No matter the location, the activity must reflect sincerity and vulnerability, so the participants know they are valued and feel both seen and heard while developing trust within the group.

In closing, the power of story is enriching as we broaden our perspectives. Traditional Lunar New Year (February 10) and Spring Festival (February

10–20) are upon us, and some of our students will be celebrating with family and friends from countries such as South Korea, Vietnam, and China; others will be apart from their families, studying abroad, while trying to join the festivities back home. For broader student-body engagement, international coordinators and ELL staff are hosting students and showing appreciation for cultural diversity by hosting Lunar New Year meals, chapels, and other awareness activities. When we learn more about different cultures, we inherently become better hosts, creating a stronger school culture. 🌍

**SARAH EDGAR**

*Interim SCSBC International  
Student Program Coordinator*

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school students,  
ors, board members,  
taff, and alumni  
ngs (Australian &  
pilots)



# GUIDING SCHOOLS TO FLOURISH

Leadership Conference | 28 October 2023

*with* LYNN SWANER

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO ATTENDED our Annual Leadership Conference this past fall. Attendance was great with a good mix of school administrators and board members. This was our first year hosting the conference at TWU and, based on the feedback, we will do the same next year.

Lynn Swaner served as the keynote speaker and presented research data on flourishing Christian schools. This struck a chord with participants as her follow-up workshop was well attended. Other workshops focused on financial management, Ministry of Education trends and initiatives presented by FISA, and best practices for boards in

working with heads of school. The SCSBC annual general meeting was held during this conference and attempted to model best practices in that area as well.

Next year we are planning to strengthen both the offerings and the focus of the day. We plan to offer an increased number of workshops for school leaders and board members and are in the process of securing the date and the keynote for next year.

Please plan on attending on 26 October 2024. It promises to be worth your time (and travel)! 🌟

**DAVE LOEWEN**



# GUIDING SCHOOLS TO FLOURISH

Leadership Conference | 28 October 2023

*with* LYNN SWANER







# News & Events

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: DR. DAVID S. ROBINSON, REGENT COLLEGE



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