



In-Psyghts

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President's Message:

Message from the President

Dear Colleagues,

In this unprecedented time, BCASP members have to do what many others are doing, adapting service delivery so that the needs of students are met, while following the directives from the BC Public Health Officer, CDC and policies and protocols developed within their own districts. It is a great deal to juggle and balance in our already demanding job. I am grateful to everyone who has reached out for consultation and shared information as our knowledge has grown over this time.

Some protocols and suggestions may change this year to stay up to date with standards and evolving information. I appreciate how much more difficult the start-up in schools has been this year, and the impact this has on School Psychologists. It also adds another layer of complexity that, while each of us is working within a school district within BC, our directives and resources vary from district to district.

The information provided to our membership in the May COVID-19 Communication (posted for members on our website) stands and the BCASP Executive encourages you to review it. I also want to acknowledge that some of the questions being asked right now do not have specific answers. Our membership has a depth of knowledge and decision-making skills to guide practice around the complexities imposed by this pandemic. It is sometimes important to err on the side of caution then to forge ahead when ethics or practice decisions could be compromised. Ultimately individuals are responsible for the decisions they make during this time.

This newsletter is designed to help address some of the questions and concerns that have arisen during this pandemic. Please take the time to read the various sections and follow up if you have any questions.

While many things have changed with the back to school start-up this fall, I take comfort in things that are constants. As a collective group of school psychologists, BCASP has always embodied a feeling of a team in that we are all in this work together. This has never been more true than in our current time. I want to thank those of you who have reached out with questions, and to those who have shared protocols and procedures that are being established for safety but are also allowing the integrity of our work to continue.

Lastly, I am thankful for the work and advocacy each of you are doing at your

The BCASP Executive

President: Alyssa Bollans

Past President: Doug Agar

Vice President: Barbara Nichols

Secretary-Treasurer: Melanie Baerg

Membership Secretary: Stacey Kemp

Chair, Ethics and Professional Conduct: Emily Baker

Director of Communications: Gregory Pearce

Member at Large: Kim Wolff

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district level, on behalf of the students to ensure our most vulnerable learners are identified and their needs are met. We truly are in this together and I continue to be thankful for our amazing members who make BCASP so special. 2020-21 is going to be a complex school year for all of us and I want to encourage you to take care of yourselves.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our online AGM in November! Date and technology needs will follow shortly.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Bollans

Past President Report

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all back to another school year—albeit it is dramatically different than our typical annual return. Nonetheless, we will by necessity adjust to our “new normal.” Part of this readjustment will be BCASP’s use of a virtual format of our AGM on December 8, 2020. However, midst all of this change will be our annual election of Executive positions. The Call for Nominations has already been sent out to the membership and I would strongly encourage anyone who is interested to put their name forward prior to the October 29, 2020 deadline. Candidates will be required to submit a brief written position platform outlining their views on why they feel they are suitable for the position and what they would hope to accomplish. These position platforms will then be distributed to membership as a means of introduction and ballots will be distributed after the nomination deadline.

Take care and be safe,

Doug Agar

Vice President and Conference Committee

Dear Colleagues:

Greetings from my new/old community and workplace: Kamloops. It was an interesting move, starting in COVID-intense spring. I am going to miss Prince George a lot, especially – believe it or not – the winters. The place is alive with winter fun and adventure.

Now we’re back to work; many of us eagerly so. As a colleague and an executive member, I have received many questions about parameters for one-on-one assessments. Each district has its unique circumstances. For example, working in Prince George at the end of the last school year, my colleagues (primarily Olivia Jaswal) produced an extensively referenced and detailed safety plan which included guidelines from the PHO, BC CDC, WorkSafeBC, as well as guidelines for both education and health professionals. It was a good starting point for this year’s start-

up.

But not all districts are asking its employee groups to submit a plan; some are worked out at the district level and given to its employees. And some are still in progress.

In Kamloops, we have worked with our District Principal on a plan for what we need to do our job safely. We have also made an addition to our informed consent discussion guide for parents that addresses safety measures for their child and others during assessment, as well as limits to confidentiality should the Public Health Office need information for contact tracing.

My personal experience is that I am hyper-aware of being in contact with thousands of people per week while I'm doing file reviews and attending school-based team meetings. My safety measures are more stringent than school-based personnel because I am outside the learning groups and could potentially be a "vector" or "spreader" of COVID. I wear a mask in all schools. I wash my hands and I sanitize all spots I work in. I make a point of observing the capacity limits of various rooms such as the office and copier rooms. Some schools are vigilant about distancing and sanitizing; some are not. I sometimes have to ask people to "please let me keep my distance" when they are walking with me or popping in to use the phone. I am informing my schools that one-on-one assessment will occur when I have a proper barrier (already in some schools; we received our own recently), adequate ventilation and means for sanitizing. In the meantime, I'm compiling priority assessment lists, contacting case managers and families, and providing support and consultation for school-based interventions.

From the Conference Committee:

We all feel the loss of our collegial and personal connections that our annual conference provides. In an attempt to bring that back to our members at some level – as well as providing continuing professional development hours – we are planning some presentation offerings. The first of which will be a live webcast in early November on the topic of Ethics During COVID. Details will follow.

As always, we are happy to receive your suggestions with regard to topics, themes, and specific presenters - so please email us at conference@bcasp.ca

My best in health, collegiality and productivity,

Barbara Nichols

Ethics and Professional Conduct Chair

COVID-19 & School Psychology: Ethics Considerations

The global pandemic and resulting school closures have created ethical concerns with regard to school psychology assessments and rightly so, as our reactions could result in over or under-identification. It is to be expected that students are below

what we would normally expect at this point in the school year. This is of particular concern for students who may be candidates for a possible learning disability diagnosis as school psychologists must rule out *access to education* as a primary factor. Additionally, inequity issues such as access to education amongst low social-economic families are magnified. At such a time, the role of intervention and data collection becomes even more vital in our decision making for and interpretation of assessments. Therefore, a trial period of a class-wide intervention may be required prior to formal assessments to better determine appropriate candidates. While challenging, this also presents an opportunity for school psychologists to display a broader skillset. School psychologists are in an excellent position to support data collection for progress monitoring and district screeners as well as promoting and supporting evidence-based interventions. Utilizing current research to implement the most effective and efficient instruction will be essential for all students and particularly for those at risk for learning challenges. In light of this, there are several specific considerations you may wish to consider with your colleagues when approaching school psychology assessments and services this year.

- amend your consent form to include health and safety procedures and any additional risks associated with COVID-19 and then pass on these amendments for district approval
- amend your background interview to inquire what learning at home was like for your student in order to better determine the limits of access to education
- review data prior to COVID-19 including district screeners, report cards and intervention reports to determine patterns over time
- if a district-wide screener is currently not in place advocate for the implementation of a screener to better track and determine appropriate assessments
- if possible, support implementation of a trial class-wide intervention to better determine appropriate assessments for this school year
- prioritize CLBC update assessments until a trial intervention period can be completed for possible learning disability assessments
- support implementation of targeted tier 2/3 interventions to better determine appropriate assessments
- support progress monitoring during class-wide and tier 2/3 interventions to help provide data for assessment decision making
- if you are currently not a member of your school-based teams this may be an opportunity to provide consultation for interventions and data collection for students before and after school psych assessments
- consider a standard emotional-behavioural inventory in your assessments to better determine the emotional impact of the pandemic
- consider the confidence interval in your interpretation and consider a wider confidence interval than typically used

Emily Baker
Ethics Chair

Membership Secretary/Privacy Officer

It has been an interesting time for everyone in the age of COVID-19 and membership is no different. The new members that completed their studies in the spring were fortunate that they had completed their 1200-hour internship or were very close to completing so they were able to gather enough hours to graduate. COVID-19 will certainly continue to challenge interns and their supervisors this year as we all find new ways to do our jobs and work for what is in the best interest of children.

I have been working on updating the membership application forms to make them easier to use and to reflect the new application fees.

I will be presenting all the new members for the year at the AGM so I hope to 'see' you there.

Stacey Kemp

Secretary Treasurer

When I took on the role of Secretary Treasurer in November of 2019, I knew I had a lot to learn. 10 months later, I can say that my learning curve has been more like a roller-coaster, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic arrived on the scene. I would like to thank the Executive members for their patience with me and my many questions over the past few months as I have transitioned into the role. I have navigated membership list updates, fee payments, commercial banking, our organization's insurance renewal and more, all from my little community in Cariboo. I would also like to thank you, our members, for your patience as I have been figuring out what to do and adjusting for the hiccups that have been created by the pandemic. I have learned a lot, and will continue to learn, while aiming to address needs and tackle challenges as they arise.

While I know we are living with a degree of uncertainty, both as a group of professionals and individually in the various roles that we play in our lives, I feel that we are in a position to help shape what our futures hold through taking action where we can and through being actively engaged in what lights us up. For me, that means working on my professional passion project, which involves fostering a science-informed understanding of reading development in BC education, and enjoying my local area in a variety of ways with my family. I really am looking forward to the professional development opportunities we have on the horizon and to collaborating with our members, even if just virtually, so that we can all help to light each other up.

Cheers,

Melanie Baerg

Director of Communications

Hello Everyone! Welcome back to an ever-evolving school year. As many of you, I have returned to a school system where we are being very strict with the rules of engagement in all schools and buildings. I am very happy to have Barb back in the district as we are down two psychologists and it is great to have someone who already knows the lay of the land so to speak.

As Barb noted above, we are diligently working on developing our assessment lists with a focus on those students who are potentially CLBC eligible. The conversation has also been around elementary students and we have been very up front with our schools and supported by our district principal who agrees that the majority of students have missed 6-7 months of school. Given this amount of missed schooling, it is our belief that assessing elementary students or any student for a new LD diagnosis would not be appropriate. In our discussions we have decided that the results of any level B assessment would be invalid unless the student has continued to attend. This has made for some interesting conversations with schools that I am sure will continue.

As for safety procedures, we are working on developing a strategy. One piece that will occur is the purchasing of many more pencils that the students can keep instead of reusing them. We are also looking at portable screens and taking our own sanitizing sprays with us to wipe down our equipment after an assessment. We are also pushing for a set space in schools for assessment that have adequate ventilation instead of assessing in the proverbial book room or other closet type location.

For me one positive that arises from this situation is the opportunity to alter our service delivery. I am seeing this current situation as a means to really support RTI prior to assessment and to be more involved with consulting on interventions. This is a great opportunity to help schools see how intervening on a regular basis before referral is more appropriate than a level B to get a level C (maybe you have heard that one before).

Overall, we are all working on staying safe and healthy. Everyone one of us needs to be very aware of our own health and safety which includes mental health. This can be a very stressful time in our lives and in those of schools and students meaning we have to be more diligent in protecting ourselves. Make sure you are self-checking for stress and other types of issues such as anxiety as you do not want that to become typical (sorry, that's the therapist coming out☺).

On another note, as your BCASP executive, we have been alive to your suggestions and are taking the initiative to move us forward, which includes the means for promoting our brand as an organization of professionals and connecting us on social media.

As you know there have been issues with the website mainly due to the choice of platform at this time, we have outgrown our past provider's capability. As we move

forward, we have employed a new web designer who is also a graphic designer and together we are developing a much more user-friendly platform. This new platform will enable us to use more technology within our home page allowing for video sharing, live streaming conferences and events, and to have an embedded email program that will be more efficient for our membership.

I'm excited as we are rolling this out - our first major change is expected to take place November 3, 2020 and I am looking forward to the future changes to help our organization be more prominent in the community. Please check us out.

Overall, we need to be taking care of ourselves so that we can all be healthy and be strong after this pandemic is over and we can come together for another Conference. On that note I wish you all an excellent year and hope to see you next year in person and this year online for the AGM.

Greg Pearce

Member At Large

Hello BCASP colleagues.

As Member-At-Large, I was tasked with formalizing BCASP's Quality Assurance Program for continuing competency requirements for members (BCASP Bylaws and Constitution Section 2.3). "Members must actively participate and engage in activities which maintain, expand and update their professional skills. This requirement is met by completing at least 25 hours of professional development each year to promote a high practice standard among members."

We have adopted a format similar to that of the College of Psychologists of British Columbia. The 25 hours of continuing competency activities are divided among three categories: 1) *Direct Participation in Formal Programs* (such as attending a conference), 2) *Self-Study* (online courses, journal reading), and 3) *Structured Interactive Activities* (peer consultation). Within these 3 categories, a minimum of 5 hours must be in the area of ethics. Additionally, BCASP members will complete a self-care assessment of their choosing annually.

The program will be discussed at our AGM and will be implemented in 2021. I hope all members will be able to join our online presentation as we walk through the program and the requirements for documentation.

Kim Wolff
