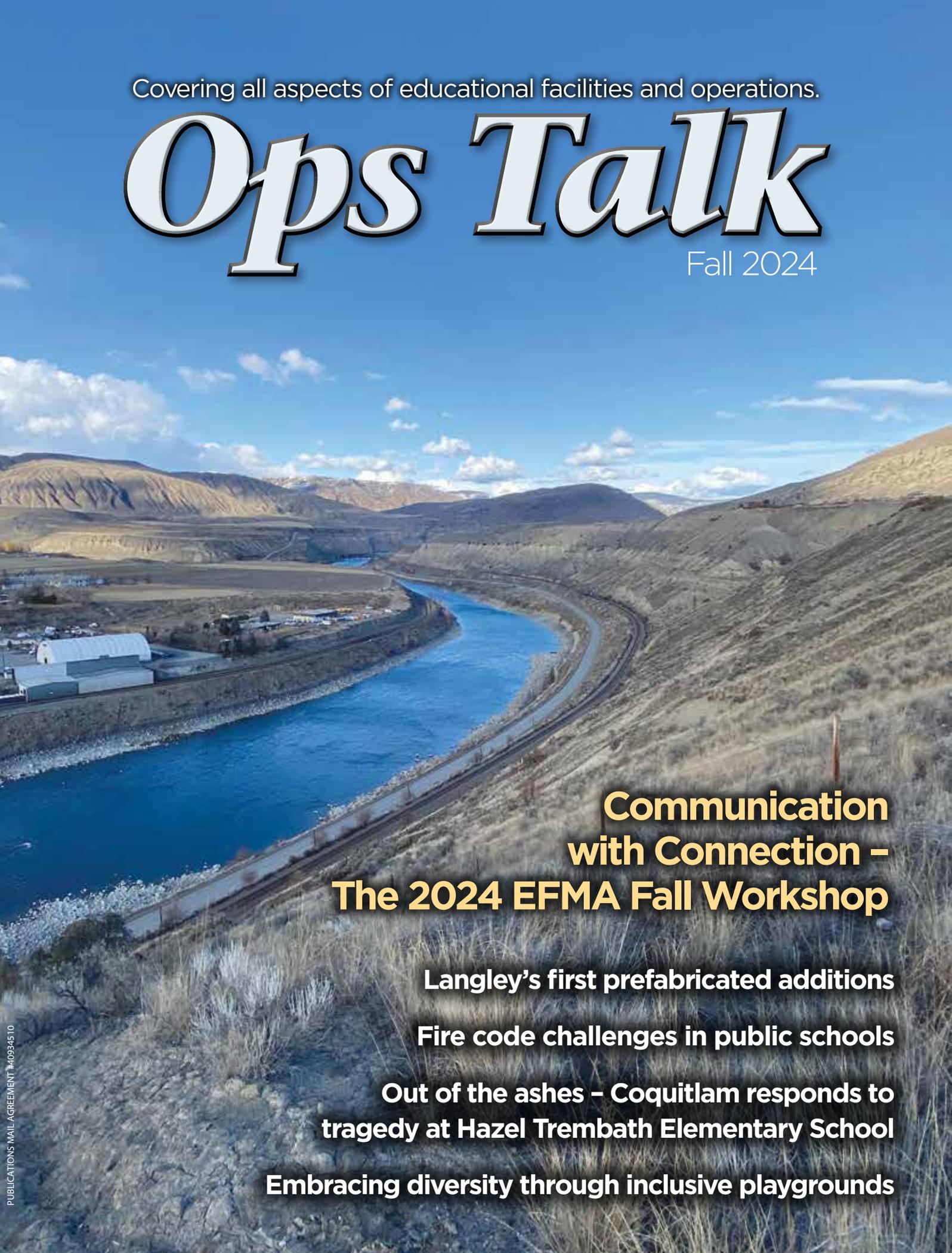


Covering all aspects of educational facilities and operations.

# Ops Talk

Fall 2024



## Communication with Connection – The 2024 EFMA Fall Workshop

**Langley's first prefabricated additions**

**Fire code challenges in public schools**

**Out of the ashes – Coquitlam responds to  
tragedy at Hazel Trembath Elementary School**

**Embracing diversity through inclusive playgrounds**



# Return-It School Program is Back From Summer Break!

Return-It School is the free beverage container recycling program offered by Return-It. Return-It is the not-for-profit product steward that makes recycling in BC easier for everyone. The Return-It system diverts used beverage containers from the landfill and makes sure they are properly recycled. You probably know us best through your local Return-It depot.

By participating in BC's **FREE Return-It School program**, you get access to our online Teacher's Dashboard with exclusive educational resources and fundraising tips, our online activity book as well as free recycling bins for your school. Your school keeps all the deposit refunds from recycling, so you can use the program to supplement your school's fundraising efforts. We want to help students learn how to do their part to help keep the planet green by recycling their beverage containers and more.



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### Return-It School Online Activity Book

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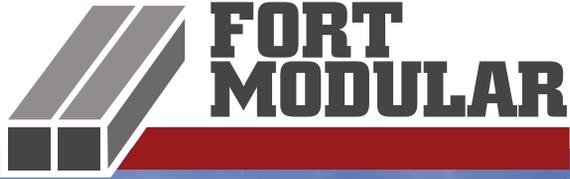


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## ON THE COVER

With fall approaching and the weather getting colder, leaves turn colour and begin their slow dance to the ground. The Thompson River flows past School District 74 (Gold Trail) operations centre. This view never changes unless snow falls, covering the desert and sage. For short periods during winter, the temperatures can dip to -30C, and they can hit the mid- to high-40sC during summer.



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# MESSAGE FROM THE EFMA PRESIDENT

## Travis Elwood



Its September as I write this and hope this message finds everyone in a positive frame of mind as we begin another school year. As we reflect on the recent months, I want to extend my sincere congratulations to each of you and your teams for the incredible work accomplished across departments and districts. Whether it was summer cleaning, playground work, or a construction project, the grand opening in September was the same for everyone. Now we all are transitioning into a phase of routine maintenance around students and teaching staff in an effort to be as invisible as possible. All this work is vital

to ensure the longevity and efficiency of our collective efforts to provide learning environments that we are proud of.

I would also like to take a moment to thank the EFMA Executive team for their unwavering dedication. Their efforts in organizing more learning opportunities, particularly through the upcoming workshops, are invaluable. These workshops will provide vital tools and insights to keep us all at the cutting edge of operations and maintenance excellence.

EFMA remains committed to fostering the strong partnership between ministry staff and those working within school districts. Together, we share the same mission: ensuring that our schools are safe, functional, and supportive environments for students and staff alike. This collaboration is crucial as we continue to navigate the evolving needs of our education system and its facilities.

As we move forward, I encourage each of you to not only set personal and departmental goals for the months ahead but also to take time to celebrate the hard work and dedication of your teams. Recognizing and acknowledging your staff's accomplishments and efforts helps foster an environment of motivation and pride.

Facing challenges together as a group is always more effective than facing them alone. I urge you to make the most of the opportunities that EFMA provides to build relationships, share knowledge, and support one another. Our strength lies in the community we've built, and together, we can overcome any challenge that comes our way. Coming up there will be great opportunities for this at Zone meetings, workshops, and the EFMA conference in June.

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to excellence. I look forward to seeing the strides we will make together in the coming months. ■

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# Happy retirement | 2024

---

*A huge congratulations and best wishes to our  
EFMA members retiring this year!*

**Ian Heselgrave SD#71 Comox Valley**

**Brian Hackwood SD#68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith**

*Be healthy, happy, and adventurous*

## Thank you Zone Chairs

---

We are sincerely pleased to acknowledge the work and dedication of our EFMA Zone Representatives. They are simply the first line of defense and the last line of offense for our Association when it comes to working closely with all our members. Their efforts to organize and directly support EFMA Facility Managers around the province of British Columbia is not only appreciated but fundamental to ensure members have the contact and help when needed.

### EFMA Zone Chairs

**Zone 1 David Reid, SD#51 Boundary**

**Zone 2 Steve Owen, SD#67 Okanagan-Skaha**

**Zone 3 Greg Porter, SD#82 Coast Mountain**

**Zone 4 Vacant**

**Zone 5 Jason Decksheimer, SD#72 Campbell River**

**Justin Taylor, SD#68 Nanaimo**

**Zone 6 Matt Lindgren, SD#59 Peace River South**



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# EFMABC FACILITIES LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

## 2024 FALL WORKSHOP

### *Communication with Connection*



In the spring of 2024, EFMA launched our Facilities Leadership Series Education Program for the first two modules of the five-module series. On March 24 and 25, 2024 we concluded the final module of the series at the Tsawwassen Coast Inn in Tsawwassen, B.C.

A huge thank you to the 50 facilities managers who travelled many kilometres and spent two important workdays to attend and participate in this fall workshop. Our workshop theme, Communication with Connection, was created to not only highlight the importance of everyday communication that is critical in every day of our work life but it was most important that we catered our program to include real strategies and formulas for success.

A much deserved thanks to our Education Committee with Jim McFadden, Alan Blohm, and Louie Giroto for listening to and understanding what our members asked for and needed in terms of training and education. A particular thanks to Jim for the extra time we spent working on the final content and details for this year's program.

#### **Opening remarks and welcome**

Megan McDonald, EFMA Vice-President 2024/2025, welcomed our members and Executive Director Glenn Miller assisted in facilitating the presenters, sponsors, and schedules.

We received big support from the following sponsors who took the time and effort to spend two full

days with our EFMA members:

**National Air Technologies, Habitat Systems Inc., Canstar Restorations, SMcN Consulting, Intoba, Caliber Sport Systems, Specialty Services.**

#### **Day 1**

**Michael Nyikes, Director, Capital Management Branch, B.C. Ministry of Education and Child Care**

Michael began the morning with a two-part presentation.

#### **Module 3 Session 5**

Part 1: Capital Planning and Management

- Ministry Capital Programs and Planning



- Capital Asset Management (CAMS)
- Property acquisition and disposal
- Closure of schools
- myCaps
- VFA Facility Condition Assessments & Capital Planning Software
- Timelines

**Module 3 Session 6**

Part 2: Managing Projects

- Project Management - PMI Phases
- Construction management
- Government procurement

Michael completed the morning sessions providing a lot of clarification and taking many questions from the floor. Thank you, Michael, for taking the time and effort to put together a very detailed and informative presentation.

**Michael Bowden, District Principal Aboriginal Education, SD#73 Kamloops**

**Module 4 Session 7**

First Nations and Metis People

Michael opened his presentation with a Land & Territory Acknowledgement. His presentation topics included:

- Indigenous Cultural Humility, emphasizing its significance in K-12 Facilities Managers roles, cultural humility





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- defined, relevance to facility & maintenance workers
- Understanding key terminology
- Cultural humility vs. Cultural competence
- Local education agreements with boards of education
- Understanding community needs
- Respective indigenous protocols/

- practical protocol examples
  - Leading self: reflecting on biases and assumptions
  - Fostering respectful practices
  - Creating including school environments
- Michael wrapped up his presentation with a Q&A session and highlighted some outcomes and

takeaways.

Thank you, Michael, for taking your time and effort for not only being at our fall workshop but also for being part of our Educational Program Leadership Series.

**Mark Margerison, Orca Health and Safety Consulting**

**Module 4 Session 8**

Safe Working Environments

Mark joined us in Tsawwassen from Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. Thanks, Mark, for making the trip across the pond. The topic of health and safety has far-reaching implications in the daily responsibilities of facilities management. This really is part of the reason that we often see health and safety training programs and sessions as part of an overall education program.

**Presentation topics/ highlights included:**

- OHS Guidelines Part 3: Occupational First Aid

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- Washroom facilities at construction sites

**Day 2**

**Alan Kavanaugh, Noratek**

**Module 4 Session 9**

**Risk Management**

The subject and complexities of a risk management program is sometimes difficult for facilities managers to completely understand and manage without professional education. We are extremely grateful to Alan for taking the time and effort to join us once again at our Education Program table. Alan has been a providing quality training, advice, and real solutions to EFMA members as it relates to risk management programs, loss prevention and safety inspections for more than 25 years. After all these years, Alan continues to be an active and consistent contributor to our Association and ALWAYS delivers his presentations with a huge smile and enthusiastic approach. Thank you once again Alan! Oh, and just to let you know, your request to retire has been denied!

Presentation topics/highlights included:

- Work performed in school district facilities/grounds 2024
- School protection program discussions
- Accessibility updates
- Principal responsibilities update
- Shop layouts – discussion & plans
- Electrical, housekeeping, storage concerns
- Inspections

**Raj Dhasi, Turning Point Resolutions**

**Module 5 Sessions 10 and 11**

**Understanding and Managing Yourself and Communication**

We could not have asked for a better definition and example of “Communication with Connection”. As an expert in conflict resolution, Raj once again demonstrated through

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examples and strategies that positive and focused human interaction is fundamental in any organization as long as you have a heartfelt purpose and intended outcome. The morning session elaborated on understanding and managing yourself and the afternoon session focused on communication. A huge component of the presentation was

Raj's interactive approach which very much resonated with our members. Thank you once again Raj for your dynamic message.

### EFMA Executive Panel Discussions

Many thanks to Archie Stogianos, Megan MacDonald, Cintha Winters, and Harry Kumar for taking us

home at the end of a busy two days. These panel discussions are always a favourite venue for members to ask questions and give their thoughts on most any subject.

Thank you to the TEAM for your insight and help.

### Much thanks

As we have now completed the first run through of the EP, the Education Committee will review the next steps, content, and timeline for the upcoming 2025 Spring Leadership Workshop that will help EFMA members continue their path to complete the 11 sessions of the Leadership Program as well as other important topics and sessions. Stay tuned!!!!

A huge thank you to the entire EFMA Executive for your support and guidance over the past year. EFMA members province wide will ultimately be the benefactors of your support. Well done!

Molly, once again your consistent and committed effort in putting this workshop together is so much appreciated by us all. THANK YOU!

Most of all, thank you to all of YOU EFMA members for taking the time and making the effort to attend our 2024 Fall Workshop. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me, Molly, or any member of the EFMA Executive. If we don't know the answer, we will put you in touch with someone who does.

**We are committed to your success! ■**



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# Melissa Ang

## Manager, Facilities Administration, Richmond School District

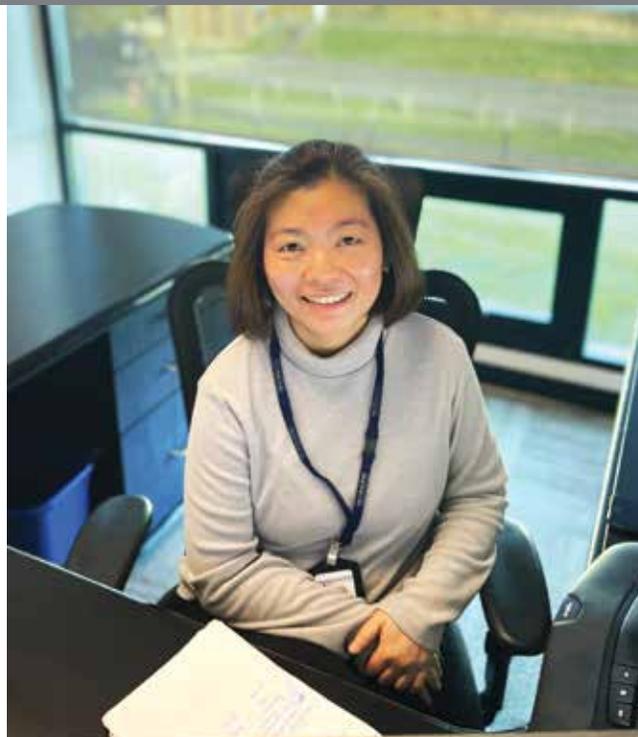
As Manager, Facilities Administration for the Richmond School District, Melissa Ang plays a critical role in ensuring the smooth financial and operational functioning of the district's facilities, supporting the learning environments for thousands of students.

The Richmond School District consists of 48 schools comprised of 38 elementary schools and 10 secondary schools creating an environment of learning opportunities, fostering academic excellence and personal growth within the community.

Beginning her management role in 2023, Ang oversees a range of financial functions, including procurement of goods and services, capital fund management, expenditure tracking, reporting and record-keeping, and invoice and expense processing. She serves as the liaison between several district business departments, such as finance and purchasing, and provides support and oversight on budget management and financial accountability on capital funding. Her role is integral to the success of both the Richmond Project Team and the Facilities Services Team. She also manages office operations, supervising six administrative assistants and coordinating workflow across both teams.

Ang joined the Richmond School District in August 2017 after immigrating from the Philippines. She first posted into the Facilities Services Branch as an administrative assistant where she covered several positions in the Maintenance, Operations & Rentals Departments, giving her an excellent understanding of the branch's daily operations. Then, after furthering her education, she moved into the district's Purchasing Department as a buyer in 2022.

Prior to starting her career with the district, Ang built a 16-year career in corporate banking in the Philippines as a financial analyst, managing corporate accounts and assessing credit risk. This experience made her an ideal fit for the district's Purchasing Department and set her



up perfectly for her current role as Manager, Facilities Administration, which she stepped into one year ago.

Ang says she enjoys the variety of tasks and duties in her position and each day brings new challenges and opportunities to learn new skills. She says her favourite part of her job is the people she works with.

In her spare time, Ang enjoys spending time with her family, sharing meals, and enjoying everything Richmond has to offer with its rich history, cultural events, and many recreational activities. She is looking forward to participating in the EFMA workshops and connecting with fellow members through both work and association events. ■



# Cameron Allenby

Manager of Facilities, Facilities Department, Chilliwack School District



With years of experience fighting fires as an on-call firefighter, Cameron Allenby now puts out daily fires as the Manager of Facilities at Chilliwack School District, overseeing a busy team and managing critical projects at Chilliwack's largest employer.

With the school district since 2017, Allenby first started in the maintenance department as a cabinet maker, then spent over a year as a carpentry foreman before moving into his current management role in November 2023. He oversees 12 staff members, manages minor capital projects, and acts as a project manager. He is responsible for the carpentry and painting departments, assists with grounds maintenance, and serves as the health and safety manager for his building, making him a key figure in the district's operations.

Allenby is currently preparing a project submission to the Ministry of Education and Child Care for a new childcare building on district property. So far during his tenure, he has overseen several childcare space upgrades, including three schools last summer, which now offer before- and after-school care and an all-day daycare. Allenby also oversees projects such as annual roofing and flooring upgrades, ensuring renovations and upgrades are completed year-round.

Located in the Fraser Valley, the Chilliwack School

District serves Chilliwack, Sardis, Vedder, and surrounding areas of Yarrow, Cultus Lake, Rosedale, and Greendale. The district includes twenty elementary schools, five middle schools, and five secondary schools that are attended by approximately 15,000 students and are served by approximately 2,400 staff members.

Allenby says he values the connections he's built within the district and enjoys seeing projects through from start to finish. "You're not just one piece of the assembly line. You see it through from budgeting through to completion, and staying within budget is always a nice feeling."

Before joining the Chilliwack School District, Allenby spent six years as a cabinet maker, earning his Red Seal certification which set him up for his transition into the district. He was also an on-call firefighter for 12 years, juggling Red Seal training with travel to Texas to earn his firefighting certifications (1001 and 1002). His experience in firefighting gave him a strong foundation in community work, volunteering, fundraising, and emergency response. "Firefighting was an exciting and rewarding experience, though not every call was fun," he says. "I was at the point where I wanted to make a decision on my career path." After seven years of working with the school district,

Allenby made the decision to focus on his role there, and he's enjoying his first year in the management position.

After less than a year his current role, Allenby says time management seems to be his biggest challenge. "I'm always looking for a solution for people, but sometimes I have a hard time delegating. It's easier for me to think, 'I'll just do it,' and that leads to longer hours." He's also working on another newly acquired skill. "Presenting to large groups wasn't part of my past experience in the trades industry, but it's a hurdle that will take time to overcome."

Allenby emphasizes the importance of communication, organization, and planning in his current role. "Communication is the most essential skill," he says. "You don't have to be an expert in every trade—we have ticketed staff for that—but you need to listen to what people need from you." He also highlights the importance of staying ahead. "You have to try to be ten steps ahead of your team, because if you're not, you're behind."

For Allenby, family time is a priority. He and his wife have a five-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter. Outside of work, he enjoys curling, fishing, hunting, and spending time outdoors. "Chilliwack is an awesome place to live and work—five minutes out your door and you're in the wilderness."

From fighting real flames to putting out metaphorical fires, Allenby continues to face the heat and effectively handle the daily demands of maintaining a safe, functional learning environment for staff and students. ■



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# Art Olson

## Manager of Operations, Kootenay-Columbia School District



A seasoned facilities expert and a true people person, Art Olson embarks on a new chapter as the Manager of Operations for the Kootenay-Columbia School District, bringing years of hands-on experience and a knack for relationship building to a larger stage.

In his role since September, Olson

made the move to District No. 20 after nearly two decades at the Arrow Lakes School District. With over 17 years of experience, he offers a wealth of knowledge in facilities management, maintenance, and transportation, skills he is now eager to apply to a larger, more dynamic environment.

Born and raised in Nakusp, a small town surrounded by B.C.'s wilderness, Olson's roots are firmly planted in the backcountry. His parents owned a sporting goods store in town, and his love for the outdoors was nurtured through years of fishing, hunting, quadding, and backwoods camping, activities he continues to enjoy with his wife and children.

Olson's professional journey began in 2000 after earning his Red Seal ticket as a journeyman carpenter. He worked on a construction crew in Nakusp before joining Arrow Lakes School District as a maintenance carpenter in 2006. He became the lead for maintenance and custodial in 2010 and then took on the role of Manager of Operations and Transportation in 2014.

In 2024, when the Kootenay-Columbia School District posted a job opportunity for a Manager of Operations, he saw it as an opportunity to grow both personally and professionally. "I had always

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wondered what it would be like to work in a bigger district,” he says, “so I took a gamble.”

The Kootenay-Columbia School District incorporates 12 schools, including seven elementary, one elementary/secondary, two secondary, and one alternate school (on two campuses). The district serves approximately 4,000 students and employs more than 750 people.

Moving to a district with more people and larger facilities, Olson is finding that the core responsibilities remain the same, but with added complexity. “The bigger district has the same challenges and scenarios as my previous one, but at a higher frequency,” he says. “But there are more people to fall back on when challenges do arise.”

Despite only being in the role for one month, Olson is already feeling at home. “I’m finding the environment very supportive,” he shares, adding “And for some reason, they seem happy to have me here!”

A typical day for Olson involves working closely with his maintenance team, reviewing projects, and coordinating with school principals. His evenings are spent visiting schools to meet with custodians and familiarize himself with each building. He says one of his biggest challenges at the moment is simply getting to know everyone. “As the new guy, not knowing anybody coming into a big staff is tough. I’m working on getting to know everyone’s role and which facility they are at. That’s my first big challenge.”

Olson remains connected to his hometown of Nakusp, where he has served as a volunteer firefighter for 25 years. Although his new job requires him to be in Castlegar

during the week, he still finds time to give back to his community whenever possible.

Reflecting on his career so far, Olson says he is proud of what he has accomplished but is equally excited about the opportunities ahead in the Kootenay-Columbia School District. One project in particular, the replacement of Glenmerry

Elementary School, is something he’s especially enthusiastic about.

As he settles into his new role, Olson is eager to support the growth and success of the district, just as he did in Nakusp. “It was a big transition between districts,” he says. “But I’m looking forward to supporting the team here and contributing to the future of the district.” ■



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# PREFABRICATED ADDITION: A first in Langley school district

BY CALVIN LAL, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF CAPITAL PROJECTS, FACILITIES, AND TRANSPORTATION,  
LANGLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT SD#35



Axel Holterhoff, Project Coordinator; Calvin Lal, Assistant Director of Facilities, Transportation, and Capital Projects; and Tristan Schaufler, Director of Facilities.

The Langley School District SD35 started the 2024-2025 school year with the completion and opening of its first ever modular prefabricated addition, located at Richard Bulpitt Elementary School. The project's process has been an exciting journey aimed at helping to provide much needed spaces for the increasing enrolment pressures in the fast-growing Willoughby Slope neighbourhood. The district has experienced growth of one thousand

students on average annually in the last three years, and there is the expectation that this is the start of many more modular projects in the future.

The addition blends the existing school's aesthetics, matching colour patterns and finishes. The intention in these design choices was to have the building look and feel as if it has always existed in this way. Importantly, the use of a breezeway supports student accessibility and

flow, allowing students to attend classes without leaving the second floor of the pre-existing building. The addition's design incorporated pre-existing civil services, fire suppression, communication, and building automation systems.

The project began in October 2023 when SD35 received funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care. Given an ambitious completion date of September 2024, the district opted for a design-build delivery model and engaged MAKE Projects as the owner's project manager, and the successful design-build contractor was Fort Modular.

Early in the planning stages, various project team members collaborated scheduling, identifying risks, and conceptualizing any potential limitations to work within a volumetric prefabricated building. The team worked together to ensure appropriate change management protocols were put into place to keep the project on time and on budget.

At the beginning of the project, the location of the future construction site had four existing portables. As such, the district planned and

**Early in the planning stages, various project team members collaborated scheduling, identifying risks, and conceptualizing any potential limitations to work within a volumetric prefabricated building.**



coordinated dates to relocate the portables and prepare the site for the prefabricated buildings. The plan allowed construction elements to take place over spring break, including craning, concrete pouring, and other key activities.

The design intends for a seamless transition and feel between the modular structure and the pre-existing school. Ensuring the experiences of students, staff, and administrators moving through the school felt singular, was important to the community. The intentionality within the design was for the building to feel as one, rather than a separate building like a portable.

The district prioritized construction of a breezeway, enabling access for students and staff to move between the original school to the prefabricated structure. The covered breezeway will also mean students and staff can stay dry when moving between buildings on those typical rainy days on the west coast. The district maximized opportunities to bring natural daylight into the classrooms which is evidenced by the south-facing classroom windows. Storage spaces in the classroom were created, along with additional cabinets, and handwashing stations.

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The district reviewed the building layout and finishes to minimize operating and facility maintenance costs. Some examples of work include shifting service rooms away from classrooms while ensuring HVAC/plumbing equipment remains both accessible and away from the learning spaces. With finishes, the decision was made to choose wall panelling that can be removed for quick access to plumbing as well as

the inclusion of an interior ladder for easy access to the roof from inside the building.

Using Direct Digital Controls (DDC), the district can meet the energy targets and support remote monitoring of the pre-existing and new facility together. The team was able to include security systems with door access control, cameras to monitor the exterior of the building, and public address system for safety

in emergencies.

Through the dedication and commitment of the project team, the Langley School District was able to remain within the funding envelope and meet the September completion date. The district is extremely proud of what has been achieved, creating a home for 150 students in this new school year and many more to come. ■



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# OUT OF THE ASHES: The response to Hazel Trembath Elementary School fire

BY MEGAN MACDONALD, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS, SCHOOL DISTRICT 43 COQUITLAM



On October 14, 2023, tragedy struck our community as Hazel Trembath Elementary School burned to the ground. The fire, which started in the early hours, quickly engulfed the building, leaving nothing but ashes and memories. However, in the face of this disaster, our community demonstrated remarkable resilience and unity.

Within hours of the fire breaking out, our District Leadership Team sprang into action. Despite the ongoing blaze, they convened an emergency meeting to formulate a response plan. Their swift action was a testament to their dedication and commitment to our students' education and well-being.

As the flames continued to

consume the school, members of the leadership team met with school staff, students, and parents. The scene was one of both devastation and hope. Teachers and administrators reassured students and parents, providing comfort and outlining the steps that would be taken to ensure the continuity of education.



The phrase “it takes a village” was never more evident than in those critical hours. The entire community rallied together, offering support and resources. Donations of school supplies, furniture, and equipment poured in. Local businesses, neighbouring schools, and countless individuals stepped forward to help in any way they could.

Our facilities team sprang into action, converting an old high school used for continuing education into a temporary elementary school. This transformation required creativity and hard work. Trades staff created cloakrooms in the hallways and built platforms for the urinals and sinks in the washrooms to accommodate the younger students. Our team worked double shifts, renovating rooms to ensure they were safe for elementary-aged children. Many of our staff made significant sacrifices to meet the tight deadlines.

Despite the devastation, we were determined to make the new space feel like home for the Hazel Trembath school community. We included special touches such as adding the school logo in the gym and creating new signage to welcome students into their new home. Within a week of the fire, we had the school staff and students back in the classroom. It was not an easy task, but our trades staff went above and beyond, becoming part of the Hazel family. Food was brought in daily for lunch and dinner as we worked around the clock, often sharing mealtimes with the school staff.

I am incredibly proud of all the work the Maintenance Team did. Every department, including office staff, played a role in getting the school ready for students. It was miraculous to see students arrive at

**Despite the devastation, we were determined to make the new space feel like home for the Hazel Trembath school community. We included special touches such as adding the school logo in the gym and creating new signage to welcome students into their new home.**

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*New Hazel Trembath signage at Winslow Centre with grounds staff.*

Winslow Centre, their new home for now. Looking back one year later, it is still unbelievable how a tragedy can bring so many people together.

I still find it difficult to visit the fire site, which has since been cleaned up. October 14, 2023, was such a

tragic event. I am grateful for our staff, our local fire department that worked tirelessly to try and save the school, and the school community for their response to this tragedy.

The fire at Hazel Trembath Elementary was a heartbreaking

event, but it also highlighted the strength and solidarity of our community. Together, we are committed to rebuilding and ensuring that our students continue to thrive and receive the education they deserve. ■



*The original school sign on display in the halls of Winslow Centre.*



*Principal Dave Phelan.*



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# Fire code challenges in public schools

In British Columbia, the British Columbia Fire Code (BCFC) challenges for school districts are multifaceted. The BCFC sets minimum requirements for fire safety in buildings, including schools, and it is essential for school districts to comply with these regulations. In B.C., the Fire Services Act stipulates the requirements for fire prevention and enforcement of the B.C. Fire Code within the province. Information here is from The ABC's of Fire Safety for Schools.

## Decorative materials in schools

The location for the placement of decorative materials in school classrooms and corridors shall be established through cooperation between the school district or school and local fire officials.

## Distance to ceiling and floor

Combustible/flammable material must be a minimum

0.5 m below ceiling level and 0.5 m above floor level.

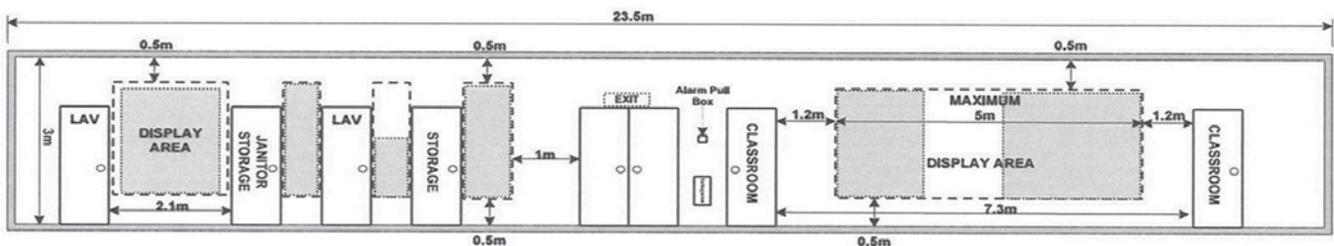
## Clearances for Fire Alarm Pull Stations/Electrical Panels and Fire Extinguishers

The locations for the displaying of combustible material shall be a minimum 0.5 m from safety equipment, such as fire alarm pull stations, fire extinguisher or fire hose cabinets, fire detectors, automatic sprinklers, emergency lighting, and exit signs.

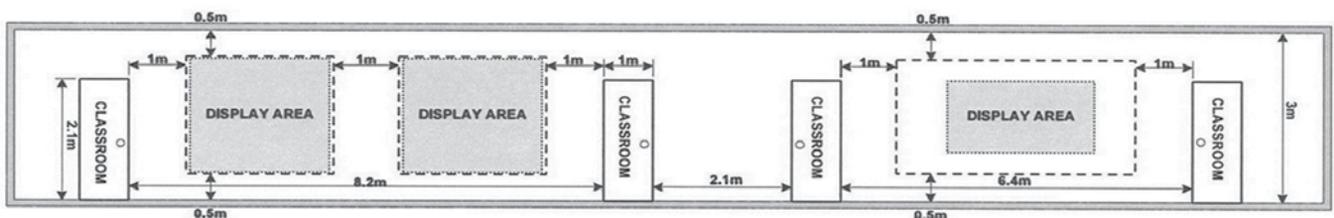
## Student Artwork on Ceiling Tiles

Combustible material may not be attached to the ceilings in corridors or classrooms. Ceiling tiles are flame rated so if they are to be painted, the paint used must be water based. Care must be taken so the ceiling tile is not damaged while removing or replacing. The ceiling tile space cannot be left vacant while students are painting as it may affect the fire separation the ceiling tile provides.

EXAMPLES OF DISPLAY AREAS IN SCHOOL CORRIDORS



WALL AREA = 71 SQUARE METER  
SHADED AREA EQUALS 20%



NOT TO SCALE

## Classroom / Corridor and Exit Doors

Combustible material must be a minimum 1.0 m from classroom and exit doors and may not be attached to the door or around the door casing. Glass panels in a classroom door cannot be covered or have the view into the room obstructed, unless it is for temporary “Lock-down” situations.

## Classrooms

Combustible material such as teaching aids or decorations may not exceed 20% of the total area for each wall in the classroom.

## Corridors

### Length of a display area

Display areas may not exceed 5 m in length and need to be separated from each other by a minimum of 1 m clearance.

## Corridor Width

Combustible material may not be displayed in corridors less than 1.8 m in width.

Corridors 1.8 m to 2.1 m in width may have combustible material displayed on one wall only.

Corridors greater than 2.1 m in width may have combustible material displayed on both walls, keeping in mind the 20% coverage maximum.

The designated display area for decorative artwork for classrooms and corridors should be mapped out and included in the fire safety plan.

## Exemptions

Enclosed trophy and display cases, glass-faced framed pictures, commercial or district issued posters and notice boards are exempt from these requirements. There is no restriction on the amount and location of fire-retardant paper/material on corridor walls, other than the clearance from safety equipment. <sup>CM</sup>



# Changes to the First Aid Occupational Health and Safety Regulation

If you are not already aware, significant regulatory changes to First Aid have been implemented on November 1, 2024. There are several minor changes within the regulation itself while the major changes occur

in Schedule 3-A, Minimum Level of First Aid. Some of the key changes to the First Aid Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) are summarized in the table below.

Reg #	Current Requirement	November 1, 2024	Impact
<b>General Requirements</b>			
3.16 (2)	The employer must conduct a FA assessment.	The employer must prepare a <b>written</b> FA assessment.	More specific requirements for annual first aid assessments which must be done in consultation with the JOHS.
3.17 (4)	None	At least once each year and whenever the procedures change, the employer must conduct a drill.	Will require scheduling and recording annually.
<b>Schedule 3-A</b>			
Tables 1 through 6	Hazard rating (Low, Moderate or High), # of workers on shift and the worksite's proximity to the nearest hospital determine FA needs.	<p>New tables broken down by Class of Employer, # of workers <b>present</b> and employers hazard rating.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class 1, an employer other than Class 2, 3 or 4.</li> <li>Class 2, remote but not less accessible.</li> <li>Class 3, less accessible but not remote.</li> <li>Class 4, both remote and less accessible.</li> </ol> <p><u>Remote</u> Within 30 minutes surface travel time to nearest ambulance station (no ferry).</p> <p><u>Less Accessible</u> A workplace that that cannot be safely accessed by ambulance personal, such as work in a confined space or work taking place at height or one that requires ferry.</p>	<p><u>Number of workers</u> There is a specific way to calculate workers, including those that are dispatched.</p> <p><u>Less Accessible</u> Having effective rescue plans in place will help prevent a workplace from being designated as 'Less Accessible'.</p>
<b>FAA Qualifications and # of Attendants</b>			
Qualifications	OFA 1, OFA 2, or OFA 3 certificate.	Basic, Intermediate or Advanced certificate	There is a 3-year transition period attached to this change. You do not need to re-train immediately.
Training Duration	OFA 1 – 1 Day OFA 2 – 5 Days OFA 3 – 10 Days	Basic First Aid – 1 Day Intermediate First Aid – <b>2 Days</b> Advanced First Aid – 10 days	
<b>First Aid Facilities and Equipment</b>			
First Aid Supplies	Employers to provide Personal, Level 1, 2 or 3 Kits.	<p>Changing to meet the requirements laid out in CSA Z1220-17 that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal Kit</li> <li>Basic Kit (medium) + tourniquet + PPE</li> <li>Intermediate Kit (medium) + PPE</li> <li>Intermediate Kit (medium) + Oxygen Therapy Kit + PPE</li> </ul>	

Hopefully you find this information helpful in meeting the responsibilities placed on you by these updated First Aid OHSR's. If you have any questions or would like some

assistance in meeting compliance with these changes, please get in touch with us. We are here to help with your health and safety needs.



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# Cultivating continuous improvement

## A leadership blueprint for facilities management

---

Continuous Improvement (CI) must be part of your language. As a Facilities Manager or Director, you must take hold and steer the ship in the direction of CI. As the Leader in your operation, you will need to get buy-in from all your staff. You will need to show them the benefits of CI, and how those improvements will benefit those doing the work and save time on processes. However, you must believe in CI to be able to sell it to staff and show them how everyone succeeds. Plan it out carefully giving it a lot of thought. You have been managing for many years and as such all of us in that situation can recognize where the improvements need to be. Use technology where you can as well.

Your perspective on CI can be spot on, especially when it comes to its impact on efficiency, staff morale, and budgeting. By championing CI, you are positioning yourself not only as a leader in operations but also as someone who actively engages in forward-thinking strategies. With your years of experience, you likely already know where improvements should be made. The key is building trust amongst your team by demonstrating quick wins and long-term benefits through CI.

Integrating technology, whether through maintenance management systems, data analytics, or streamlined communication tools, can greatly support your CI initiatives. Planning is critical to ensure that the changes are practical, measurable, and aligned with your operational goals.

Start with the “low-hanging fruit” as a great way to generate momentum in a CI initiative. Tackling simple or routine tasks first can build confidence in the process, and quick wins help show your team the benefits of CI early on. It creates a foundation for more complex, challenging improvements later, while fostering buy-in from everyone involved.

Building a multi-page document that outlines each phase of CI is a smart approach. Here is a rough structure for your document to guide the brainstorming and execution process:

### Continuous Improvement Plan Outline

#### 1. Introduction

- Purpose: Explain the importance of CI for the facilities management team and its expected benefits.
- Objectives: Outline clear goals for improvement, focusing on both short-term wins and long-term change.

#### 2. Quick Wins (Low-Hanging Fruit)

- List of Tasks: Identify simple tasks that can be improved immediately (e.g., routine maintenance, ordering supplies, scheduling).
- Timeline: Set short-term timelines for these tasks to show early results.
- Resources Required: Tools, software, or staff involvement required to implement these improvements.
- Metrics for Success: Identify measurable outcomes like time saved, cost reduced, or quality improved.

#### 3. Staff Involvement and Buy-In

- Brainstorming Sessions: Plan team meetings to encourage idea generation and collaboration.
- Incentives for Participation: Create a recognition system for staff who contribute ideas or participate actively.
- Training and Education: Outline how you will educate your team on CI principles and how it benefits them.

#### 4. Technology Integration

- Tools: Identify technological tools that can streamline processes (e.g., maintenance management software, energy monitoring systems).
- Implementation Plan: Assign roles for integrating new technology and track its adoption.

#### 5. Long-Term Improvements

- Complex Improvements: Identify larger, more difficult areas of improvement (e.g., infrastructure upgrades, major process overhauls).
- Timeline and Milestones: Break down these tasks into manageable parts with long-term timelines.
- Cost/Benefit Analysis: Show how these changes will have lasting impacts on budget, efficiency, and safety.

#### 6. Metrics and Feedback

- KPIs: Define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track the success of the CI program.
- Feedback Loops: Implement regular feedback sessions with staff to continuously refine and improve the CI process.

Starting with this structured approach will provide clarity to your team and ensure the program has measurable outcomes. Do you want to focus on a specific section, or are you thinking of introducing the whole plan to your team at once? <sup>CM</sup>



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# Embracing diversity through inclusive play



BY SONYA WILSON



You know the sound — the roaring eruption of chaotic excitement as kids leap up from their desks and out the doors onto the playground at lunchtime. A school playground is a place of unscripted games, navigating intricate routes of escape from capture, and sliding, spinning, and screaming to shake off the classroom. It's where you hang out with friends and create worlds of fun.

At Habitat Systems, we want to ensure every kid can join in that fun. That's why we've been creating accessible play experiences with Landscape Structures playground equipment across Western Canada for over 25 years. Using Landscape Structures' Inclusive Play Advisory Board means that the input and unique perspectives of people with disabilities are used to design our play spaces. At its heart, inclusivity is about belonging, and a space's design impacts how you feel and how you can interact with others.

## Everyone can participate when a design is inclusive

We understand that play is essential for a child's physical, cognitive, and psychological well-being. Children discover and learn through play, and a well-designed inclusive playground can facilitate social, emotional, and physical learning. Ease of access also

gives children the independence to choose what play features they want to use. The design itself should promote and allow for different types of engagement.

## Seven Principles of Inclusive Design

- 1. Inclusive** – so everyone can use it safely, easily, and with dignity
- 2. Responsive** – taking account of what people say they need and want
- 3. Flexible** – so different people can use it in different ways
- 4. Convenient** – so everyone can use it without too much effort or separation
- 5. Accommodating** for all people, regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity, or circumstances
- 6. Welcoming** – with no disabling barriers that might exclude some people
- 7. Realistic** – offering more than one solution to help balance everyone's needs and recognizing that one solution may not work for all

True inclusion can be found in projects like the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Playgrounds at Unwin Park in Surrey and at Marshall Field Park in Vernon. Pour-in-place rubber surfacing throughout the play space means that kids and adults that use mobility devices can access all play elements. Ramps with play panels

lead to slides, climbers, and the multi-user sway fun, allowing children using a mobility device to be in the thick of the action. Kids can find stimulation on the spinners, we-saw, and swings, or find quiet places to self-regulate. Everyone has different abilities and, given the right access and a non-prescriptive design, can choose anything they want to engage with.

Inclusive play has come a long way, and there are so many more options that go beyond ramps. We can help you create a playground that's accessible for wheelchair users, sensitive to children with autism spectrum disorder or Down syndrome, engaging to children with reduced vision and hearing impairment, or all the above. We take great pride in the spaces we've created, and we'd love to create a Habitat playground with your school too. ■

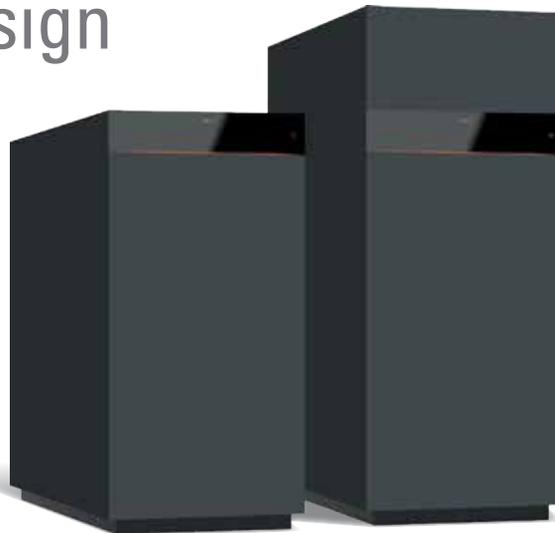


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## The doorbell rang

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The doorbell rang at about 3:30 this afternoon. An officer was standing at the door, and upon answering, I asked what we could do for him. He asked if my husband was home and went on to verify the driver of the pickup truck with a B.C. license plate. I confirmed that it was my husband's truck.

I indicated he should be pulling into the driveway at any time, in fact there he is pulling in beside the patrol car. The officer waited and as my husband got closer, he asked him the same questions to verify that it was his truck and whether he drove it all the time. Then he proceeded to give my husband a ticket. He explained that he was caught on camera passing a school bus when the lights were flashing, and the stop arm sign was extended. As a school bus driver, I am very angry with him. He risked the lives of children getting off the bus as he sped thru the

zone where he should have stopped! RED flashing lights mean stop now and if the stop arm signal is out there is no quibbling as to its intent!

Passing a stopped school bus with its lights flashing and stop arm extended is incredibly dangerous, and it could have resulted in a serious accident or injury to children. The fact that he was caught on camera makes it even harder to deny, and the consequences, a fine, points, and the risk he posed to others are serious.

It is understandable that you may feel angry and that he did not fully consider the gravity of the situation. Consider how this incident could have had far worse consequences, beyond just the ticket. He might not have fully realized the danger, but now that it is clear, it will serve as a wake-up call to be more careful. It is definitely a situation that would leave anyone upset. Especially given

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## **Passing a stopped school bus with its lights flashing and stop arm extended is incredibly dangerous, and it could have resulted in a serious accident or injury to children.**

your line of work and the safety standards you hold in such high regard.

So as the driver of a school bus, one must be prepared for the ignorance of some people, while you watch children disembark safely. They should only be running across the road upon your signal. If a vehicle is not going to slow down and drive right on through, then you need to remember to push the button on the recording system, so the vehicle is caught in the act. When it is brought into the office we look to see if we caught the complete action, entering the field of view alongside the bus and leaving the field of view along side the bus. Incomplete evidence is worthless to the police as it opens to a likely court case that they could lose, especially if the driver fails to present in court. Let us make it easy for everyone involved.

As a school bus driver, you not only have the responsibility of transporting children safely, but also being vigilant about the reckless behaviour of other drivers. It is a constant balance of focusing on the kids. Ensuring that the recording system captures the full sequence of events is key to holding those drivers accountable, as incomplete footage can make it much harder to prosecute.

It is frustrating that some people disregard the safety protocols in place, but having solid evidence makes all the difference when dealing with law enforcement. Your point about ensuring the vehicle is fully in view, both entering and leaving is important, as it gives the police a clear case to follow up on, without any ambiguity that could lead to dismissal. Encouraging drivers to respect school bus zones should not even be necessary, but unfortunately, ignorance is out there.

From a bus driver's perspective, it is critical to make it easy for everyone; the authorities, the school, and, most importantly, the children whose lives are at risk when others disregard the rules.

The primary focus is to deliver children to and from school safely. The drivers that allow the camera to pick up the offence are the good people here and we need to ensure they receive the acknowledgement they deserve. No one wants to deal with a child being hit by a car, let alone the driver of the children he/she has been transporting that day.

The school bus drivers are true unsung heroes when it comes to ensuring the safety of children. That is no small responsibility. When they manage to catch a reckless driver on camera, they are actively preventing future incidents and holding people accountable, which could save lives down the line.

Drivers who take their job seriously and use the camera systems effectively are helping to enforce those safety rules that are so critical. They deserve recognition, not just for driving safely but also for protecting the children in their care by ensuring that dangerous drivers are reported and dealt with. It is a stressful job to think that at any moment, a child's life could be at risk because of someone's careless decision. It is not just about avoiding a ticket; it is about making sure that no driver ever has to experience the trauma of witnessing or being part of a preventable tragedy.

The acknowledgment of these drivers is crucial, they play such a vital role, not only in transportation but also in ensuring that children arrive at school and home unharmed.<sup>CM</sup>

**They deserve recognition, not just for driving safely but also for protecting the children in their care by ensuring that dangerous drivers are reported and dealt with. It is a stressful job to think that at any moment, a child's life could be at risk because of someone's careless decision.**



# That piece of paper

BY CHUCK MORRIS

When hiring people for any variety of positions, we look at what they bring to the table. We not only want to know what experience they may have but also a backgrounder on what moves them, what initiates behaviour in them. Let's face it, they may be in your employ so why not try to get a sense of what thrills them, what makes them do what they do!

Hiring is not just about evaluating a candidate's skills and experience, but also understanding what drives them on a deeper level. This approach helps to ensure you bring people on board who not only have the capability to do the job but who will be motivated and engaged in their roles. A good way to uncover this during the hiring process is by asking questions that explore their personal and professional motivations, such as:

**1. Values and Purpose:** Ask candidates what motivates

them to get out of bed in the morning, or what personal values guide their decision-making. Understanding someone's core values can give you insight into whether they will align with your organization's culture and mission.

**2. Passions and Interests:** Find out what excites them outside of work. People who are passionate about certain hobbies or causes often bring that same energy into their professional lives.

**3. Challenges and Growth:** Ask about a time they were excited by a challenge. This gives insight into what drives their sense of accomplishment and whether they thrive in environments where problem solving and innovation are required.

**4. Career Goals:** Get a sense of their long-term goals. Are they driven by a desire to lead, innovate, or make a meaningful impact? This can show if they are

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forward thinking and invested in their growth within your organization.

**5. Work Environment:** Explore what types of environments and teams they find most energizing. Do they thrive in fast-paced, collaborative settings, or are they more effective when given autonomy and space to focus?

### Understanding these elements can help

We want to leverage what they understand of work life and how they would respond in specific situations. We look for little meanings that may help illustrate something much bigger. Will they pick up that errant piece of paper laying in the corridor outside your office? That can give you a terrific sense of how the person thinks. Even today with long-term employees, I watch to see whether they pick up the piece of paper or other item laying on the floor they are walking over.

With some keen insight, small actions can indeed reveal a lot about a person's attitude and work ethic. Picking up something as simple as a piece of paper may indicate conscientiousness, attention to detail, and a willingness to go beyond their formal job description. It is a sign of someone who cares about his or her environment and takes initiative.

When hiring or evaluating long-term employees, these subtle cues are often more telling than answers in interviews or performance reviews. Someone who sees a problem or something out of place and takes immediate action without being asked shows they have a mindset of ownership and responsibility. Here are a few ways you can assess this type of behaviour:

**1. Behavioral Interview Questions:** You can ask candidates about times when they saw something wrong in their workplace that was not directly their responsibility. Did they take action or wait for someone else to handle it?

**2. Observation in the Workplace:** Observing how long-term employees handle these small, everyday situations helps you gauge their ongoing level of engagement. If someone starts overlooking small things like that, it might be a sign they have become

disengaged or burnt out.

**3. Realistic Job Previews:** During the hiring process, giving candidates a chance to experience real aspects of the job (even as small as walking through the workspace) can allow you to see if they notice things or take initiative in real time.

**4. Cultural Fit:** People who naturally align with the culture of caring for the workspace and the team's success are likely to perform these actions without being prompted. Incorporating this value into your company's core expectations can help you hire individuals who are aligned with it from the start.

It is the mindset, which you are really looking to hire and cultivate. Skills can be taught, but a person's willingness to take responsibility and act on what they see around them speaks to their intrinsic motivation and their fit within a team.

So back to that piece of paper, it will speak volumes about the person. They may be shy so might not pick it up, however if they do and everything else fits, hire her (or him) as they will work out well!

That single act of picking up the piece of paper, or even hesitating to do so, can reveal a lot about someone's character, and how they approach their work. Even if they are shy or unsure, if they still go out of their way to pick it up, it shows initiative and a sense of responsibility. These are the kinds of intangible qualities that can be just as important as experience or technical skills.

People who take action in those small moments often have a natural sense of ownership and accountability, qualities that will likely translate into their day-to-day work. In addition, when everything else aligns, their skills, values, and fit with the culture, those are the types of employees who can really thrive and contribute to a positive work environment.

Your hiring philosophy of paying attention to these subtle cues helps to ensure that you're bringing people on board who care, even about the little things. And in the long run, those little things are often what set great employees apart from the rest. ■

# Ops Talk magazine

BY CHUCK MORRIS

We are beginning to wind down the year 2024, the 20th Anniversary of this magazine. Our website [www.efmabc.com](http://www.efmabc.com) has available every issue of Ops Talk ever printed and distributed. With so many new members over the past several years, it would be a good experience to click the URL and experience what the magazine has to offer. You can get a flavour of topics discussed over the years and see who was doing what ahead of your arrival into the public school system.

The birth of Ops Talk took place one evening in a hotel room in Richmond. We had completed Executive meetings that day and had invited David Langstaff to attend. David is the owner of DEL Communications in Winnipeg. Three or four of us met with David to talk about starting a magazine for our Association.

Discussion about what it could and would look like took place as well as brainstorming for a name. We were familiar with DEL Communications as some of us had seen several of their publications created for other associations. It looked like a good venue to expose more of our association to our members and more importantly to others in the education facilities management sector.

An idea was conceived, a platform devised, a name

chosen and that was the start of a beautiful relationship. From the first issue we, as the Executive of the Association saw what DEL could provide us. We began working with them on each issue to enhance the magazine, to broaden our audience, to address our supporters and to strengthen what we saw as an association of educational facility managers, a body of professional people working together ensuring safe and healthy facilities for education.

When reading the next issue of Ops Talk, give some thought as to what goes into making this magazine what it is. There are well thought out pertinent editorials, content to help you in your job, and promise of a more knowledgeable career.

Today, as we wind down Ops Talk 20th Anniversary and look back upon each issue, the production keeps getting better and better. A huge thank you to the various DEL editors we have had. Each one doing a superb job and making us feel proud. Ops Talk has truly become our flagship magazine. Thank you DEL and thank you to all who contributed over the years to this point.

(Portions of this editorial are reprinted from the Fall 2010 *Ops Talk* 10th Anniversary). ■

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