

## President's Message

I sit here typing this letter in the midst of what might be the craziest time of year for a drama teacher! We are one week to opening our musical Mamma Mia here at our school, and we are only home from our Zone Drama Festival two weeks ago!

I'm reminded, during these times of little sleep, too much coffee and pure exhaustion of just how special our role is in the school. As ABCDE members we have myriad opportunities to engage our students with other like-minded students, to connect with them on a deep level of relationship, and to have an influence on their growth and development in ways other adults would likely never understand.

The young people that gravitate to drama and theatre are some of the most articulate, interesting and observant young people. While the past few years have been challenging for many of us and our departments, I feel encouraged to work with these students, and to carry on building back up what we had pre-2020.

I am excited to announce our YouthWright winners in this message! Congratulations to all the student writers and to Sophie Borthwick, Mack McCormack and Ben Anderson for being selected to present their new plays at this year's NTS Provincial Drama Festival! It has been a wonderful year of collaboration with our adjudicators Omari Newton and Amy Lee Lavoie. Look for their scripts on the ABCDE website ([www.bcdramateachers.com](http://www.bcdramateachers.com))

We also remind our ABCDE members that their students are eligible for Scholarships in both performance and behind the scenes theatre. The performing scholarship includes, but is not limited to, a focus on acting as well as singing and dancing. The Behind the Scenes Scholarship includes, and is not limited to, stage management, technical theatre, design or operation of light/sound/props/costumes, choreograph, writing, composition and event planning. The deadline to submit these applications (which can be found on our website - <http://www.bcdramateachers.com/abcde-student-scholarship.html> ) is May 31, 2023.

Your ABCDE has also been very busy with some new initiatives. If you haven't already checked out the work Sharmila Miller has been doing with the Anti-Racism curriculum, be sure to check out the latest in this newsletter. Also, keep your ears posted for upcoming news regarding workshop opportunities. We hope to see and connect with many of you at the upcoming Goodwill Shakespeare Festival and/or the NTS Provincial Drama Festival. Much gratitude to the teachers working tirelessly to see these annual festivals come to fruition!

Sincerely;  
Heather Lee  
ABCDE President

## ABCDE Executive

Images from Highland Secondary's production of Concord  
Floral, the Zone 10 festival selected play

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## ABCDE Pioneers Visit Conference goes



There are so many reasons to love the ABCDE Fall conference. It feels like family each year we return, we see people we haven't seen all year, we make new friends, and we get to talk about things and do workshops only another Drama teacher would understand. The icing on the cake this year was when Robert Morgan and Larry Bauer stopped by our evening social. They are pioneers of our organization and did so much during their time as exec members. They still champion what we do as educators, and Robert reminded us that evening that we are in our 55th year. It was lovely to see their smiling faces.

Newsletter submissions: If you want to share show photos, lesson ideas or have an idea for a write up, please contact Christine Knight at [Christine.Knight@sd72.bc.ca](mailto:Christine.Knight@sd72.bc.ca). We'd love to hear from you.

## Making Connections for the Lonely Drama Teacher

Ah, the lonely Drama Teacher. Often the only one of its kind in the ecosystem, isolated in the windowless theatre, nearly-buried under the weight of scripts, costumes, casting, counselling, set building, and motivated by the unshakeable belief in the benefits of collaboration, communication, and creative expression. Sometimes observed as a curiosity by colleagues, the Drama Teacher's natural inclination is to celebrate and to be inspired by the ever-evolving community of teachers and learners at school, but the Drama Teacher can rarely disentangle themselves from cast, crew and student needs while the layered deadlines of show-making loom. Sound familiar?

Our most depleted resource is often time and, like many committed professionals, we often feel forced to deprioritize the time required to reach out, to connect, and to collaborate with our colleagues. Part of a healthy teaching practice and growth mindset, collegial dialogue and cross-pollination is often relegated to "someday...when the rehearsal schedule clears".

Fear not, intrepid educator! Not only are you seen, and valued, you share so much with so many around the province. This article will give you a few ideas for tapping into the pulse of other drama teachers and theatre professionals, like you.

Obviously social media is a great way to virtually connect with other drama teachers. Facebook groups like ABCDE on Facebook and Drama Teaching Resources, Drama Teachers Sharing Group are generative spaces to share news, ideas and inspo. Try searching #dramateacher on Instagram or TikTok for a laugh, or even a lesson plan! Resource-rich websites run by drama and applied theatre pros include <https://thedramateacher.com>, [www.thedramaclass.com](http://www.thedramaclass.com), and [www.theatrefolk.com](http://www.theatrefolk.com).

There are other ways to use digital media to get connected with professional theatre: Sharmila Miller, drama teacher at Garibaldi Secondary School in Maple Ridge, has her students attend virtual workshops run by A Class Act NY, an award-winning acting studio established in 2005 by Jessica R. Grosman. The studio offers workshops hosted by prominent actors (stage and screen), agents, directors, and more! The learning outcomes for these online workshops can be tailored to your students' needs; the host is often streaming from their professional industry setting allowing for an authentic glimpse into their creative career. In Garibaldi's workshop last year with Thayne Jaspersen, students "went backstage" at the Richard Rodgers Theatre, where "Hamilton" is still going strong. The digital format allows for unique learning opportunities that might otherwise be inaccessible, without a plane ticket! For the face to face experiences that motivated you to choose theatre in the first place, register for a conference or take your students to a festival.

The ABCDE (The Association of British Columbia Drama Educators) has been producing an amazing conference annually for over 50 years, pulling together a community of forward-thinking practitioners and educators from all over this province. During BC's dedicated PSA day in October we emerge from our studios, theatres and classrooms to play, think, learn and grow together with industry innovators like Principal Intimacy Professionals, Biz Books, ActSafe BC, Urban Ink. Conference faculty always includes local working creatives like Omari Newton, Susan Bertoia, Peter Abando, Davey Samuel Calderon, Cat Haggquist and Peter Jorgensen. The ABCDE conference is fuel for your fire; the atmosphere is one of safe, creative risk.



One of the best opportunities to meet other drama teachers and connect your students with like-minded theatre kids is to attend a festival. Several areas throughout the province hold zone festivals where your work can be showcased and adjudicated. Select plays move on to the BC National Theatre School DRAMAFEST in May, at Douglas College in New Westminster, where student casts and crews get to relish in the joy of a diverse theatre-loving audience from across the province. The three-day DRAMAFEST includes workshops, shows and social opportunities (though the kids tell us that the comfy robes at New West's Inn at the Quay are the real draw!) Students love DRAMAFEST. If you do not have an active zone, consider becoming the zone representative. Reach out to the ABCDE for support; there is possible grant money available!

Not interested in a competitive festival? The Good Will Shakespeare Festival held in Vernon in late April is another option. The mission of "Shakesfest", as it is affectionately called, is to provide secondary school students and educators with the opportunity to meet and learn from a variety of internationally acclaimed actors, musicians, and artists. The festival attracts world class performers and teachers to work with the attendees. Lana O'Brien, Festival Coordinator says, "There are so many great things about Shakesfest for students, but one of the best things for me has been the decades long friendships I've made with incredibly talented and creative people."

There are many, many opportunities for drama teachers to provide rich and meaningful opportunities for their students. Sometimes we forget that these opportunities also have benefits for the teacher. Not only can we learn from online resources, conferences, and festival workshops, we can also meet other educators, creators and future collaborators who extend our knowledge and understanding of the transformative power of theatre education. Most importantly, we can make friendships that make us feel just a little less like the only one of our kind.

A few more Facebook groups:  
Drama Teacher Hub  
Theatre Production Resources Vancouver  
Maada'oonidiwag Anti-Racist Canadian  
Theatre Exchange

Websites:

<https://thedramateacher.com>  
[www.thedramaclub.com](http://www.thedramaclub.com)  
[www.theatrefolk.com](http://www.theatrefolk.com)  
[www.bcdramateachers.com](http://www.bcdramateachers.com)  
[www.dramaonlinelibrary.com](http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com)



The Cast of That Funny Feeling, the Zone 9  
selected play - WJ Mouat

Note: For over 50 years, the ABCDE has advocated for Theatre and Drama teachers in BC as your official Provincial Specialists' Association. Supported by the BCTF and by membership fees, the ABCDE sponsors an annual pro-d conference, an annual spring festival, an annual playwriting competition, several scholarships, teacher awards, a newsletter and more. The ABCDE Executive, elected annually by members, works to adapt, defend, share and develop Theatre, Drama and related curricula while building community across our province.

Sharmila Miller, Maple Ridge, Drama Teacher  
Laurie Anne Lorge, Vernon, Drama Teacher  
Nicole "Coco" Roberge, Port Coquitlam, Drama Teacher

Highlights from the Brookwood Secondary Musical, Spongebob Squarepants





**Congratulations to the selected Zone Festival Productions. The winning schools from each zone have been invited to perform at the B.C. National Theatre School DramaFest, May 4 to 7th, 2023 at Douglas College in New Westminster.**

**Zone 2 - Northwest** (Rep: Alison O'Toole)

February 24-26, 2023 at Lester Centre of the Performing Arts

Adjudicator: Rudy Kelly

*Outstanding Production: Interrupting Vanessa - Caledonia Secondary- Graham Wojdak*

Alternate Production: Conflict - Charles Hays Secondary- Allison O'Toole

**Zone 9 - Upper Fraser Valley** (Rep: Brian Billo)

December 6-7, 2022 at Imagine Secondary

Adjudicator: Bryan Cutler

*Outstanding Production: That Funny Feeling (orig) W.J. Mouat Secondary- Brian Billo*

Alternate Production: Jabberwock (orig. based on poem) - Imagine Secondary - Penny Miller

**Zone 10 - North Island** (Rep: Christine Knight)

November 17-19, 2022 at Highland Secondary

Adjudicator: Fran Gebhard

*Outstanding Production: Concord Floral - Highland Secondary- Lisa Williams*

Alternate Production: The Yellow Boat - G.P. Vanier - Lori Mazey

**Zone 12 - Langley** (Rep: Lindsay Mitchell)

January 20, 2023 at Langley Fine Arts

Adjudicator: Yvette Dudley-Neuman

*Outstanding Production: The Hallmarks of Horror - Langley Fine Arts School - Lindsay Mitchell*

Alternate Production: Words, Words, Words/15 Min. Hamlet - Brookwood Secondary- Sheri Eyre

**Zone 13 - Surrey** (Rep: Craig Wrotniak)

January 31 & February 8, 2023 at Johnson Heights Secondary

Adjudicator: Marcus Youssef

*Outstanding Production: Work in Progress (orig.) - Frank Hurt Secondary - Stephanie Henderson*

Alternate Production: Radium Girls - Johnson Heights Secondary - Beth Scozzafava

**Zone 14a - TriCities** (Rep: Coco Roberge)

December 8-10, 2022 at Heritage Woods Secondary

Adjudicator: Kate Craven

*Outstanding Production: I'm Fine (orig.) - Riverside Secondary- Coco Roberge*

Alternate Production: The 146 Point Flame - Terry Fox Secondary - Zelda Coertze

**Zone 16 - Vancouver** (Rep: Meghan Byrne)

January 26, 2023 at Magee Secondary

Adjudicator: Paul Moniz de Sa

*Outstanding Production: Lockdown - St. George's School - Jamie Donnici*

Alternate Production: No Time for Sergeants - Magee Secondary - Meghan Byrne

**If you want information about starting a zone festival in your area, please contact a member of the executive. We can help!**



### ABCDE Anti-racism resources can be found **HERE!**

## Community Capacity Building

The ABCDE Anti-Racism Resource guide is an evolving Google doc to benefit community members and to support more equitable, inclusive classrooms where all students are seen, heard, valued and represented in positive ways. The guide, an ongoing ABCDE project, was collected and curated by Sharmila Miller, Artistic Director of Garibaldi Secondary's Interdisciplinary Arts Academy, and the ABCDE executive committee member in charge of our TEDI Scholarship program (Theatre Equity, Diversity and Inclusion). Sharmila is a BIPOC artist, storyteller, and cultural entrepreneur who is actively involved in several projects and committees that focus on the current and future development of our collective anti-racism lens, moving forward to better, as opposed to back to normal, post-pandemic. Sharmila worked on the BC Ministry of Education's Anti-Racism Action Plan,

and Teacher Guide, now included in the Google doc. These documents will continue and progressively guide systemic change, but the real work is in each classroom, and in every rehearsal space, with you. Join the global Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion conversation. Your ABCDE is here to support you!

**Looking to level up your understanding of essential terms and concepts, and prepare yourself for facilitating necessary, challenging conversations?**

Book an excellent 60-minute Pro D session with Sharmila Miller for your department, LSA (Local Specialist Association), or district Drama teachers. In person workshop for ABCDE members, \$125 total.

The empowering is also available remotely, \$100 for ABCDE members.

Contact Sharmila directly ([sharmila\\_miller@sd42.ca](mailto:sharmila_miller@sd42.ca)) for details or to book!

Feel free to email Coco Roberge ([nroberge@sd43.bc.ca](mailto:nroberge@sd43.bc.ca)) to share any questions you may have about inclusive resources, or how to use them; let's collaborate to further decolonize our stages and rehearsal spaces.



**The Yellow Boat - GP Vanier Secondary**





## Highlights from Little Women - Riverside Secondary, Coquitlam



Louisa May Alcott's 1868 evergreen novel "Little Women", came alive in early February at River's Edge Theatre (Riverside Secondary), featuring two alternating casts of 15 students each, grades 10-12. "Little Women: The Musical" written by Allan Knee, with lyrics by Mindi Dickstein, and music by Jason Howland, starred Sutton Foster on Broadway in 2005 and covers 4 years for the March family filled with personal discovery, heartache, hope, loss and love. The committed cast rose to the show's many challenges, from difficult ballads to layered period costumes, on a set that invoked the March family's cozy, eclectic home centred on the fireplace and surrounded by evergreen boughs. This emotionally engaging and thought-provoking Broadway show was a School District #43 premiere. In order to best serve our cast and to allow for the evolution of the iconic character, Jo March, played powerfully by Scarlett Stratton and Sophia Dato, the scholar and love interest Professor Bhaer was played beautifully by Serin Cheun and Claire Bernat. Witnessing the resonance our version evoked for diverse audience members made the show process even more special, and we were proud to tell the story the way we did. From our family, to yours...at River's Edge.  
- Coco Roberge, director/designer/producer

# ABCDE Teacher Awards 2022



Once again, congratulations to Caroline MacKenzie of Colquitz Middle School in Victoria, this year's Drama Teacher of the Year, and Jennifer Clement of Vancouver Film School, this year's Excellence in Drama Education award winner.

