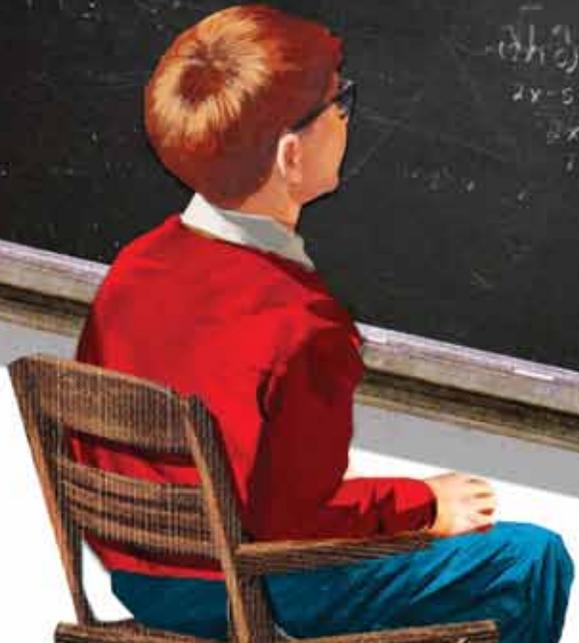


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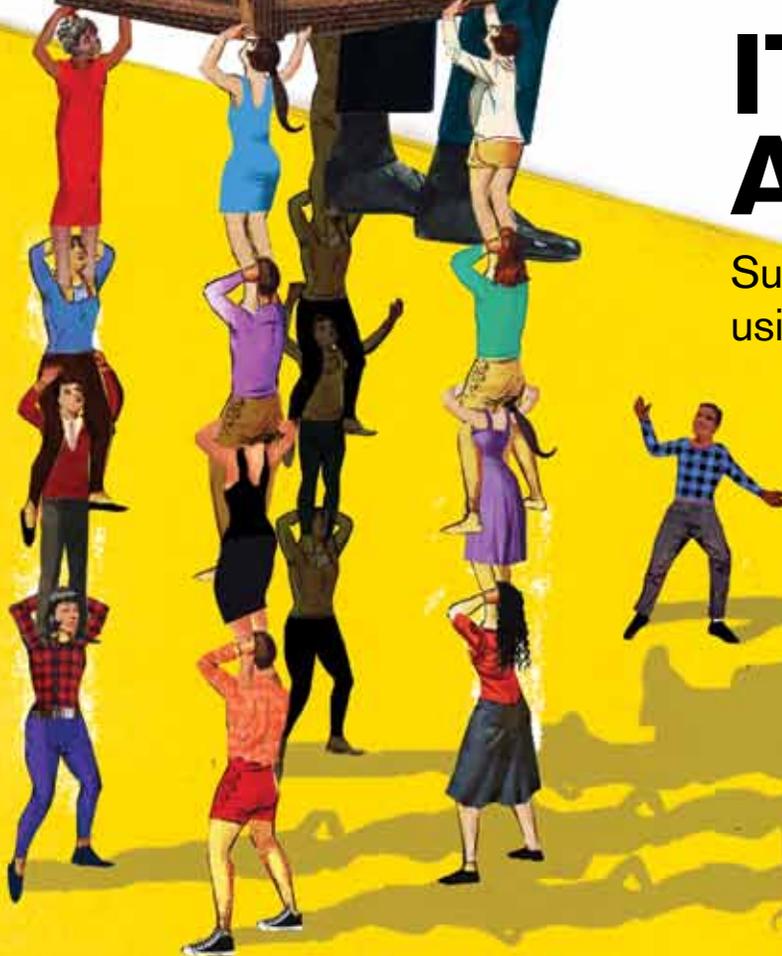
# OPC Register

THE MAGAZINE FOR ONTARIO'S PRINCIPALS & VICE-PRINCIPALS



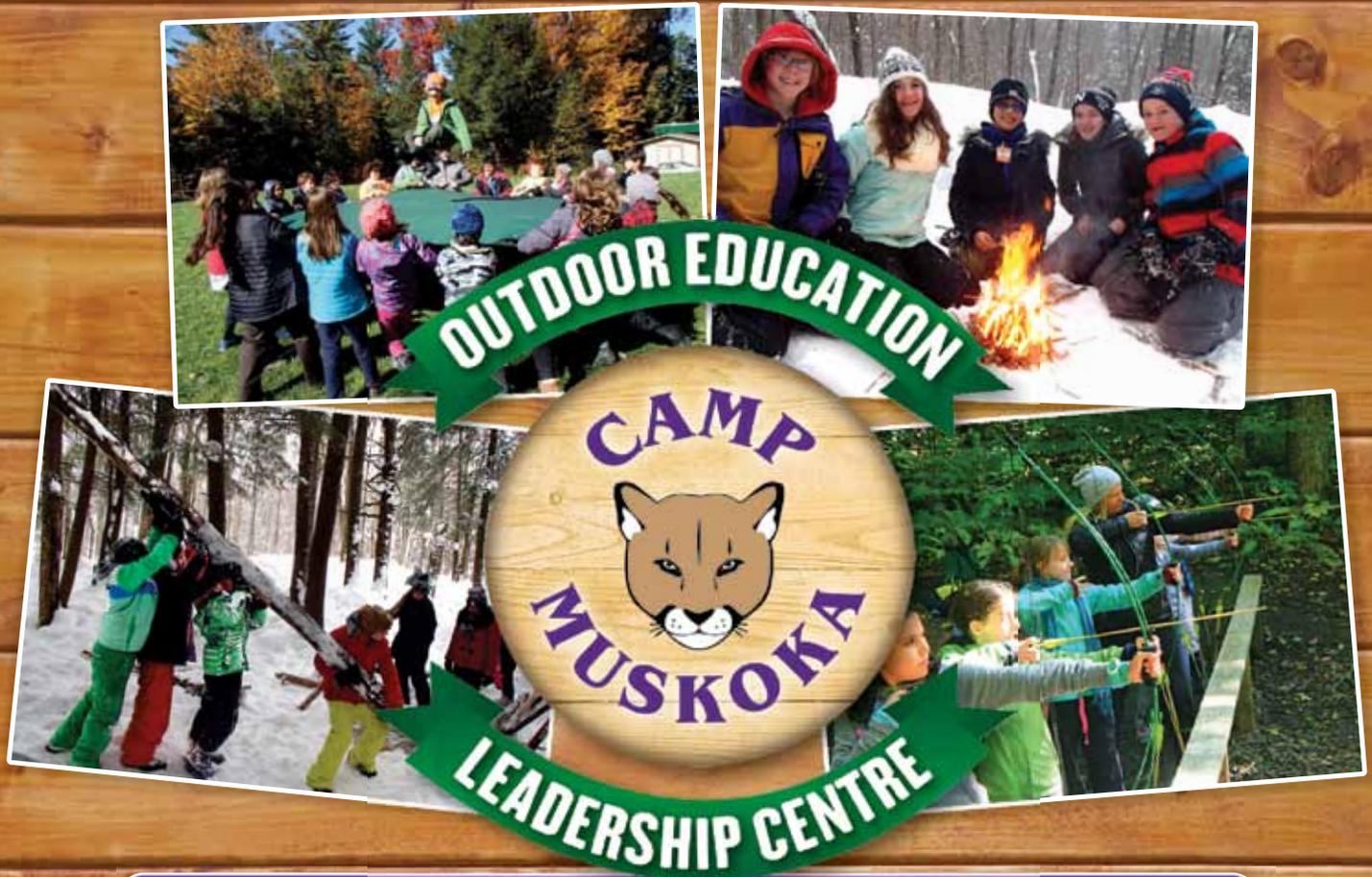
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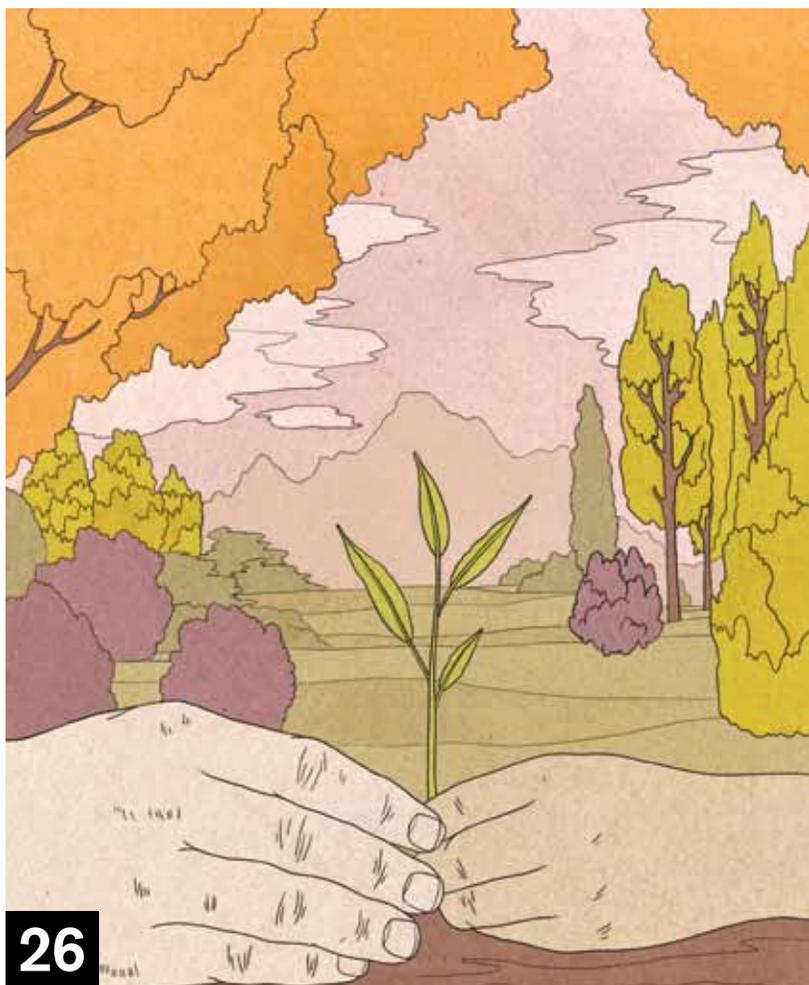


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# Principle that is a Principal

## The Gender Wage Gap and uncovering a legacy



During my first month as President, I met several OPC key personnel. Each described in detail their role and responsibilities within our association. These meetings allowed me to ask questions, in particular, as President how can I

best support my colleagues. During one meeting our Senior Communications Consultant, Peggy Sweeney, posed the following, “What is your goal this year as President?” She elaborated by stating that each year the President has a goal s/he desires to accomplish, to leave a mark, so to speak. Honestly, being new to the role, I had not spent a considerable amount of time formalizing any goal(s) for the year. I knew my role was to be one of support and to ensure that my colleagues had a voice. But a specific goal ... so utilizing the media training from the OPC, I quickly replied, and deflected, “I think, as my term evolves, and I become more familiar with the important issues, my goal(s) will come into focus for me.”

Peggy’s question got me thinking. What legacy do I want to leave behind?

My term provided me with several opportunities to formalize a goal. The union sanctions, the OCT Peer review and institutional bias, and our Terms and Conditions were certainly all “goal worthy.” Just imagine this legacy, our T and C completed, encompassing full job security, no Reg. 274, airtight provincial dispute resolution and just cause language, and raises of 5 per cent yearly! Yet, for me, what drove me this year more than these other, albeit important issues, was the Gender Wage Gap, my firm belief that a “principal is a principal” was not reflected in the compensation structure – in 2000, our Provincial Council

passed a motion pertaining to the need to address this wage disparity. A historical gender bias, females were paid less than their male counterparts, and subsequent salary benchmarks entrenched in the funding formula in 1998 meant that my elementary colleagues were, on average, receiving \$7,000–11,000 less than their secondary counterparts, of which I am one! Future wage increases would only widen this gap. My goal this year would be to work towards an awareness of this gender bias and, hopefully, a promise that this gap would be acknowledged and addressed.

Fortunately, the government recognized this disparity and created a Gender Wage Gap commission, along with public town hall sessions where individuals and organizations could voice their opinion. A highlight of my tenure was the opportunity to present to the Gender Wage Gap panel, on behalf of my OPC colleagues. Another highlight, which substantiated my belief that a “principal is a principal” were my numerous district visits, especially those in our elementary schools.

Now I realize some of my secondary colleagues will counter with school size, but my visits made it apparent that the additional supports and resources, a vice-principal(s), resource staff etc. I had as a secondary principal were lacking to an even greater degree in elementary schools. The requisite training and experience are identical in both panels, as are the statutory duties and liabilities; the terms and conditions of principals

and vice-principals from both panels are governed by one contract; the only difference being – salary. And, if you are a single administrator, those duties are performed solo. I also maintain that the liabilities of elementary principals are even more pronounced given the age of the students under their care. If one is still not convinced regarding panel equity, all I need to say is “code brown” – which all elementary administrators have implemented numerous times during their career!

Now, I enter my role as Past President with a clear goal – that the OPC continues to address the Gender Wage Gap, and my elementary colleagues are equally compensated for the challenges and complexities of their role. And, besides, if we are to continue to lead, not only throughout our country, but internationally as well, in the area of school leadership, succession planning by attracting the best candidates, must be a priority. This can, and will, only happen, if this entrenched bias is addressed. For, truly, in the end, it is our students who will be the beneficiaries. Is that not why we all became educators, leaders? ▲



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*The Register* is the proud recipient of the following awards:



# Happenings at OPC ...



We recognize authors Dr. Michael Fullan O.C. and Joanne Quinn at the recent launch of their newest books *Freedom to Change* (Fullan), *The New Meaning of Educational Change 5th Edition* (Fullan) and *Coherence* (Quinn and Fullan).



Garfield Gini-Newman leads a one-day workshop at the Leading Student Achievement Speaker Series.



In March the Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) welcomed keynote speakers George Couros (top) and Cathy Montreuil (bottom) as part of our New Administrator Seminar.



Numerous international visitors stopped by the OPC for an overview of the structure, services and unique programs our association has to offer. (Top: England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Bottom: Colombia and Peru.)



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# PROVOKING CHANGE THROUGH

# DIVER

## A conversation with Chris D'Souza

Following in the footsteps of his mother, Chris D'Souza became a teacher, having witnessed the trials and tribulations that came along with the role. "I guess you could say I was mentored into the role." But in addition to being a classroom teacher, he is now considered an equity guru in education.

D'Souza has taught for 25 years in both panels. "As a person of colour, I had navigated that world of looking different. I gained a skill set of trying to get people to understand who I was and what my life was like. When I became a teacher, I realized that I was often the only teacher of colour on my staff. Students of colour would reach out to me, telling me about racist situations that they had had, or had come across. So I wanted to mentor them."

He became the equity and human resources officer for the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, holding the position for five years. "I ended up in a role promoting human rights, and that's where I really cut my teeth and got the opportunity to speak to students and educators, getting them to learn how to see through an equity lens."

By Peggy Sweeney



# SITY



He was then seconded to York University in the Faculty of Education, where he taught a course on inclusion.

When he returned to the classroom, he continued lecturing on equity and inclusion to school boards across the province, and was in high demand.

Now on a sabbatical from his board, D'Souza works full-time lecturing and presenting on the issues of equity, diversity and inclusion.

How does he define equity? "In a nutshell, equity is making everybody feel included in their experience day-to-day and ensuring their complex identities are honoured and dignity is promoted around them. Equity means that we work to understand the mechanisms that marginalize students, that provide power to different groups, and then try to create a level playing field for the students who come to us to learn."

Having worked as a consultant on the Ministry's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, D'Souza knows there are still challenges that schools and boards face in trying to become more equitable and inclusive. "It is the bias of the individuals who work within school systems. Everybody comes with their own identity bias formation from their experience, wherever they grew up or wherever they were schooled. It's the negative bias formation that can have an impact on the way teachers interact with other teachers, principals interact with their own teachers, teachers interact with their own students. So the work that I'm trying to do is to get people to understand their identity bias formation, and then have them go through an analysis of identity bias deconstruction so that it's not marginalizing students."

D'Souza sees the role of principals and vice-principals in helping their schools become more equitable and inclusive as an important one. "They're very powerful individuals. They are curriculum leaders. They have input in regards to hiring, and the chronic under-representation of racialized and indigenous personalities is another part of inequity in our schools. As leaders, they can create a culture of understanding around equity and marginalization, but it's a process. Principals can use professional development to talk about equity of inclusion and focus, so that teachers can collaboratively learn and have a discourse around what strategy they can implement in their school to move the entire school along the equity continuum. And if principals themselves have a sharp equity lens, they can continue to promote equity by getting students to create an understanding around the culture of respect."

In 2005, D'Souza created the Equity Summit Group. It is a collabora-

tive of 127 people from 28 school boards. "At the time, there was no mechanism for those of us who were working in the equity portfolio to dialogue around the work we were doing. Now, we meet every other month, as a kind of support group. We share our best practices. We look at potential areas of marginalization, areas where students might be marginalized, and try and address and minimize the marginalization. We offer professional development for the group, bringing in people who help to sharpen our equity lens. It's a group of high calibre people who care about students, anti-oppression mechanisms and education.

"Recently, we wrote a position paper to the Minister of Education as a result of the recommendations of the truth and reconciliation commission. Chief Justice Murray Sinclair said that in order to repair the damage of racism, logos and mascots that are offensive to indigenous peoples must be eradicated. So we wrote a letter to the Minister requesting that she provide a directive to school boards to ban all uniforms or any piece of clothing that has a mascot or a logo that is potentially offensive to indigenous people. That's a new foray of activism that the group has embarked on."

D'Souza notes that one of the reasons we need to be mindful of equity is because language that has been used for generations can now be uncomfortable for some people. One word in particular that he refers to is heterosexism.

"We exist in a society that is heterosexist; 90 per cent of our population is heterosexual. Our default understanding is heterosexist. So anytime you see a commercial that only displays a heteronorma-

tive group or family, that is heterosexist. I believe that school systems need to interrupt heteronormative activity and make sure that the sexual minority population is included.

"For example, I'm married. I'm heterosexual. But I call the person I live with my partner. That language interrupts heteronormativity. I will later refer to Maria as my wife, but as an introduction as part of conversations, she is my partner. Usually gay and transgendered people refer to their love interest as their partner. Language is very powerful. We can include people by using aggressive language or we can exclude them by using exclusive language."

Can schools address this use of language, of heterosexism? "Yes, there are many ways we can address this in schools. The visuals on the wall, the language of the teachers, the content of the curriculum, the videos that are shown in classrooms. Students will constantly analyze media content that teachers use. I think it is dangerous for a teacher to pull up a YouTube clip and just show it in class, and then unpack it later.

“...if principals themselves have a **SHARP EQUITY LENS**, they can continue to promote equity by getting students to create an understanding around the **CULTURE OF RESPECT**.”

Instead, they should be previewing it themselves, taking a look at the representation of the human identities in it, and asking if it is reinforcing stereotypes or interrupting them.

“You can reinforce a heterosexist or heteronormative stereotype or you can interrupt it and get people to think. Teachers should be asking, ‘If 10 per cent of my classroom might fall into the sexual minority category, how am I including them in the discussion? In the exercise? In the classroom activities?’ And principals should be asking the same questions. They should be using language that interrupts heteronormativity.

“It’s a slow movement. But anytime we do something that is more inclusive for one group, we find that another group benefits. For example, when the province mandated that we have access ramps for persons with disabilities, anybody who pushed a child in a stroller also benefited from that. Likewise, any mechanism that promotes inclusion or enacts inclusion, benefits more than just the targeted group.”

D’Souza sees an equity piece in the revised health and physical education curriculum. “The curriculum is excellent. It needed to be updated. It is designed to get teachers and students to understand the complex landscape of student development, student physical development and student sexual development.

“Certainly there were tensions around the parts that address sexual minority realities. And that is okay. Education is a space where we help our students understand personal identity and respect and dignity for others. We have an obligation to get our student population to understand who people are, their biological reality, their sexual reality, their class reality, their racial reality. We need to increase the understanding amongst teachers and students, always raising the bar around dignity.”

D’Souza sees principals and vice-principals as “the perfect target group” for helping schools become more equitable. “They have to unpack their own personal biases first; it starts with themselves. They have to understand their own identity bias formation – where are the gaps and the knowledge? They have to increase their own knowledge base around equity inclusion, human rights and identity bias. And then they have to find the way to share and collaboratively get their staff

inside. It’s got to be the collaborative approach and there’s got to be a congruency of understanding.

“For a principal, it’s more complex, because they’re managing teachers who come from different experiences and different racial, sexual minority and socioeconomic backgrounds. So their landscape is ultimately more complex than the teacher in the classroom, because principals have to support staff to try and understand and work with, and make them feel included.

“We are always hearing that we need to be lifelong learners. We are always trying to learn and become better educational practitioners and administrators. Every day, we should be sharpening our equity lens, learning something new about the complex realm of human identity and then transferring that knowledge to our staff and support staff in a collaborative manner.”

To that end, D’Souza is organizing a new course for administrators entitled Taking Equity to the Next Level. The program is designed to sharpen administrator’s equity lens so they can better understand and navigate the complex landscape of identities within their teaching staff, support staff, parent/guardian community and student population. The course will cover topics such as Critical Race/Anti-Oppression Theory; Deconstructing Identity Bias; Intersectionality and Identity Politics; The Negation of the Racialized Experience as a Form of Oppression; Equity and Organizational Change; Understanding Privilege; Gender Inequity and

its Impact on School Systems; Studies in Ethnobia; and Inclusive Mechanisms and Practice.

Clearly equity is an area in which schools and educators need to pay more attention. With our student population becoming increasingly diverse, it is more important than ever that all students feel safe, comfortable, honoured and accepted in their school. Educators will play a critical role in ensuring that happens. And the work D’Souza is doing will help us reach that goal.

For more information on the course or his work, visit Chris’s website at [www.chrisdsouza.ca](http://www.chrisdsouza.ca). ▲

“We have an obligation to get our student population **TO UNDERSTAND** who people are, their **BIOLOGICAL** reality, their **SEXUAL** reality, their **CLASS** reality, their **RACIAL** reality.”



✉ [psweeney@principals.ca](mailto:psweeney@principals.ca)

# PRINCIPAL'S FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT DUTIES

Among the many responsibilities associated with the role of the principal is the financial management of the school. First, school leaders must ensure that the public's money is *spent* wisely. Second, and nearly as important, they must be able to *demonstrate* that this money has been spent wisely. Financial statements, clearly presented and externally verified, make an important contribution to this second role.

By Protective Services Team  
Illustration by Min Gyo Chung



With this in mind, in March 2004, following significant discussion and input from school boards and the boards' external auditors, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA), the Ministry of Education announced that Ontario's school boards would be required to adopt Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) recommendations for local governments as their financial reporting standards. A "B" memoranda was issued to school boards to provide direction on funding policy and other financial or operational matters.

The district school board spells out the financial responsibilities of the principal in its policies and procedures linked to the *Education Act* s. 265 and in Regulation 298 "Duties of the Principal," to make reports relating to the organization and management of the school to the Supervisory Officer. Recently, the Protective Services Team (PST) has responded to a growing number of calls from principals who have been contacted by their board as a result of concerns with the management of public and non-public funds.

This article aims to identify some key areas of concern and our advice for addressing those concerns. The information and advice presumes that you have already read and understood your own board's requirements. It is especially important for all principals and vice-principals – both newly appointed and experienced – to familiarize themselves with these documents. A large number of individuals who have experienced difficulty were either following old, no longer sanctioned processes, or processes they "thought" were sanctioned without first ensuring compliance.

The principal has oversight and responsibilities with respect to both *public funds* as allocated by the school board and *non-public funds* that are raised through other sources such as fundraising, student fees, and cost-recovery events such as field trips and pizza days.

### Duties with respect to the public funds

School budget refers to the portion of the board budget created out of public funds; that is, grants from the provincial government, distributed to the school for the purchase of items such as instructional and office supplies and services. The principal's budget responsibilities are to

- allocate appropriate amounts of public funds to the budget template
- inform staff of the process for spending, reimbursement, budget approvals and all other matters of a fiscal nature, including non-public funds
- assign budget responsibilities to staff members, ensuring that their training is current and their practice is compliant
- implement the board-approved tracking

procedure for all school-related expenditures, both public and non-public

- monitor monthly expense reports as provided by the board
- scrutinize and sign reconciliations, invoices, cheques, purchase orders and contract release orders
- maintain the inventory and storage of resources
- report regularly as needed to the board, staff and school council with respect to budget information, spending and status and
- report any non-compliance immediately to the board.

### Purchase protocols

There are several options that boards may make available to principals for the purchase of goods and services using public funds. Generally speaking, schools should not go out and buy items directly unless they are small purchases for which discretionary funds can be used. Boards have purchasing departments whose role it is to obtain the best pricing through bulk buying, through an open competitive process that is fair to the taxpayers and that ensures that certain standards are maintained. This is usually achieved through the issuance of a purchase order.

The overarching principle is that the board will have tendered out to suppliers in order to spend wisely and economically; as such, purchasing anything from a non-approved vendor can violate that contract. This is why a principal can run into difficulty when s/he makes a purchase that seems to achieve savings, but is purchased from a non-approved vendor. These tenders often include service contracts and guarantees that are not included in sales prices.

### Purchase Cards

Some boards provide corporate credit cards ("purchase" or "p-cards") to administrators and other school board employees, in order to expedite small purchases. It is important to read the contract that you sign upon receipt of the p-card because it will outline exclusions (such as gas, alcohol, hotels) and will state that any violation of the terms listed may result in

## 4 TIPS FROM THE PROTECTIVE SERVICES TEAM

1. Do not hesitate to ask for training or advice in your board's financial practices and expectations for you as the budget manager.
2. Transparency and Accountability are two key concepts to guide you in managing your school budget.
3. Your number one criterion for decision-making when allocating funds and resources is the impact on student learning. Is this expenditure aligned with your current school and board priorities?
4. Purchase cards may not be used for personal items. Using purchase cards for personal use may lead to serious consequences, up to and including dismissal.



discipline, up to and including termination. The main areas of misconduct alleged against principals have been: a) the use of the corporate card for personal purchases; b) the use of the p-card for unauthorized purchases; and c) a failure to monitor the use of the p-card assigned to an employee under the principal's supervision (vice-principal, teacher, custodian, librarian, for example). The use of the p-card requires the retention of original receipts provided at the time of reconciliation and an explanation of how the purchase aligns with the school budget. This is a "need to do," not a "nice to do."

#### Petty cash/Cash advance

"Petty cash" or "cash advance" budget lines provide a sum of money to allow schools to buy small items directly rather than through the board's purchasing department. This budget line is often used to reimburse school staff for classroom or program purchases. As with the p-cards, original receipts must be provided prior to reimbursement and must be attached to the budget reconciliation.

Collecting and processing cash requires strict and transparent protocols. As money is collected, a record must be made of the person who provided the money and in what amount. Money should never be left in a classroom or other area of the school, but rather should be forwarded to the office as soon as is practicable. The counting of cash in the office should be undertaken by at least two people, recorded on a standard form, then stored in a locked safe whose access is controlled and limited. As soon as possible, cash should be deposited with the board's designated bank or credit union accompanied by properly completed deposit slips. Large amounts of cash should not be left in the school, even if secured in a safe.

#### Bank or credit union school accounts

Boards generally require that a school bank account have two signatories from the school and that this account be registered in both the names of the school and the board. Monthly bank statements (not a passbook), supporting original receipts and regular bank reconciliations,

will be required to satisfy the board that the funds are being controlled properly. This account involves public funds, must only be used for its stated purpose and must be kept separate from any non-public funds as described below. Consult the board's business or finance office for guidance and direction.

## If the school council engages in fundraising activities, the annual report shall include a report on those activities.

#### Non-public funds

Non-board funds are under the direct responsibility and authority of the principal who must ensure that the funds are collected and spent appropriately and within board policy.

Certain basic controls are recommended including

- a bank account held separate from other school accounts which relate to public funds,

also with a requirement for two signatures on all the cheques

- regular reconciliations requiring original receipts and/or invoices to prove compliance and
- proper filing of source documents (donors, fundraising results, receipts).

Large balances not needed in the short-term may be invested in appropriate conservative investments, such as GICs, to generate additional interest income. There are new, strict guidelines for such investments that your board has outlined in its financial protocols. Non-public funds are raised for a specific purpose; there is an obligation to ensure that they are expended for that purpose. An annual report should be submitted to the business office and, depending on the board, may be subject to audit.

#### School council fundraising

All fundraising must adhere to board policy per the *Education Act* and Regulation 612 Section 22(2) and 22(3):

22. (1) Subject to subsection (2) a school council may engage in fundraising activities
- (2) A school council shall not engage in fundraising activities unless, (a) the activities are conducted in accordance with any applicable policies established by the board, and
- (b) The activities are to raise funds for a purpose approved by the board or authorized by any applicable policies established by the board.
- (3) A school council shall ensure that the

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funds raised by it are used in accordance with any applicable policies established by the board.

Section 24(1) states, “every school council shall annually submit a written report on its activities to the principal of the school and to the board that established the council.” Section 24(2) states, “if the school council engages in fundraising activities, the annual report shall include a report on those activities.”

**NOTE: If the principal is a signing officer, however, then the funds belong in the school administered category above and are under more direct control of the board.**

All financial activity of the school is subject

to audit, either on a random, scheduled or targeted basis and either internally by board business staff or externally by the board auditor. As a result, it is important to ensure that proper procedures and record-keeping are maintained.

### Finances and conflict of interest

A conflict of interest may arise where a person in authority is involved in an activity that can result in personal gain to him/herself, a family member or a close associate. An example could involve the purchase of school materials from a relative, without going through the open competitive purchasing

process. Another example would be a purchase for the school, from yourself, such as a used refrigerator or a book you may have published. A conflict of interest can have serious consequences for the employee, up to and including termination. Refer to Section 217 of the *Education Act* and, when in doubt, check with the board’s business office before proceeding with the transaction.

### Principal expenses

Reimbursement for items such as mileage requires proper documentation and timely submission, at least on a quarterly basis, to ensure that it is charged to the correct budget year. When submitting requisitions for reimbursement themselves, principals must ensure that they follow board procedure – including the attachment of original receipts for approved purchases – and, if required, that the appropriate supervisory officer approve the reimbursement.

### Gift cards, hospitality

Gifts or hospitality for staff should be provided from the principal’s private resources (your own bank account) and not from school funds – neither public nor non-public. Boards have protocols related to providing food for meetings or small tokens of appreciation (like gift cards) which must be adhered to.

The PST is not only tasked with representing our Members when investigations arise with respect to your practices, we also seek to arm you with risk management strategies; that is, giving you the latest information to assist in your day-to-day tasks. Transparency and accountability may require us to participate in audits or to respond to questions from the public or from the employer-board. If the answer to such enquiries is “I followed all board policies, procedures, and accounting practices” accompanied by the documentation to demonstrate compliance, then the experience is much less burdensome and the outcome more positive than if you responded, “I didn’t know I was supposed to do that or know that.” Go in knowledge, not fear. ▲

✉ cquinlan@principals.ca

## Make a *Difference*

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## 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ADVANCED ISSUES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW



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## A Three School STEAM Journey

How to use best practice in STEAM planning to develop inter-school partnerships and engage learners

By Nicole Miller, Greg McLeod and David Rowan

RH King Academy, located in South West Scarborough, is the local high school to HA Halbert Junior Public School and John A. Leslie Public School. Both of these elementary schools are identified as Model Schools for Inner Cities, and as such, struggle with issues around poverty. Starting with the principals as instructional leaders, this project sought to impact student learning and engagement, teacher capacity in the areas of Mathematics and Science, and extend and build partnerships with feeder schools for more effective transitions for students from elementary to secondary. Ongoing data, both qualitative and quantitative, were gathered from staff via Google doc and informal discussions.

Ultimately, recommendations around the successes and areas for development in this particular project highlight the unique nature of our particular school climate, staff needs, expertise and areas of student interests. This project produced engaged principals, staff and students through a localized intervention strategy for each unique school community. In addition, developing expert partnerships and lengthy project-based enquiries are an important way to make learning relevant and to address career and academic expectations in the 21st century.

Early data collected on this project study concludes that this type of instructional programming has measurable, positive results in the areas of student engagement, social emotional responses to school and teacher capacity building.

### STARTING POINTS – RATIONALE & DEVELOPMENT

---

This journey started on a trip to New Orleans with our Superintendent of Education to attend the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) STEM Conference in May 2014. It was an opportunity to learn about how to begin creating an environment for and using the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) model as a framework for student improvement in three of our Toronto schools.

The conference included a discussion by Amy Budden, a teacher who spoke about her school's Fairy Tale "STEAM" study. The school used Rapunzel's non-scalable tower as an opening for student brainstorming around engineering possible escape routes, including a focus on pulleys and gears.

# S SCIENCE      T TECHNOLOGY      E ENGINEERING      A ARTS      M MATH

We are focused in this initiative on adding the **A** to **STEM** as an engagement and enrichment piece.

By uniquely adding an element of the Arts, it transformed the STEM model into STEAM. We considered this to be an exceptional way to engage our Toronto students and staff.

Our strategic goals were identified as follows:

1. To introduce STEAM to our teachers in such a way that it was not an “add on” to their workloads.
2. To introduce STEAM to our students as a way of increasing student engagement and comprehension across several curricular strands – mathematics, science and the arts.
3. To create partnership between the secondary school and its two feeder schools.

## GETTING STARTED – THE PIED PIPER

Careful teacher and class selection was made, with a focus on teacher readiness, content knowledge and positivity. We made sure to select some teachers who were both ready and excited to take on this project, and others who were a little more reluctant.

The elementary schools chose classes in grades 1–3 to participate. The elementary and secondary teachers and principals sat down together to brainstorm ideas. It proved helpful to all participants to make connections with each other and be part of the early stages of program planning.

We selected the *Pied Piper* as our focus text for the project for all three schools, and the secondary drama students created an incredible kick-off to this journey. Three possible “problems” were formulated for student groups to try and solve:

1. building a habitat for the rats to live in
2. creating a sturdy bridge for the Pied Piper to walk over, or
3. creating a soundproof barrier/system to protect the children from the Pied Piper’s flute.

Following the dramatic presentation by our secondary drama students, we strategically stopped at the problem point in the story presentation so that the students could meet to ‘solve’ the

**STEM education has many definitions, but at the heart of all STEM learning is recognition of the need to prepare teachers and those whom they serve for the challenges of the 21st century and the work skills needed to succeed in that environment.**

(Yager & Brunkhorst, 2014, p.144)

**There are five guiding principles for STEM instruction:**

1. Focus on intervention
2. Establish relevance
3. Emphasize 21st century learning skills
4. Challenge students
5. Provide a variety of instructional tasks and ways for students to demonstrate their understanding

(Vasquez et al., 2013, p.5)

problems and return in one month for the conclusion of the tale.

The students broke off into small groups, each selecting one of the problems to solve. A secondary school student mentor was assigned to each group to assist with brainstorming ideas and developing a working plan.

In the month that followed, students worked in-class on their projects with the help of a number of experts from the community, including the use of Video Researcher on Call and Expert Skype Calls. In one case, a rodent expert answered a lot of eager grade 2 questions about rat care including: “Why are rats rodents?” “How many rats can live in a group?” “Why are rats dirty?” “How big is their home?” and “Are rats smart?”

For many of our teachers this was a new approach to teaching, and for our leaders a level of support was needed to assist

FIGURE 1.1

STEM UNIT OUTLINE – THE PIED PIPER – PRIMARY DIVISION		
BIG IDEAS AND OVERALL EXPECTATIONS THESE ARE SUGGESTIONS ONLY. Many other possibilities exist in this unit.		
GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3
<b>Science and Technology: Materials, Objects and Everyday Structures</b>	<b>Science and Technology: Understanding Life Systems. Growth and Change in Animals</b>	<b>Science and Technology: Strong and Stable Structures</b>
<b>BIG IDEAS IN THIS UNIT:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objects have observable characteristics and are made from materials</li> <li>• Materials have specific properties</li> <li>• An object is held together by its structure</li> <li>• The materials and structure of an object determine its purpose</li> <li>• Humans make choices related to their use of objects and materials that have a direct effect on the environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animals have distinctive needs</li> <li>• Humans need to protect animals and the places they live</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A structure has both form and function</li> <li>• Structures are affected by forces acting on them</li> <li>• Structures need to be strong and stable to be useful</li> </ul>
<b>OVERALL EXPECTATIONS:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the impact on people and the environment of objects and structures and the materials used in them</li> <li>• Investigate structures that are built for a specific purpose to see how their design and materials suit the purpose</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding that objects and structures have observable characteristics and are made from materials with specific properties that determine how they are used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess ways in which animals have an impact on society and the environment, and ways in which humans have an impact upon animals and the places they live</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the importance of form, function, strength and stability in structures through time</li> <li>• Investigate strong and stable structures to determine how their design and materials enable them to perform their load-bearing function</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of structure, strength and stability and the factors that affect them</li> </ul>

**CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

Sample of Unit Plan Math, Science and the Arts connections provided to primary teachers. This is a link to our unit document for anyone interested in using it or modifying it for your own use. [http://bit.ly/STEM\\_fairytale](http://bit.ly/STEM_fairytale)

these teachers in conceptualizing the project. They were provided with a unit outline that explored specific Ontario Curriculum connections in both Mathematics and Science to illustrate the academic rigor expected within this STEAM project. Room for individualization was needed within the program based on specific student and class requirements. (See sidebar, opposite, for sample mathematics expectations in the primary division and a link to the full document.)

The big reveal occurred about five weeks after the kick-off when the elementary students returned to our secondary school to present their findings and watch the conclusion of the tale.

A link to our results video can be found at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XT\\_vYv\\_cO3Y&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XT_vYv_cO3Y&feature=youtu.be)

### THE BENEFITS – STUDENTS

The National Research Council defines STEM Literacy as “the knowledge and understanding of scientific and mathematical concepts and processes required of personal decision making, participation in civic and cultural affairs and economic productivity” (National Research Council, 2011 in Vasquez et al., 2014, p.10). With this goal of improving access to, and readiness for, 21st century technology and with a focus on problem solving as a process standard, our students were engaged in new learning and recognizing that they could reach beyond the classroom to engage in knowledge building.

“I feel like this has been a great leadership opportunity for me and a chance to see what working with kids would be like. I organized the whole workshop for kids at the two feeder schools and planned for a fun day that I would (have) liked.” (Grade 11 STEAM Club Leader)

Early anecdotal feedback from the younger children also proved positive in terms of their attitude towards school on STEAM days, using math problems to solve a larger problem, and exploring interesting facts in the area of science. Most students identified the creation portion of STEAM as being the most fun.

“I got to try things out and see what my bridge could hold. It broke a lot of times and then finally it would hold a book. We had a lot of fun with that.” (Student comment during consolidation)

There was a general feeling that the testing processes, and by extension working through the failures in the project, produced the most excitement – they could go back and experiment again.

**Children are both problem solvers and problem generators: children attempt to solve problems presented to them, and they also seek novel challenges. They refine and improve their problem-solving strategies not only in the face of failure, but also by building on prior success. They persist because success and understanding are motivating in their own right.**

(Bransford, quoted in Myers & Berkowicz, 2015, p.16)

### THE BENEFITS – STAFF

Benefits for staff were evaluated through informal discussion and survey results. Staff enjoyed having a transdiscipline and trans-panel (elementary and secondary) experience – many indicating that it was helpful to their overall practice when they made a connection between where children had been and where they were going in terms of exposure to content and curricular foci.

For some staff, this was a journey about learning what the STEAM model is and how it can be used as an effective framework for learning. Figure 1.2 highlights that a combined 20 per cent of staff between both schools were not at the recognition level for STEAM. Figure 1.3 shows that at the beginning of the project a combined 30 per cent had not tried a STEAM activity in their classroom. Some staff were more STEAM ready than others, indicating they have started creating and implementing some STEAM activities into their classroom program.

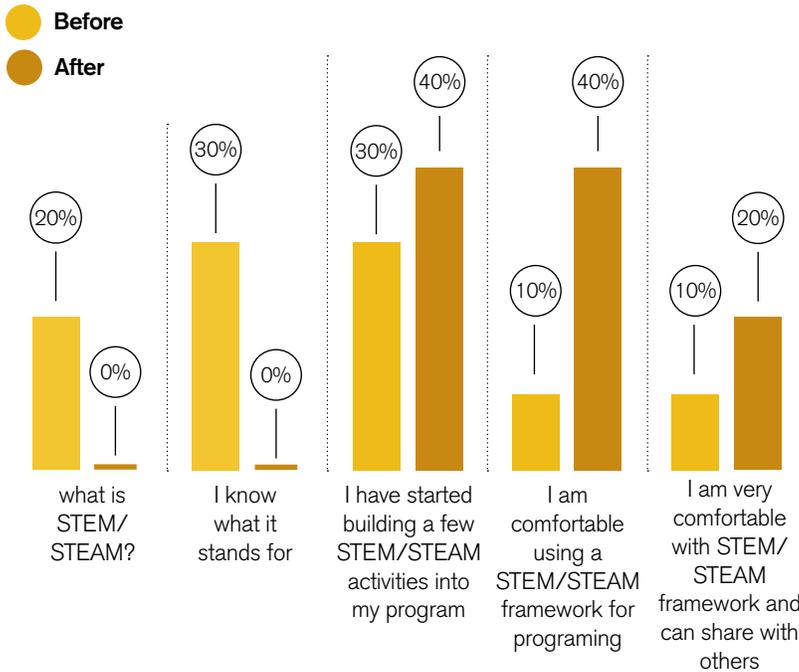
Fewer than 10 per cent of staff at both schools, however, were comfortable using STEAM as a framework for overall programming prior to this STEAM project. This project was initially an effort to make students and staff aware of the STEAM model. It was clear for some staff that the addition of the Arts to STEAM acted as an access point in terms of their own comfort level with the various curricula. Figure 1.3 indicates that the awareness of STEAM rose, with all staff at least implementing some activities into their programs.

Co-planning with colleagues both at the same school and between schools was cited as another significant benefit for staff. And 20 per cent of respondents at each school initially listed this as a significant barrier to implementing STEAM into their practice. Of particular note was a comment that it is very helpful professionally to see what students in other schools, at the same grade level, can accomplish or can be expected to accomplish.

**A summary of select survey responses from teachers on staff at both John A. Leslie and HA Halbert schools before and after the STEAM unit.**

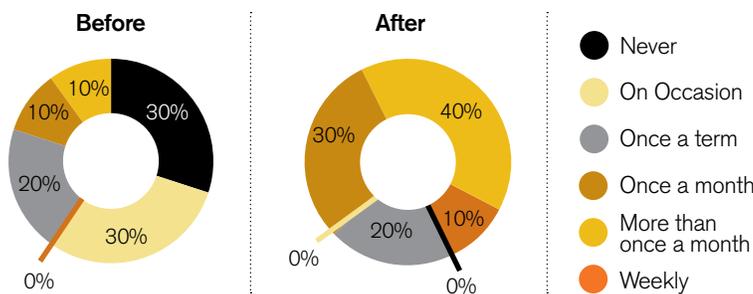
**FIGURE 1.2**

Select the options that best describes your understanding of STEAM:



**FIGURE 1.3**

How often do you build STEM/STEAM activities in to your program?



**A CAUTIONARY TALE**

It would be disingenuous to say that everything in this project ran smoothly and perfectly. While we feel that overall the project was a success, there were some areas of difficulty that we think highlight some of the intrinsic issues with this type of instruction: time and space, building instructional capacity and event versus framework.

Overall this is a time consuming prospect – with complex inquiries that take weeks to complete. Projects are difficult to pack up as they are being created. Careful planning around

where these inquiries can occur may be required if space is tight. STEAM is messy, but if our goal is to use the STEAM model as a framework for learning and addressing a variety of learning styles while working to improve student achievement and engagement, then there is a lot of evidence that it is worth the effort. Yager and Brunkhorst point out that a rigorous approach to STEAM in a classroom can be a very powerful experience for students and staff, and can ultimately “bridge the gap between (academic) standards and industry practice.” The benefits for students are “a sustainable program that fosters academic growth, critical thinking skills, social development, confidence and competence and a resilient persona” (2014, p. 169).

While this was not an expensive endeavour, our Superintendent of Education was generous and provided a number of release days for staff to collaborate and meet with each other on the project. Staff were also willing to meet after school hours for other collaborations. Additionally, we found some opportunities during unscheduled staff meeting time as the project moved along, and the result was that staff engagement soared alongside student engagement.

**BUILDING INSTRUCTIONAL CAPACITY**

To provide a program with the rigour required for academic excellence requires teacher capacity in all areas of STEAM learning, particularly in mathematics and science. Yager and Brunkhorst caution that while student achievement is “measurably greater and deeper using STEAM methodology,” this is only so if we first “commit ourselves to our ultimate goal as educators: to provide rich and rigorous experiences that will, in a very tangible and measurable manner, foster the development of citizens who are ready and able to be productive and responsible contributors to society” (2014, p.169).

They go on to suggest that this goal is essential and must dominate our goals in development of appropriate learning tasks that will truly move student achievement forward. Indeed, STEAM is not intended to replace all direct instruction. The teacher role, however, becomes the facilitator of larger ideas. Hattie and Yates (2014) remind us that when dealing with larger inquiries “even when students solve the specific given problems, they may fail to acquire the underlying principles and so fail to generalize the experience” (quoted in Myers & Berkowicz, 2015, p.16). This is a key element to consolidating learning for students and ensuring that the focus skills are explicitly discussed, and students can articulate that learning.

In the case of our three Toronto schools, this was evident in the depth and breadth of student knowledge during the reveal portion of the project. A number of students had absorbed, and were able to effectively communicate, interesting and varied knowledge on their chosen topic. They were able to excitedly explain their process, their trials and their successes. However, there were some classes where questioning and prompting revealed that students had garnered a limited depth of understanding and their projects reflected little more than an art project; but investigation suggested that it was more a reflection of teacher discomfort with the curriculum and overall project style. We do know that front loading of the curriculum knowledge is essential for a successful STEAM journey.

STEAM activities or one-off challenges can be fun and engaging. They can produce learning and excite and engage students. However, to be meaningful in terms of building 21st century learning skills and enduring student and teacher practice, it needs to become inquiry based over time and replace traditional educational frameworks.

#### HAPPILY EVER AFTER ...

Myers & Berkowicz (2015) remind us that education must transform to accommodate the needs of our students, who will be living in a very different future:

*Classrooms with desks and blackboards and teachers lecturing will soon take a place in a historical photo album next to a one-room schoolhouse and a Conestoga wagon. Schools cannot be the bastions of the past. They must be the conveyors of the values and lessons of the past, but their role is to ready children for the future. And the future is not a patient partner. (p.6)*

As we move forward into our next STEAM journey, we do so working to address some of the challenges we found in the first attempt but with exciting successes behind us. We are fortunate to have the support of our Superintendent and school board as a whole, and as designated STEM schools, we hope to move

#### GETTING STARTED: FIRST STEPS AND KEY LEARNING

1. Start small – strategic selection of your participants is important for buy in. Scaffolding support for staff and highlighting cross-curricular instruction and assessment strategies. (see Fig. 1.1)
2. Use STEAM as a lever for improving pedagogy. Remind staff that this replaces old practice, it does not add to it.
3. Focus on the process, not the product. With STEAM events we can spark interest but teachers need to focus on embedding STEAM into their daily practice. Expressly teach students about the value in mistakes and the learning that can occur through inquiry.
4. Celebrate your successes! Acknowledge staff as they move along the continuum of implementation.
5. Invest in a few easy-start resources for staff. For example: NSTA has a number of book-series, like The Picture Perfect Science Lessons books, that can inspire whole STEAM inquiry and help staff have a kick-off point.

Greg McLeod and Nicole Miller (2014–2015)  
Staff Data Collected around STEAM implementation

forward to positively affect teaching and learning for the 21st century. As administrators, we value the time to collaborate with each other and to focus on our favourite part of the job: leading the instructional program. ▲

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The OPC is pleased to recognize the following OPC Members who have recently been awarded with a **2016 Canada's Outstanding Principals Award**, in recognition of their outstanding contributions as exemplary leaders in public education. The program, sponsored by The Learning Partnership, also includes an Executive Leadership Training Program. This program, in partnership with the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, strengthens the education system in Canada by developing its leaders. Award winners become part of a National Academy of Principals, a pan-Canadian learning community of Canada's Outstanding Principals alumni.



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# Pupil Accommodation Reviews

## Understanding transitional changes for all

Accommodation decisions around closing or consolidating schools can be a difficult time for students and the school community. Boards are responsible for developing policies

and procedures to address Pupil Accommodation Reviews (PARs) to deal with this issue. Prior to making any decision, your board administration will prepare an initial staff report to local Trustees. This report must contain one or more option(s) to address the accommodation issues(s) and includes detailed School Information Profiles (SIPs), which you may be asked to develop or review.

Following approval of this report by the Trustees, an Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) is formed. The ARC then acts as the official conduit for information shared between both board and school community. This committee is required to follow the current Ministry of Education's Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines (PARG) and Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG). If your school is going to be part of an ARC, you should familiarize yourself with your board's specific process. You may be asked to attend meetings of the ARC to act as a resource.

### Who decides to close a school?

A final staff report is presented to the Trustees, following ARC meetings and at least two public meetings (if the process is following the Standard PAR process) or one public meeting (if the process meets Ministry specifications for a modified process). Meetings for public delegations to the board occur prior to any final decision. Trustees, after hearing delegations, vote on the report and make a final decision.

### Why would a school close?

Boards have often opened and closed schools as local student population in the surrounding community shifts with time. School funding is mainly set based on student numbers, so with fewer students a school may see less monetary support, which can correlate to a decline in certain programs and even staff. Therefore, through school consolidation, boards can offer better educational experiences in one larger school, rather than in two or more smaller ones.

### Who gets consulted in the review?

Boards are committed to community engagement, with PARG developed to assist the public in understanding the PAR process. Public meetings are structured to gather input and share information to and from the local community. These meetings are open to anyone who may wish to attend including parents, teachers, students, school council members, local community members and other interested parties.

### How is information from the ARC shared?

Board administration must ensure parents and the public have access to information, including meeting agendas and minutes. In many cases, the board and/or school website or newsletters are used to share updates regarding the ARC progress and/or upcoming public meetings.

### Does a review guarantee my school may close?

No. Oftentimes boards include a

number of schools in a PAR because the option(s) developed by the administration may include the consolidation of two or more schools, the closure of a school building, the repurposing of a school or the construction of a new school.

### What is the principal's role in the PAR process?

Your role is to facilitate the gathering and sharing of information required for the review. It is imperative that you communicate your obligation to follow board policy and to remain neutral with respect to your personal feelings or opinions. If you are attending ARC meetings, it is important that you share information to support the board's staff report. To be – or seem to be – a part of an advocacy group in opposition to a potential or real board decision to close or consolidate (a) school(s) could attract serious discipline for insubordination; that is, a failure in your duty of loyalty to your employer-board. If strong emotions may be provoked and that you feel you may be pressured to oppose the board's direction, you are encouraged to seek support and advice from your supervisory officer.

It's important to remember that boards must focus resources so that all students have access to high quality education. A closure or consolidation of a local school can be a very emotionally heavy and difficult transition for parents, guardians, students and the community. As an administrator, you play a very important role in supporting your community in carrying out this important work.



Resources: Ministry of Education, board websites, People for Education Guide to Pupil Accommodation Reviews document [edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1516/2015B9appenAEN.pdf](http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1516/2015B9appenAEN.pdf)

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# The Implementation Journey

Mentoring educators new to kindergarten

In 2010, the Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) initiated discussions on how young children learn and the intentional play-based practices that support that learning, in the year before the first cohort of children began full day learning. Since that time, numerous opportunities have been provided for educators and administrators to come together and learn about intentional play-based pedagogy.

This initiative utilized professional inquiry groups in workshops as a basis for understanding the changes that educators were grappling with, and as a way to offer differentiated learning opportunities during and after school hours. It was noted that there had been much change in practice within some classrooms, modest change

in many classrooms and very little in a few classrooms. Correspondingly, there were also pedagogical misunderstandings threading their way throughout our schools despite our best efforts.

Educators new to kindergarten (a significant number each year) were particularly struggling with the implementation of play-based pedagogy.

By Linda Benallick and Caroline Mitchell  
Illustrated by Marco Cibola

This included educators new to the profession as well as those who were experienced but had taught other grades or in other settings, such as day-care. The pedagogy was so different in kindergarten that they were often overwhelmed when also dealing with new partnerships. Additionally, there were numerous new administrators and administrator transfers. In response, the board offered a half-day workshop for new educators to help orient them to the Full Day Kindergarten Program Document and

through practical scenarios. Jeannie and Kate also modeled mentoring sessions for the entire group, outlining topics that included

- listening deeply
- asking powerful/impactful questions
- building relationships
- providing meaningful feedback: acknowledging and challenging
- holding the mentee's agenda

**“I believe this is truly an awesome opportunity**

**to learn from teachers that have been doing this**

**for a long time and have great ideas to share!”**

pedagogy. Administrators were encouraged to attend with their staff.

Research indicated that District led large group workshops have only limited success in changing practice. More contextualized, “in the moment” support better promotes professional learning (Katz & Ain Dack, 2012). To address this, the UGDSB full day kindergarten implementation team began spending more time in classrooms and facilitating in-school capacity days and inquiries. Despite this, there was still a jagged implementation of play-based learning across the board. More support was needed for new educators – without additional funding – so the team had to become creative.

The decision was made to use some of the combined board and Ministry full day kindergarten funding for training, in support of a kindergarten mentoring program for both ECEs and teachers, that would help give more in-school, personalized support. Because the pedagogy was such a shift for even veteran educators, the board invited not only new educators to participate, but also experienced educators who were new to kindergarten.

General research indicates that when educators get together, they often just share stories and ideas rather than talk deeply about how to change practice. It was important that each mentor be able to support the mentee to solve their own problems and reflect on their own practices. Mentor training was extremely important to the success of our program (Gardiner, 2012) and in-school shared leadership opportunities were also provided for Administrators. The decision was made to train mentors and give on-going support and training throughout the year.

Professional learning for mentors should be rich and ongoing. Mentors should deeply examine, reflect and re-examine their facilitation practices. The board called in Kate Sharpe and Jeanie Nishimura to assist. Kate and Jeannie offered four days of full day learning opportunities for mentors. Two days were spent together in the fall before the mentors met their mentees, and two follow-up dates occurred in the winter. At each session, mentors were provided with new ideas and processes, as well as opportunities to develop new skills with each other

- being in the moment/fully present
- navigating the coaching conversation: forwarding action/deepening learning and
- self-managing – not fixing, solving or interpreting/letting client do own work.

The objective was for mentors to be able to use these skills at the school level when facilitating or participating in team meetings or capacity days. During this training the full day kindergarten team worked to pair mentors and mentees. A decision was made not to pair educators who were in the same building, in order to maintain privacy and also provide a broader view of pedagogy. Attention was paid to geography so that mentors and mentees would either live or work in the same area, making it easier to get together.

We enlisted the help of administrators to choose mentors who were not only implementing play-based pedagogy in their classrooms, but also had skills that would help them successfully work with new kindergarten colleagues. The chosen mentors displayed a range of abilities and exhibited a growth mindset. Each one was open to possibilities and new learning themselves so that mentors and mentees could learn from each other.

It was important to document the success of this program. We gathered information through a survey of the mentors at the beginning of the year and from both the mentees and mentors at the end of the year. At the beginning of this journey the mentors, as a group, felt most confident in their relationship building skills. They felt moderately confident providing feedback and holding the mentee's agenda. By the end of the training, mentors felt their skill levels and confidence had improved in all of the areas except relationship building, holding the mentee's agenda and providing feedback. Self-evaluation at the final workshop illustrated that mentors, now with better understanding, felt they were not as skilled in particular areas as they had believed themselves to be at the beginning of the training.

In the final surveys of both mentors and mentees, both groups reported they had spent time talking about classroom environment and

literacy and numeracy in a play-based classroom, but more mentors felt that they had spent time focusing on relationships and behaviour than did mentees. Mentors indicated to us that they needed to spend more time with their mentees than they had during the year. They also wanted the mentor program to start earlier in the year. We responded to the feedback by finding funds to support a small amount of additional release time. Overall, both mentors and mentees felt that this had been a positive experience with some indicating extremely positive.

Most mentees indicated that working with a mentor had changed their practice in one or more ways, mostly in terms of literacy and numeracy in the play-based classroom, the classroom environment and learning through inquiry. Mentees indicated that mentors supported them mostly by providing ideas, listening to their challenges and goals and offering meaningful feedback. One mentee stated “I believe this is truly an awesome opportunity to learn from teachers that have been doing this for a long time and have great ideas to share!” According

to the work of Gardiner (2012), five things are important to good mentoring: a trusting relationship, time to work together, pairing mentors and mentees who work in similar environments, keeping broader pedagogical goals in mind and training the mentors.

Even with the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) Lead connection last year, we aim to forge a closer connection not only to help in pairing mentors and mentees, but also to share the cost of training. Kindergarten mentors should be a part of the larger board mentorship program and in this way administrators would have a better understanding of the mentorship process and how to apply this process when working with staff. While administrators were connected to the process, we feel that a more direct involvement at the school level would have enabled administrators to offer encouragement to participate in the program and improve practices.

It remains important that we review the content of our training to make sure it is in line not only with the needs of the mentors and mentees, but also supports current research in the area. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) discuss the idea that the veteran educator may not always be the expert in all areas. Therefore, an inquiry and co-learning approach to mentoring should be explored. Research suggests that mentors need to focus on the goals and needs of the mentee but also keep broader pedagogical goals in mind (Gardiner, 2012; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000).

Therefore, training that also focuses on promoting good play-based pedagogy would help the end goal of increasing the adoption of play-based pedagogy more consistently across the system.

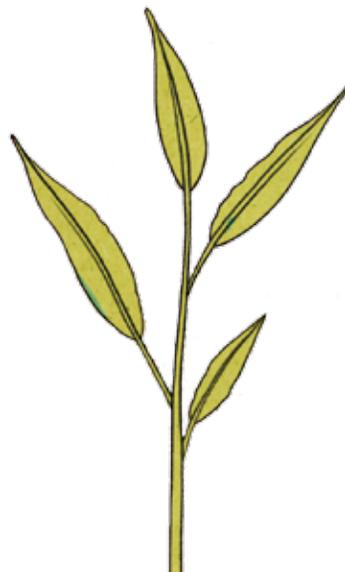
Moving forward, we will continue to review our method of collecting data and gathering more information at the beginning of the program from both mentors and mentees. This may allow us to better support mentor/mentee partnerships in the future. It would also have been useful to gather data from administrators regarding evidence of change in a mentee’s practice.

It became apparent from discussions with mentors that the mentees were initially unsure of what the Mentor Program would look like. We are now considering ways that we can better inform both mentors and mentees about the vision of the Mentor Program. For example, might a brochure about the Mentor Program provide more information? Might a more detailed explanation at the new educator workshop be helpful? This would also support administrators when recommending both mentors and mentees for the program.

Much was learned from our first year of implementation. Our initial success has encouraged us to continue to work to improve the mentor program. Our goal remains to support educators in implementing play-based learning and providing more in-school, personalized support.

Reflection has led us to many questions and considerations for the future, such as, sustainability, cost and effective evaluation of the program. As we continue our journey, we look forward to increasing our understanding of how mentoring can support professional learning and changes in classroom practice in our schools. ▲

Our goal  
remains to  
support  
educators in  
implementing  
play-based  
learning and  
providing  
more in-school,  
personalized  
support.



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# It takes a **Village**

Supporting student well-being using a collective impact model

Among the most challenging issues school leaders face is how to make a real difference in supporting student well-being, especially for students with mental health challenges. There are limits to what school leaders can do in this area. We are not health care professionals.

School leaders can promote student well-being by educating staff, students and parents about healthy living. We can connect students and families to school-based, board and community supports. We can nurture a safe climate and a sense of belonging. Even when all these strategies are in place, students can still face mental health challenges and school leaders can still be left feeling helpless.

Lasting change for complex social problems needs to include the whole village, not just the school. Sustainable community development thrives when there are multiple influencers such as active engagement of home, school and community focused on a common goal.

Ontario's Policy Framework for Children and Youth for Mental Health provides a comprehensive plan and community agencies are restructuring to meet the increased demand. School leaders and staff have access to training including Mental Health First Aid, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and safeTALK. Student groups are forming to raise awareness and "stomp out stigma." Careful work is being done in many places to better support our young people.

By Jessica  
Outram

Illustrated by  
Matthew  
Billington

Yet, what does this mean for a child who struggles with anxiety and refuses to go into the classroom? Or a family who has lost faith in a system due to one mishandled experience? Or a teen who has been on a waiting list to receive counselling support for six months? Gaps still exist.

We are on the edge of an important provincial tipping point in how we support student well-being in our schools and communities. How will we know if we have made a difference?

In the meantime, the projects continue. Well-being teams are formed in schools. Staff are trained in nurturing resiliency and students attend group sessions to learn self-regulation skills. Parents are invited to mental health conferences. But what is the impact? When is it time to pause for reflection?

Adaptive leadership puts learning in the centre. Adaptive leadership “encourages bold thinking, tough conversations, and experimentation, planning that is iterative and

dynamic, and management organized around a process of learning-by-doing.” (Cabaj, 2014, p. 111). Complex social problems *can* benefit from adaptive leadership.

If our collective goal is to support the development of healthy, whole-hearted children and youth, then what are we learning, what are we doing and how are we adapting our plan as we learn more? Change requires a continuous cycle of reflection and action.

### **Shift from Isolated Impact to Collective Impact**

In 2011, John Kania and Mark Kramer introduced the concept of “Collective Impact.” The idea goes beyond the idea of collaboration. It “involves a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants.” (Kania & Kramer, 2011). To create social

change with this model, the work needs to be intentional, integrated and widespread.

Staff at a rural high school in Ontario noticed an increase in students with mental health issues and an increase in students with diagnosed mental illnesses. Staff reported feelings of helplessness and exhaustion. The student need seemed greater than the school resources.

A team of guidance, special education, administration, student success and counselling staff decided to work on the problem in the hopes of determining a better way to support these students.

- **Issue:** Many students required support for mental health issues at school while they were on a waiting list for professional treatment or after they had been released from treatment.
- **Response:** Each team member selected students who they could support as a caring adult, through regular check-ins.
- **Insight:** Staff continued to feel overwhelmed and student need continued to increase.
- **Next Steps:** Staff decided to learn more about mental health supports in the community.
- **Outcome:** A school-community mental health summit was organized by staff with representatives from nearby hospitals, local doctors, social service agencies, school team and school board psychology team. Staff were surprised to learn that everyone at the table agreed with the current situation and that gaps existed in each sector.

Each group prioritized the well-being of children and youth, generously offering cross-sector support. Within a couple of months, all returned to working in isolation. As more time passed, communication among the groups faded. Gains were likely made with some individual students receiving support but the broader, more complex social problem of students in distress continued.

### **Complex problems sometimes need complex solutions**

A solution to a complex problem depends on the efforts of everyone. Collective Impact recommends a “cradle to career” initiative that involves a long-term commitment. (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 36).



**“Alone we  
can do  
so little;  
together  
we can do  
so much.”**

– HELEN KELLER



**“In a gentle way, you can shake the world.”**

– MAHATMA GHANDI

Imagine if the high school described earlier used Collective Impact to work through the problem of students in distress by examining possible roots of the issue. In this hypothetical example the team of community and school staff make a decision to work in a different, bolder way. Rather than return to their organizations and continue the work of responding to student need, they return to the table to better understand the conditions that are contributing to the rise in mental health challenges. The group feels a sense of urgency, the local school leaders are “influential champions,” and one of the agencies has access to a funding source that can help bring this vision to life – the necessary preconditions for a Collective Impact initiative. (Hanleybrown, Kania, & Kramer, 2012, p. 6). The group commits to working together for two to three years.

Early in the process a facilitator guides the group to develop a common agenda and shared vision. Often different organizations have different understandings of the problem and different ways of solving it. (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 39). Kania and Kramer recommend selecting a facilitator who can resolve these differences, who may not be deeply connected to any of the organizations and who can foster agreement for a common goal.

The group collectively defines well-being, exploring what children and youth are receiving and/or missing to support their cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. The preliminary data shows that the students have lower than average engagement in moderate to high physical activity. Due to changes in the community, students have access to fewer sports clubs, dance classes and parks. Therefore, most students’ needs for physical activity are not being

met. The theory of change suggests if children and youth increase physical activity, then they will be able to better cope with stress, resulting in a reduction of mental health challenges.

A comprehensive plan then includes cross-sector integration. Local shops offer a discount for sporting equipment. Schools organize afterschool family fitness activities. Some businesses increase their donations to sponsor teams. The town receives a grant to build a skateboard park. Health care professionals offer workshops to the community showing the connection between physical activity and well-being.

At every phase, from toddlers to elderly, they all learn about the benefits of physical activity and find an increase in opportunities for moderate to intense exercise. The whole town is mobilized to learn about the connection between physical activity and well-being.

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”**

– MARGARET MEAD



The Collective Impact group meets regularly to reflect on this progress, to identify new learning needs and to measure impact using a shared system. Mark Cabaj suggests a “wide-angle lens on outcomes” and being “deeply curious about all the effects,” both intended and unintended. (Cabaj, 2014, p. 117). This model is not about arriving at “and they all lived happily-ever-after.” It is a complex model focused on intentional, integrative and widespread learning.

Collective Impact is about delving deeply into an urgent social issue, examining it from

different perspectives, and then responding together with a shared vision using an adaptive plan. Everyone at the table engages deeply in the work and the common goal is impact.

### **Adapting Collective Impact for a school-based well-being team**

The possibilities for driving social change using Collective Impact are exciting, but they can also be daunting to a school leader. Without funding to hire an outside consultant to facilitate a Collective Impact process in our

communities, there may simply be too much work to do to add mobilizing a town or a city to the school leader’s pile. So, how can we use the ideas of this model to impact change in our schools today?

- **Build diverse working teams:** Include staff, students, parents and community members. Work toward a common understanding of the problem and a clear vision for change. Know the strengths at the table. Go beyond consultation and ensure that the focus of the team is to do the work. The *Foundations for a Healthy School* resource provides strategies that prioritize an integrated approach for school leaders, teachers, students and parents.

- **Design adaptive plans implemented over time:** Focus on the learning of the collective. Reflect and act. Repeat. Commit to learning together for at least two years. *Supporting Minds: An educator’s guide to promoting students’ mental health and well-being* can help focus the team on the scope of what’s possible in schools for supporting a variety of mental health challenges.

- **Reflect on impact:** Be open to surprise. Explore different ways of reflecting on progress while monitoring impact with a shared measurement system. Recognize that the work is non-linear, messy and ongoing. We can use a wide-angle lens approach to watching how the work in our school aligns with the board, the community and the province. Look for gaps. ▲

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# Shifting the Stance

## School leaders as mentor-coaches

**AS** the role of the school leader continues to evolve, as a result of the ever-changing dynamic within and surrounding education, the expectation for principals and vice-principals to lead and support learning and capacity building for teachers, students and colleagues is intensifying. Providing leaders with the additional tools, skills and frameworks to help them engage, mobilize and build capacity continues to grow in relevance and urgency.

OPC's Education Leadership Canada continues to partner with Kate Sharpe and Jeanie Nishimura, educators and certified professional coaches, in offering The Mentor-Coaching Institute (formerly The Mentor-Coach Training for Educators Program). Since 2007, this well established framework has been bringing mentoring and coaching together, as powerful allies to support a robust process for a leading and learning relationship.

Mentor-coaching provides school leaders with a set of concrete and transferable skills that come up underneath work accessing potential, growing talent and practices within buildings and beyond. The Personal Leadership Resources identified within the Ontario Leadership Framework are often cited as the key indicators of leaders' ability to effectively enact leadership practices. Our MentoringCoaching program is an avenue through which aspiring and practising leaders can target the cognitive, social and psychological skills that are aligned with purposeful school and system leadership.

Through the training, leaders can explore the critical nature and rigour of the skills required to foster individual and collective growth and development.

an in depth professional learning opportunity that combines a robust theoretical framework with in-depth mentor-coaching skill development.

Building capacity sits at the core of education. Building our own capacities, in supporting others as they build their capacities, is vital if we are to maximize our individual and collective potential ... [This shift in stance to capacity builder, pivots the leader] from being one who offers expertise, advice and experience easily and quickly to one who invites the mentee to dig deep, access their own gifts and wisdom, in service of building their confidence and competence.

(Sharpe & Nishimura, 2016)

Our Mentor-Coaching Institute learning objectives include:

- providing leaders/mentors with training in the fundamental skills, principles and mindset of coaching as a new model for professional learning and growth
- embedding the coaching frame and skills into mentoring and coaching relationships and processes to support mobilizing and building capacity
- providing a model for structured conversations and support that results in enhanced core leadership practices and competencies identified at the system level and
- providing leaders and mentor-coaches with the opportunity to foster relationships and build capacity within teams and support networks.

This Mentor-Coaching Institute has been purposefully designed to provide

The strong experiential orientation of the learning through peer coaching, observation, demonstration coaching, feedback, scenarios, etc., maximizes opportunities for practice and grounds the learning in the specific contexts of the leader's work to heighten relevance and thereby maximize integration.

To support the professional learning and growth of school leaders, we are excited to be sponsoring The Mentor-Coaching Institute and Sharpe and Nishimura's new book *When Mentoring Meets Coaching: Shifting the stance in education* (Pearson Canada), available soon. This expanded offering extends the reach and opportunity for the integration of the mentor-coaching stance for school leaders across Canada. ▲

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**i** For more information on the Institute research on the impact of Mentor-Coaching, please visit the OPC website under Professional Development > OPC Research.

# Mark Your Calendar

## AQ Boot Camp

July 11-14

Ontario Principals' Council  
Toronto, ON

Register by: **June 23**

## PQP Summer Courses

Part I & II

July 5-21

July 5-8

July 11-14

July 18-21

Register by: **June 10**

## Education Law Qualification Program

(dates may be subject to change)

Module 1 - August 19-20

Module 2 - September 16-17

Module 3 - October 21-22

Module 4 - November 11-12

Apply by: **August 2**

## Technology-Enabled Leading and Learning Conference

August 11-12

Marriott Eaton Centre

Toronto, ON

Register by: **June 27**

## ASLP Sessions

The Aspiring School Leaders' Program (ASLP) is intended to support individuals and boards in the development of skills, attitudes, knowledge and practices understood to be threshold competencies for school administrators. Visit a list of all current ASLP workshops by visiting [www.principals.ca](http://www.principals.ca) → Professional Development → Professional Learning Opportunities. For additional information email [aslprogram@principals.ca](mailto:aslprogram@principals.ca).

For more information on the events and courses listed above visit [www.principals.ca](http://www.principals.ca) or email [elc@principals.ca](mailto:elc@principals.ca).

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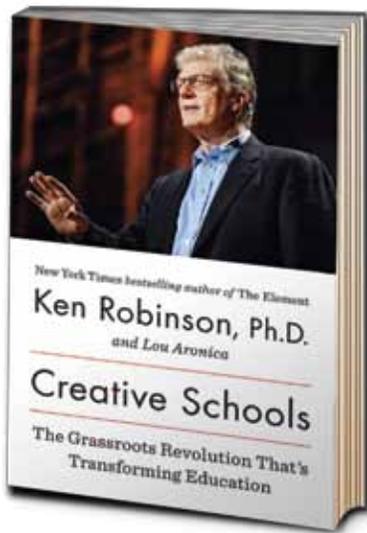
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## Creative Schools: The grassroots revolution that's transforming education

By Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica

Publisher: Viking

ISBN: 978-0-698-14284-8

Reviewed by Steve Toffelmire

If you are unfamiliar with Ken Robinson, a quick review of TED Talks will certainly familiarize you with his ideas about our current state of education; however, that search is entirely unnecessary if you pick up his recent book

*Creative Schools: The grassroots revolution that's transforming education.* This latest book of Dr. Robinson's reads just like his talks, and is an easy exploration not only of his lament on the state of education, but also on recent efforts to solve the lack of creativity in English language schools across the globe. But it is not just creativity as it pertains to the arts of dance, drama, music and visual arts. It also extends to the art of thinking creatively, the art of persuasion, the art of collaboration and the art of teaching.

Robinson's previous book, *Out of Our Minds*, details the problem with education as outlined in his TED Talks. We are making every effort to sustain a model of education steeped in the Industrial Age, while expecting that our students will be able to have the wherewithal to solve the very complex issues of the 21st century, as well as our rather bleak future on this over-populated earth. In *Creative Schools*, he turns his hand to

the solutions that he has encountered in schools in Europe, North America and in the lands down-under. But his book doesn't limit itself to schools. He also talks to and about many famous people from a variety of backgrounds in his descriptions of communities, corporations and cultures in his bid to have us understand the vital importance of education and the engagement of our students.

Leaders in education should take note of the real life strategies for transforming our global education system that Dr. Robinson details in this book. There are some amazing ideas that administrators across Ontario will likely recognize as those currently being implemented in our schools and many more that could easily make a huge difference for our students. Even if this may not be the time for any new initiatives, there may be plenty of opportunity to tweak current projects or simply enter into the conversation with school stakeholders.

This book will undoubtedly give you the creative energy to enter into the fray and make yet another difference for your school community, staff and students.

Ken Robinson's humorous and poignant way of speaking comes through in the writing so that you can easily imagine listening to yet another TED Talk about all of the people he has encountered in his studies of our education malaise and the gradual reformation of our age-old education system. This makes it rather simple to cruise through the 10 chapters on areas such as Back to the Basics, The Art of Teaching and Principles for Principals. But make no mistake. As easy as it is to read his material, you will want to spend some time reflecting on his ideas or even debating them with others who may be part of your Education Leaders Book Club. What, you don't belong to one of those, you say? High time to connect with your colleagues, create a group of your own and pick up this book as your first read. ▲

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**i** This book is also available as an audio book through iTunes and as a Kindle ebook.



# Going Green

## How one eco-school integrates positive practice

Green practices such as recycling and composting have been in place in communities and schools for several decades.

At Twin Lakes Secondary School, we have a very passionate teacher and a very committed group of students who have worked to create a green culture over many years.

In fact, we are the first secondary school in Simcoe County to receive a Gold level Eco-School status. Successful eco-schools are able to integrate environmental practices into the entire culture of the school.

To get to this point, we've had to overcome obstacles typical to any institution trying to make a change to practices.

At Twin Lakes, we decided we wanted to go beyond the ordinary in two ways: 1) make green bins part of the kitchen practice and 2) use real dishes and cutlery in the cafeteria. The challenge wasn't in convincing people *why* we would do this but *how* we were going to do these things.

Immediately, barriers were identified such as who would empty the bins, where they would be stored and who would pick them up. Part of the plan was to build an outdoor storage area to keep animals out and prevent vandalism.

That of course led to questions of where to build it, who would pay for it and when it would get done. These are legitimate questions, but until we found answers, we couldn't evaluate whether the system would work, preventing us from moving forward.

We focused on getting answers: a phone call to the city resulted in municipal pick up; staff and students within the hospitality program agreed to take the bins out daily; a facility team member determined he could install hooks to hang bins on an existing storage shed. Within a week, there was a clear plan and our system was up and running. A year later, it is now part of our regular routines.

Removing paper plates, Styrofoam bowls and plastic utensils from the cafeteria proved to be another challenge. Again, there were many valid concerns, ranging from the impact on labour for cleaning, lost and damaged items and the potential dangers of broken dishes and metal cutlery around the school.

First, we listened to all the stakeholders and people directly affected. It

was important to keep the concerns in perspective. Since it hadn't been tried before, we didn't know whether we would lose two plates or 20 to damage and theft, and we didn't know whether it would add minutes or hours to the clean-up process. At some point, we had to just start with the intent to be willing to respond to issues and re-evaluate the program as necessary.

There was some minor loss and a little bit of breakage, but nothing consistent or catastrophic. We saw huge cost and time savings with respect to purchasing plates and garbage clean up in the cafeteria and halls. Our staff and students have now become accustomed to the system, and we wonder why we never did it sooner.

When starting a new program, you can spend so much time identifying the potential problems that you sometimes don't let anything actually happen. This applies to all areas of educational change. It's often not the idea that creates the challenge, but the mechanics of making it happen. As we often remind our students, taking the first step, even if it results in a failure, is the first step towards success. Identify the area of concern, come up with a reasonable plan of action and be willing to make modifications. ▲

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**Le Cadre de leadership de l'Ontario** - un guide à l'intention des leaders scolaires et des leaders du système qui promeut une vision partagée du leadership dans les écoles et les conseils scolaires. Pour plus d'informations, visitez :  
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**Les conseils scolaires performants et leur leadership** - La plateforme de cette section du site Web de l'ILE permettra aux cadres des conseils scolaires de communiquer leurs projets en matière de leadership. Pour plus d'informations, visitez :  
[www.education-leadership-ontario.ca](http://www.education-leadership-ontario.ca)



**Outils d'autoréflexion interactifs pour les leaders scolaires et les leaders du système** - ces outils permettent aux leaders d'évaluer et réfléchir sur leurs pratiques de leadership et déterminer les prochaines étapes. Pour plus d'informations, visitez : [www.education-leadership-ontario.ca](http://www.education-leadership-ontario.ca)



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# Your road to retirement

## TIP 1



**It's never too early to start planning**

Most people regret not planning for their retirement sooner. Experts say to achieve a healthy retirement it's best to start at least 5-10 years in advance, ideally in your 40s. Come to us for supportive advice, tips and planning workshops.

## TIP 2



**You need insurance**

Healthcare needs in retirement are unpredictable. On a fixed income, it's important to have a comprehensive group insurance plan like RTO/ERO offers to cover unexpected costs.

## TIP 3



**Get expert advice with RTO/ERO**

You can trust us. We are the largest non-profit organization that caters to the needs of the retired education community. Come to us for retirement lifestyle opportunities and resources.



Get more retirement tips, resources and workshop information, visit

[www.rto-ero.org/principals](http://www.rto-ero.org/principals)  
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