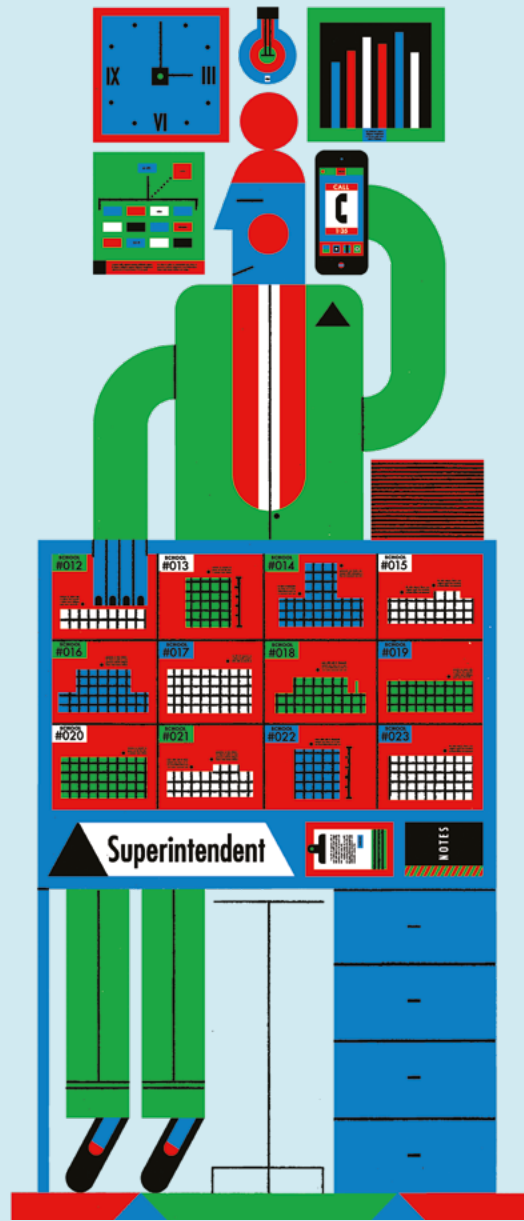
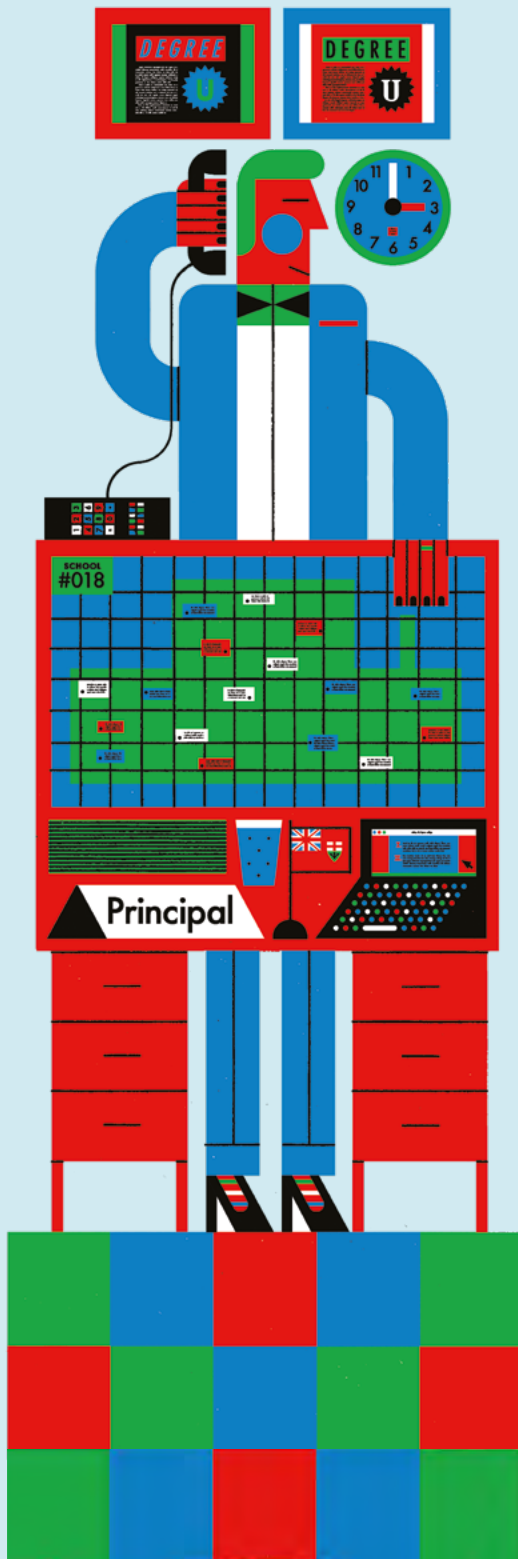


The Register

THE MAGAZINE FOR ONTARIO'S PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS & VICE-PRINCIPALS



Working With Your Superintendent

Tips for principals and vice-principals

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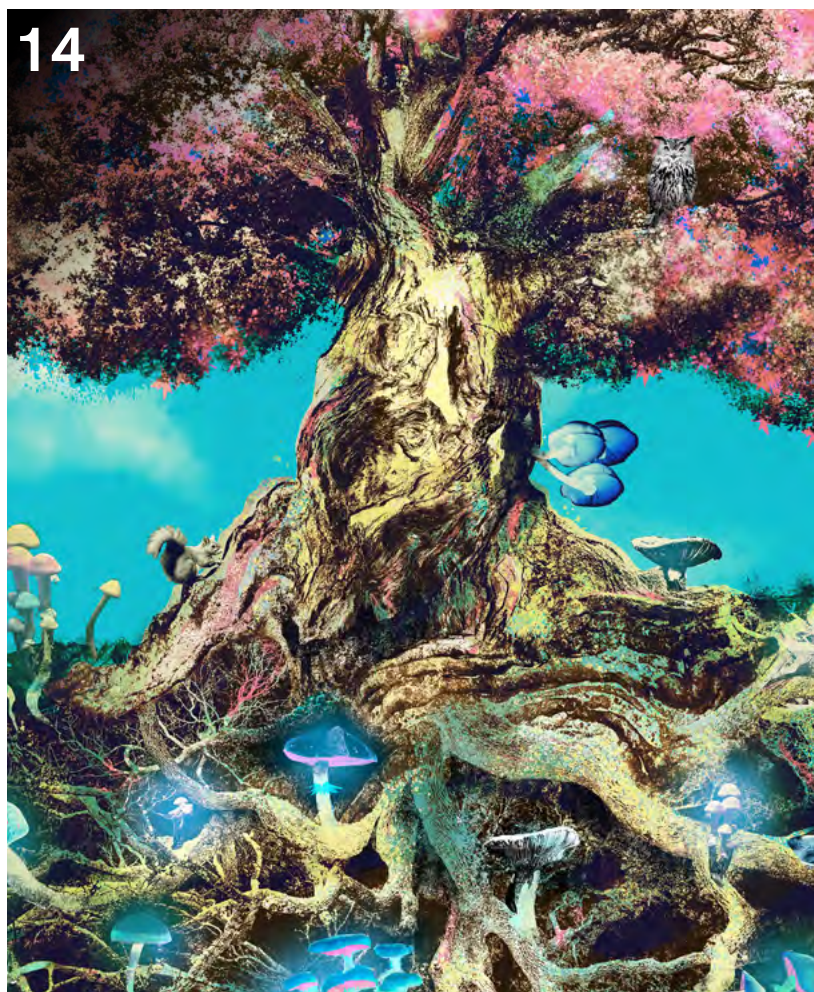
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Public Education Still Matters

We have hope for a bright future



If you listen to some of the prevailing commentary, you might conclude that Ontario's public education system is broken — overstretched,

underperforming and unable to meet the needs of today's students. The narrative can feel relentless: schools in crisis, leaders exhausted and a system past its prime.

Contrary to what you may have heard, public education still matters. It matters deeply to our communities, to our province and to me personally. As an individual and a professional, I am proudly the product of public schools. The opportunities I was given, the educators who believed in me and the experiences that shaped my path all began in Ontario's publicly funded classrooms. Public education changes lives because it opens doors — regardless of background or circumstance.

Despite very real challenges, I remain hopeful about Ontario's schools and the leaders who serve within them. My hope begins with our principals and vice-principals. School leaders today navigate extraordinary complexity. Student needs

have intensified. Mental health concerns are more visible and urgent. Classrooms are increasingly diverse, reflecting the richness of our province. Staffing pressures and operational demands continue to grow. Yet in the face of this complexity, leaders show up every day with professionalism, compassion and an unwavering focus on students. I regularly meet with leaders who are thoughtful and courageous. Leaders who advocate for inclusive practices and build school cultures rooted in safety, belonging and high expectations. Leaders who understand that equity is not a slogan, but a daily responsibility. They make difficult decisions, often with shrinking resources, always guided by what is best for students.

I am equally inspired by the educators and support staff who work alongside them. Ontario's public schools are filled with professionals committed to

continuous improvement. They collaborate, adapt and innovate. They respond to individual learning needs with care and expertise. They embrace inclusive education.

Most importantly, I find hope in our students. They are resilient, insightful and engaged. They speak openly about mental health, fairness and justice. They care deeply about their communities and about one another. Public schools remain one of the few spaces where young people from every background come together in shared experience. Public education is more than curriculum delivery. It is the foundation of opportunity and social cohesion. Strong public schools strengthen communities and contribute to Ontario's prosperity.

My hope for public education must be matched with commitment. Ontario's publicly funded education system requires sustained and adequate investment. The complexity within schools has grown significantly, yet funding has not kept pace with that reality. Funding to develop and maintain leadership, mental health supports, special education services, resources for multilingual learners and equitable access in rural and remote communities is essential, not optional.

Yes, the provincial government is spending record amounts on education, but it is not enough nor is it proportional to student needs. When funding does not align with the lived realities of schools, leaders are forced into difficult choices that strain the system. Asking schools to continually do more with less risks undermining the stability and excellence that Ontarians value.

The provincial government has the opportunity and the responsibility to reaffirm its commitment to public education. Investment in publicly funded schools is not simply a budget line – it is an investment in Ontario’s future. When schools are properly supported and equitably funded, students thrive and communities prosper. At the Ontario Principals’ Council, we support school leaders through our five commitments – grounded in Member support, advocacy, well-being, professional learning, equity and anti-oppression and ensuring the strong voice of school leaders is heard. We stand beside principals and vice-principals as they navigate complexity and champion student success.

Contrary to what you may have heard, Ontario’s public schools are not defined by crisis. They are defined by dedicated leaders, committed educators and remarkable students. I know firsthand what public education makes possible. With thoughtful leadership and meaningful investment, it will remain one of this province’s greatest strengths. ▲



Jeff Maharaj

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SUBMISSIONS & IDEAS

Would you like to contribute to *The Register*?
Do you have an article, feedback or ideas?

Our editorial team would like to hear from you.

Deadlines for submissions are listed below.

[Go to the OPC website under *The Register*](#) for further submission and writing guidelines and considerations.

Send your articles, reviews, thoughts and ideas to ddina@principals.ca.

All submissions are subject to review and selection by the editorial committee.

Content Due	Edition Release
May 1	October
October 1	February
February 1	May

The Register is the proud recipient of the following awards:



Happenings at the OPC ...

In March, the 3rd annual Eastern Cooperative Conference brought school leaders together in Kingston for a day of connection, learning and collaboration.



In March, President Jeff Maharaj joined the representatives of Ontario Public School Boards' Association and other education partners for a press conference at Queen's Park.



In April, we were pleased to join the Toronto School Administrators' Association for a celebration of principals and vice-principals working in the Toronto District School Board.



In May, the Board of Directors met in King City.



Investing in Leadership

The principles that guide our work

What do the [OPC Vision, Mission and Values](#) have to do with professional learning? Everything. These commitments will shape how we, as school and system leaders, engage and respond to the changing landscape and challenges of education and society. Professional learning becomes the bridge between these guiding principles and the daily realities of leadership practice.

Ultimately, investing in the professional learning of school and system leaders ensures that the OPC's Values move beyond words on a page. Through continuous learning, reflection and development, leaders are better prepared to translate these principles into action – building inclusive communities, inspiring innovation, advancing excellence in public education and leading with integrity every day.

Championing Anti-oppressive Communities

Championing anti-oppressive communities requires leaders who are continu-

ously developing their awareness, skills and courage to recognize and address the barriers that impact students, staff and families. Ongoing professional development provides leaders with opportunities to engage in critical reflection, examine bias, learn from diverse perspectives and build strategies that promote inclusion and belonging.

Cultivating Innovative Learning

Professional growth opportunities encourage leaders to explore emerging research, experiment with new approaches and foster cultures of curiosity and collaboration. When leaders model continuous learning, they signal to the community that growth, creativity and adaptability are essential to thriving in an evolving society. Innovation becomes not simply a goal, but a shared mindset embedded across the system.

Promoting Excellence in Public Education

Professional learning supports leaders in strengthening instructional leader-

ship, improving equitable decision-making and using evidence to guide improvement. As leaders deepen their expertise, they are better equipped to support educators, enhance equitable student outcomes and ensure that public education remains responsive, inclusive and high quality for every learner.

Supporting Integrity-driven Leadership

At the centre of these commitments is integrity-driven leadership. Professional learning that emphasizes ethical decision-making, transparency and accountability strengthens leaders' ability to act consistently to uphold trust in public education. Integrity fosters trust, and trust is essential for meaningful collaboration and sustainable change within schools and across systems.

See page 27 to learn more about OPC Professional Learning summer programming! ▲

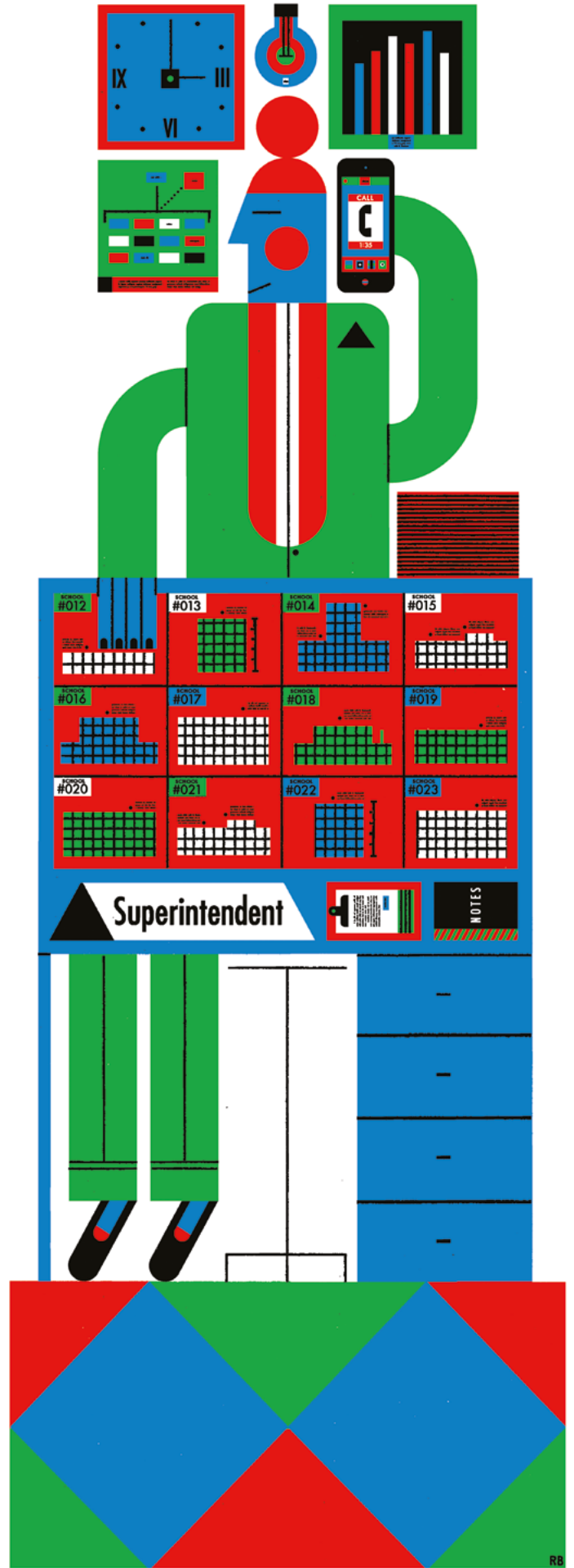
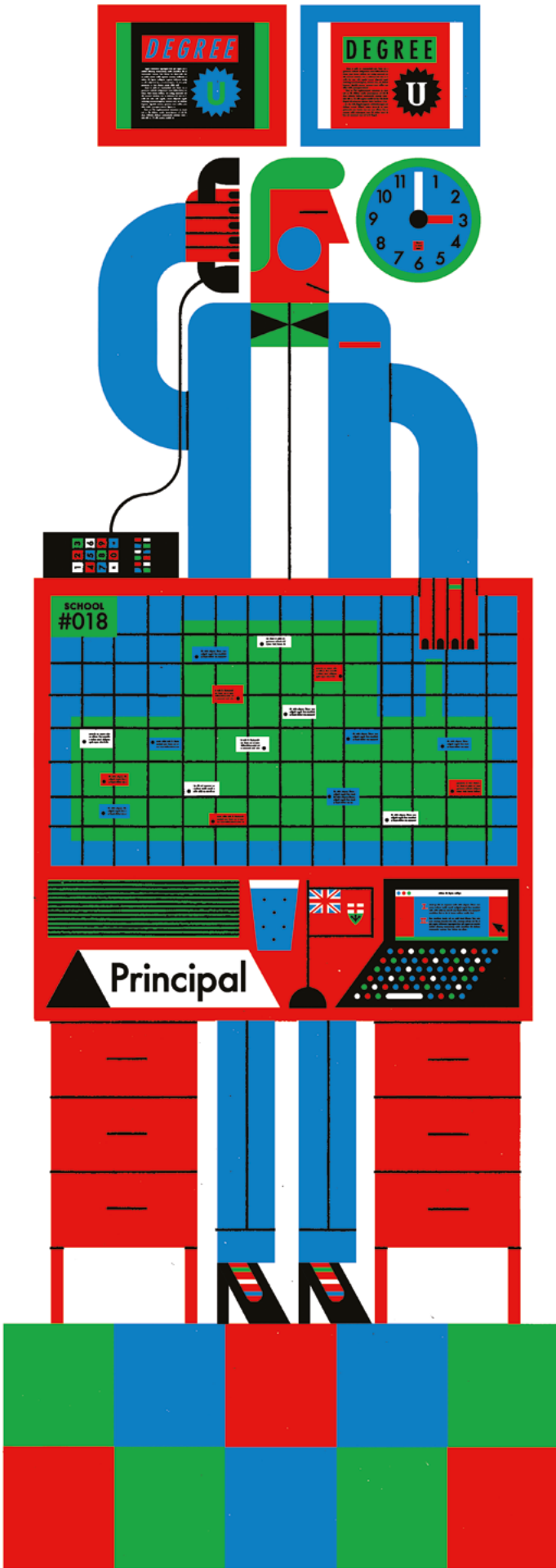
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By the Protective Services Team

Illustration by Raymond Biesinger

Working With Your Superintendent

Tips for principals and vice-principals





ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS A PRINCIPAL

or vice-principal will form is with their direct supervisor, their supervisory officer (SO). It is an interdependent relationship in which both rely on the other for support and strong performance. An effective working relationship with your SO makes it much easier to deal with the challenges that present themselves in the day-to-day running of the school. When each side of the partnership understands that they can rely on the other for solid support, regular communication and strong professional skills, that allows schools, staff and students to flourish under a healthy leadership structure. How can such a relationship be accomplished?

Establish a Clear Understanding and Expectation of Your Respective Roles

Request a call or some dedicated time for an initial entry meeting with your SO if you are a new principal, if your SO is new, if you have moved to a new school, or whenever you feel it is needed. It's important to have time for conversation to not only get to know each other, but to learn what's important to each other in your respective roles, to clarify expectations and to ask any questions either of you may have. Recognizing that availability may be limited, remember that you will have greater opportunities to interact with your SO at administrator meetings and on-site visits as the year progresses. It is a critical part of your role as principal or vice-principal to regularly assess the well-being of your school and to share that information with your superintendent. In the same way, it is important for superintendents to measure the well-being of a family of schools and to provide appropriate support. Both assessments require keen observation, effective listening skills, empathy and compassion.

Regular check-ins are important to keep both partners informed about the operations and progress of the school related to board initiatives, as well as to manage events and incidents that may impact the school and school community. A shared understanding of school status, progress and identified needs strengthens the principal and superintendent partnership, and facilitates necessary support to improve student well-being, learning and achievement.

Many supports for the transition into a new role, including building and strengthening relationships, are available through the OPC's [Professional Learning Department](#) and the [Protective Services Team](#) (PST).

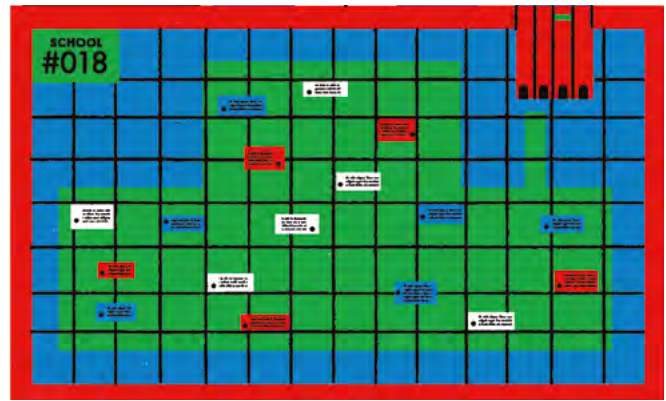
Determine an Effective Communication Plan... Including Plans A, B and Possibly C

Effective communication is essential for the principal, vice-principal and superintendent relationship to succeed. The giving and receiving of information and advice in a timely way provides support to all and helps keep schools on track.

At the start of the school year, discuss with your SO their preferred methods of communication. Ask whether they prefer that you text, call or email, recognizing that different methods might be used for different purposes, particularly depending on the level of urgency. In the event that your communication is urgent, make a plan B. Who would the SO advise you to contact if they are unable to respond in a timely manner? Would they prefer that you go through their executive assistant or another SO if you are unable to reach them in an emergency?

If your question, issue or concern is not urgent and you are simply looking to process possible solutions, it is also a good plan to have a network of colleagues you can reach out to for consultation. When it is appropriate or realistic to work with others first, such as situations where you are seeking discussion or advice on how to proceed on a school issue, consider the rule "call three before you get to me." This would also include reaching out to the OPC, by first speaking with one of the PST's intake officers and then, if needed, being referred to a PST consultant. Should you still not feel comfortable moving forward after these discussions, reach out to your SO for clarification.

The issue of responsiveness, or lack thereof, can make or break your principal/SO partnership. Both parties must



ensure that they have a clear approach to dealing with communication, ideally within 48 hours, even if it is simply to acknowledge receipt of an email, text or call, with a plan to connect later.

Provide (and Accept) Support, Coaching and Constructive Suggestions

When a different direction is needed and has been identified as necessary to correct areas of concern, timely coaching conversations, where appropriate, are important between both principals, vice-principals and their direct supervisors in a manner that demonstrates understanding and respect. If an issue arises, addressing it as soon as possible and in an honest and fair manner helps set clear expectations that encourage growth and self-reflection. The PST is available to assist with supporting principals and vice-principals through these processes. In certain instances, concerns can be raised by your SO, but they can also come from a principal or vice-principal who is seeking support as an area of growth.

There are also times when principals and vice-principals face unfair, biased or inappropriate treatment from staff, parents/caregivers and/or community members. In these situations, school leaders should be able to reach out to their SO for support, guidance and intervention. OPC Members, like all school board employees, are entitled to workplaces that are free from harassment, discrimination and harm. Adverse treatment of school administra-

tors based on an enumerated ground protected under the Human Rights Code must not be tolerated and, once reported, should be thoroughly investigated and addressed. As employees of a school board, you should follow board policy for reporting these matters.

Work with the OPC Protective Services Team

The PST reminds you to call our office as early as possible when in need of advice or when facing a challenge, problem or crisis. Members can seek a second opinion, advice or support from the PST whenever an issue arises. PST consultants may inquire about whether you have sought your SO's involvement or direction, since your SO is your board-level supervisor, your link to board resources and a person who can act as your internal and board advocate. Knowing if, when and how you should engage with your SO is always a good and safe practice.

As school leaders, we trust that our supervisors will work to build and maintain positive ongoing relationships. Since principals, vice-principals and SOs are all busy, face-to-face contact is often limited to regularly scheduled administrative meetings. Given that it is difficult to predict when you might need advice and support, it is better to engage in ongoing conversations to develop a better understanding of your respective leadership styles and to build on your relationship as professional partners. Develop a regular practice of discussing your school's operations and seeking out your SO's input on key decisions.

Part of a trusting professional relationship is respecting the experience and expertise that is specific to your supervisor's role.



Other important considerations to guide you through building and maintaining a strong and effective working relationship with your SO are found in the following tips gathered from experienced school leaders and SOs.

The Heads Up to Your SO: Expect a call from a concerned parent/caregiver

The school day is busy and complex; errors and omissions sometimes occur. Some situations with parents, caregivers or staff members may escalate, and a disgruntled parent or caregiver may threaten to call your supervisor. In these cases, the SO should ideally hear from you first, including your suggestions to address the situation. Information you provide to your SO should contain key background or contextual references.

When the issue is contentious or public, most supervisors are appreciative of a “heads up” call, which is especially important when the absence of a call could mean an unpleasant surprise at the board level. In such a scenario, instead of receiving support and advice, you may encounter concern or frustration that the situation wasn’t handled differently at an earlier stage. It is always best to provide clear and accurate details, even if those details might suggest that you should have made a different decision than what actually occurred.

Seeking Direction in Tough Times: “I’m not sure what to do next and I need support”

When seeking input from the SO, outline the key elements of the challenge, preferably in a point-form email, to be efficient. Include suggested solutions or next steps. Prior to sending the email, call or text the supervisor to alert him/her of the incoming message. This notification will allow the SO to review your position, prepare questions for clarification and consult with other parties who may have a particular expertise.

You may sometimes receive advice from your supervisor with which you do not agree. Part of a trusting professional relationship is respecting the experience and expertise that is specific to your supervisor’s role. They may

be using a different lens that reflects the board’s view on an issue, as opposed to your view as the leader of a single school. It is also critical for the SO to hear your voice as the school leader when you bring forward specific concerns that are greatly impacting your students, your staff and your school community, and there must be room in your discussion for reflecting on this as well. Where disagreement exists, carry out the conversation professionally and respectfully. Even if there is a clear disagreement in terms of your views or practices, it is better to discuss those differences in a calm and professional manner, as opposed to engaging from an emotional state.

Finally, it is often helpful to imagine yourself in the other person’s role. Consider how, as principal/vice-principal, you want teachers to establish and maintain a working relationship with you. How, when and through what method do you like to be contacted? Approaching a situation from this perspective may assist with balancing appropriate consultation versus over-communication.

Whom Should I Call: the SO or the OPC PST?

Both calls are important. When seeking an alternative view or advice on an issue, it is always appropriate to call both your supervisor and the PST. Your supervisor can provide you with board background information and policy considerations. The OPC can provide you with a provincial perspective and the benefit of advice from principals who have consulted on similar topics. In any situation, the order in which you place the calls should be guided by your responsibility in your role to the board, and, in practice, SOs frequently suggest that Members seek the PST’s perspective. In a serious crisis or emergency, you must follow your board’s policies, which generally stipulate who at the board must be contacted. Make sure you know who that person is. Once those calls have been placed and you have attended appropriately to the emergency, a call to the OPC can and should follow, even if you are unsure whether additional guidance or support is needed.

Call the SO When...

A call to your SO should be placed immediately if there has been a serious student injury, a complaint to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) or an incident involving an abusive parent/caregiver/community member. In such cases, the SO is your direct link to your board's legal services. Your SO will assist you in accessing the services of their insurance provider (for example, the Ontario School Boards Insurance Exchange [OSBIE], if they provide coverage for your school board). All boards have access to legal counsel, either with a law firm or through lawyers employed directly by the board as "in house" counsel. In most cases, your board's legal team will act on your behalf, but the PST should certainly be called as well to provide support as appropriate. It's likely that the PST has provided support in comparable situations, and our involvement is essential so that we can monitor your needs as a Member and support your board as it assists you.

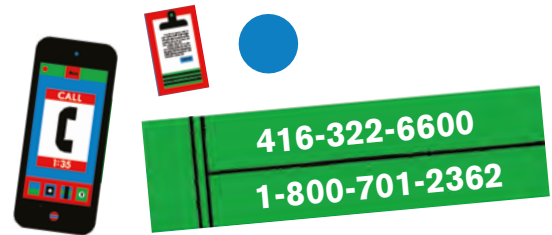
Call the PST When...

It is very important to call the OPC if there is any possibility that the principal's or vice-principal's interests come into conflict with those of the board, or if a complaint is

brought against a principal or vice-principal alleging a violation of board policy (human rights, workplace harassment, etc.), or if notification is given of a complaint to the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). In such cases, the board cannot act on the employee's behalf; it must assume a neutral role and investigate the allegations, or await the outcome of another process before proceeding with its own investigation and decision making.

The OPC would then represent the principal's or vice-principal's interests, as the SO may be directly involved in investigating the allegation.

A new school year provides an optimal time to reflect on your relationship with your SO and an opportunity to further consider how you can strengthen that pillar of support. After all, in the most difficult moments of school leadership, a strong team provides strong support to each other. ▲



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Learn more





Strengthening the Local

OPC support at the regional level

By Irfan Toor and Vicki Shannon
Illustration by Dushan Milic

The transition from teacher to administrator

presents many new opportunities, new perspectives and other professional shifts in focus. As an administrator, you are required to have an increased understanding of so many aspects of the school system – from the implementation of policy; to making decisions about spending; to understanding the perspectives of different students, families, communities and employee groups – all while maintaining a safe, equitable, inclusive and anti-oppressive learning environment.



It is also important to understand how your professional support system has changed with your new role. Now that you are no longer a member of an Ontario teacher federation, services such as professional learning, advocacy, protective services and legal assistance, which you formerly received from the federations, are now available to you through the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC). It is important to take time to learn more about your new professional association, how it is structured and how you can become involved.

The OPC represents more than 5,500 principals and vice-principals in Ontario's public elementary and secondary schools, as well as providing services to other membership groups as well as providing services to aspiring leaders and Members in different positions, such as retired OPC Members and administrators in First Nations schools. For many of our Members, their first exposure to the OPC was not when they became a principal or vice-principal, but when they engaged in our professional learning through a webinar, workshop, the Emerging Leader Development Program or the Principal's Qualification Program. When administrators are first appointed in their roles, each school board's human resources department should

provide information about the local OPC executive and the OPC Membership Services department. That's when you may learn more about some of the OPC's other services such as negotiations, terms and conditions, protective services and affinity groups, as well as some of the resources and professional learning opportunities that are only available for Members.

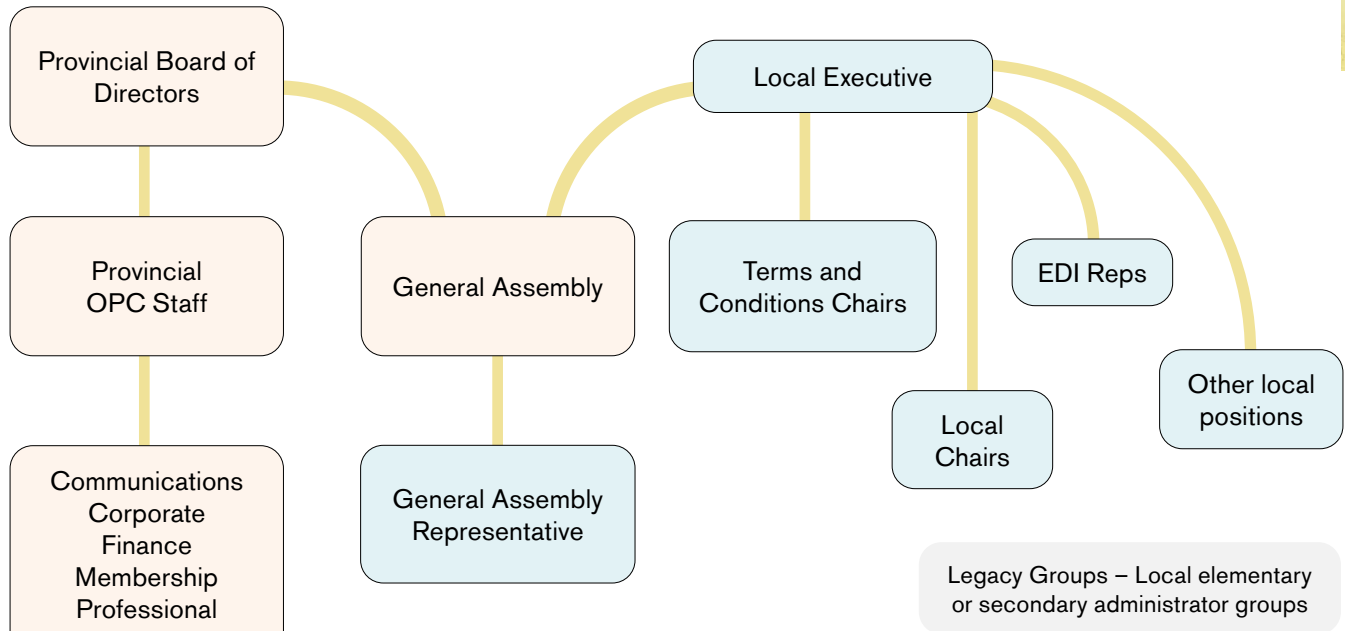
Structure of OPC Local and Provincial Bodies

Similar to the teacher federations, there is a distinction between the OPC local and OPC provincial bodies. Each school district in Ontario has a corresponding OPC local, which serves as the liaison representing local interests and which is part of the greater provincial organization. In most cases, the name of the local is very similar to the name of the school district (e.g., Durham OPC represents OPC Members from the Durham District School Board; OPC Bytown represents OPC Members from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board; and the Toronto School Administrators' Association represents OPC Members from the Toronto District School Board). Some districts may have legacy groups that existed prior to 1998, when the OPC was created, but it is important to note that across the province, the OPC is the only recognized group that is responsible for services provided to public school principals and vice-principals such as negotiations with the provincial government, and protective services. Legacy groups may still play a role in some local advocacy, consultation, networking and social events.

Each school district has a local OPC executive that represents the local membership and manages the business of the local membership. In most cases, district meetings are held regularly and have a leadership structure that typically includes chairs or presidents, provincial representatives, treasurer, Terms and Conditions representatives, an EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) representative and other locally determined positions. The local executive also schedules opportunities for all principals and vice-principals of the local OPC to get together to become informed of both local and provincial business.



Ontario Principals' Council



Each local has a constitution that has been reviewed by the provincial OPC and aligns with the expectations of the OPC provincial General Operating By-Law. The local constitution includes the process for local elections. The nomination and election process may differ across districts, but in all cases, it should be transparent and procedurally fair. A few positions are designated as requiring an election and some may be filled by appointment; there may be variations across districts.

Importance of Your Local

Your local OPC executive plays an important role in providing support, service and advocacy to your regional Members. A stronger local group can have more influence on local decision-making with senior school board leadership on issues such as workload, as well as supporting provincial advocacy. In most districts, members of each local executive participate in regular meetings with senior leadership and ideally have the opportunity to discuss the operational impacts of policy changes, to express concerns about local colleagues and to solve problems collaboratively. Your local executive can also serve as a bridge to provincial services, helping direct you to membership and bene-

fits, protective services, additional professional learning and the many other OPC resources available for school administrators.

Additionally, your local OPC executive may be engaged in supporting your professional growth as well as building a network of colleagues and support. Your local can provide many different opportunities to bring colleagues together and foster collaboration and informal mentorship, through social events, inviting the OPC provincial president to visit, organizing locally relevant professional learning or providing Terms and Conditions updates. The development of a respected and strong local is the result of Members who consider when and how they might participate or contribute, and then take the necessary steps to follow through.

Over the last few years, the OPC has also been creating opportunities for new and diverse voices and identities to find their place in the local executives. All local executives are required to have at least one position designated as a district EDI representative. In most cases, that has grown to two positions, sometimes to represent different panels or identities, or to reduce isolation. Some districts have also expanded this idea to create a dedicated position for an Indigenous

The local executive plays a critical role in bringing together all Members to discuss issues of local and provincial importance.

administrator. This intentional work has been important to creating pathways into local and provincial leadership for under-represented and underserved identities. In many cases, Members have shared that otherwise, they would not have known how to – or felt invited to – participate in their local executive. Providing opportunities for diverse voices is one of the ways in which OPC locals can be strengthened.

Succession planning for your local executive is an important topic, but one that is often overlooked. In many districts, the work of the local OPC is left to a small number of people who have worked diligently for many years to support their colleagues. It is to be expected that, eventually, those administrators will get promoted, retire or otherwise move on. Occasionally, especially in smaller (by population) or more remote districts, when someone who has been in a position on the local executive for a while leaves or when large geographical distances create challenges to participation, there often aren't enough people ready and willing to move into those positions. This creates knowledge gaps and interrupts the ability of the local to support necessary local and provincial work.

This reinforces the need for the local executive to build an understanding of the OPC within their district. The local executive plays a critical role in bringing together all Members to discuss issues of local and provincial importance, to ensure that there is a smooth transition for new Members into the OPC and to build a network of support in an environment where principals and vice-principals are becoming increasingly isolated.

Here are some strategies that districts have used to build capacity, share workloads and embed succession planning:

Multi-year fixed terms

Many positions on local executives are identified as running for a specific length of time, often two years. This allows individuals to see what a position is like, but then also lets other Members know when the position may become available. Some districts allow renewal for successive terms, but may also set a limit on the number of successive terms.

- For example, representatives can be re-elected for up to two (2) consecutive three-year terms, for a maximum of six (6) consecutive years.

Alternating and overlapping terms

If a position is held by more than one person, they will have overlapping or alternating terms so that both positions don't become vacant or replaced in the same year. Examples include

- The term for the secondary EDI Representative could be 2025–27 and the elementary EDI representative's term would be 2026–28.
- They could also switch roles over the two years. For example, one year, the secondary person is the chair and the elementary person is the vice-chair; they then switch positions the next year.

Committees

Some local Members may not be ready to commit to an elected position but still want to contribute in another way. They can get that opportunity with a committee that is chaired by an elected member of the local executive but is filled with Members from the general membership.

Open or hybrid meetings

Most regular meetings should be open in at least some part to all Members of the district, including Members on Term Assignment. This can be accommodated very easily these days through





virtual meeting tools. However, some parts of the agenda, or specific items, may require the local executive to go in camera. The Annual Meeting should be as open and accessible as possible.

Hosting local events

Local districts have funds that come from a membership rebate. Some of these funds can be used to host breakfast sessions, workshops or discussions facilitated by OPC staff or the OPC president, Terms and Conditions updates or seasonal social events. These events allow local Members to learn about the work of the local executive and also provide entry points for Members to become involved.

Rotating locations

Some districts will shift the location of meetings so that they don't seem to prioritize one geographic area over another. In districts that are very large (whether by population or by geography), there are opportunities to host smaller events in different parts of the district to make it easier for people to attend something closer



to their home or work locations. This creates more opportunities for discussion, responding to concerns and building relationships.

Your local OPC district is invaluable in providing information, assistance and support, and serves as a conduit and connection to provincial issues. Becoming involved in your local executive offers you opportunities to increase your professional network and gain access to formal and informal mentorship, and also creates a pathway for you to influence provincial advocacy.

Many experienced administrators looking back over their career have reflected that the network, support and camaraderie they received from local OPC colleagues was integral in helping them feel motivated, informed and appreciated. ▲

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- The Meadoway, **Toronto**
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- The Village at Black Creek, **Toronto**
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The Reality of School Leadership in Ontario

Abacus survey data 2025

By Dr. Nadine Trépanier-Bisson
Illustration by Luc Melanson

In 2023, the three

provincial principals' associations, **Association des directions**

et directions-adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO), Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO) and the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) retained Abacus Data, a Canadian polling and market research firm, to poll Members on questions that would inform our negotiations process with the provincial government. We turned to Abacus Data once again in 2025 to get a sense of how things might have changed for our respective Members. This article explores the data collected regarding OPC Members' job satisfaction and workload over those two years, as well as differences between principals' (Ps) and vice-principals' (VPs) perspectives across the three associations.

In 2023, there were 3,738 respondents, 2,592 of whom were OPC Members. In 2025, that number dropped slightly, with 3,450 total respondents and 2,298 OPC respondents.

Job Satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction is up four points for OPC Members since 2023, from 53% to 57%. Interestingly, Members who are newer to their role expressed higher satisfaction levels,

by a margin of about 20%. Those closer to their 85 factor reported lower satisfaction than those who were further from their pension date, by a margin of approximately 12%.

However, there are only three areas where at least half of P/VPs said they were satisfied: salary (up by 30% since 2023), P/VP evaluation process (up by 7%) and health and safety in the workplace (up by 4%). The areas where the most dissatisfaction is noted are workload during the school year, being heard by the Ministry of Education, and respondents' respective school boards and benefits (excluding LTD). Dissatisfaction with benefits (excluding LTD) saw the highest increase in dissatisfaction.

The survey data also allows us to consider differences reported across the three associations for job satisfaction differences between Ps and VPs. Generally, VPs across the three associations were more satisfied with their work than Ps. There are some notable differences in specific areas. For example, Ps were more satisfied with their salary and the evaluation process than VPs. However, VPs were more satisfied with their health and safety in the workplace, the available resources (e.g., special clothing, furniture, IT >



Concerns about workload, support and the ever-changing work environment remain widespread and persistent, casting a shadow over any positive developments.

and supplies), staffing within the school and workload during the regular school year.

In 2025, OPC Members reported small shifts in workload patterns compared to 2023, with increases in providing student support, providing classroom support and building duties. They reported spending less time on administrative duties required by their school board or the ministry, providing teacher support and on student achievement plans. The data also suggests that across the three associations, VPs spend more time on student support and classroom support than Ps, whereas Ps spend more time on administrative duties, building duties and student achievement plans.

These findings suggest that satisfaction and perceptions of support vary by role and career stage, with newer Members and VPs feeling more positive than Ps and those nearing retirement. Workload, resources and communication continue to present challenges at all levels. Recognizing these differences and digging deeper to understand why they exist can help provincial and local associations, school boards and the Ministry of Education focus their efforts to address emerging needs, foster well-being and encourage open dialogue for ongoing improvement.

Workload

The 2025 data indicates that 98% of respondents reported an increase in the number of their responsibilities, a figure that has remained unchanged since 2023. While the majority said they continue to feel over-

whelmed by the volume and number of duties (89%, a slight decrease of 2%), and 77% continue to find their workload unmanageable (a decrease of 4%), there are some areas of improvement. The sense that the work environment is constantly changing and difficult to keep up with decreased to 85% (down by 3%). Encouragingly, more Members reported having sufficient resources and training, with 59% indicating satisfaction in this area – an increase of 7%. Similarly, perceptions of support from the board rose to 45%, up by 4% from previous results.

There are notable differences based on experience in the role. Those new to their positions said they felt more supported (81%) compared to those who had been in the role for more than three years (69%). Additionally, individuals with more than three years in the role were more likely to perceive their workload as unmanageable (78%) compared to those newer to the position (64%).

While the data reflects some incremental improvements since 2023, the overall results are far from reassuring. Concerns about workload, support and the ever-changing work environment remain widespread and persistent, casting a shadow over any positive developments. The vast majority of OPC Members continue to feel the strain of their responsibilities, with stress and dissatisfaction entrenched across nearly every aspect of the job. These findings highlight that the issues facing educational leaders are not simply isolated or temporary, but rather reflect deeper, systemic challenges that need urgent attention.

Even as some areas show signs of progress, the prevailing sense is one of alarm, underscoring the need for concerted and sustained action from all partners to address these complexities and foster genuine improvements in well-being and job satisfaction.

In 2025, 2% more Ps (99%) across all three associations reported an increasing number of responsibilities compared to VPs (97%). While both Ps and VPs overwhelmingly reported that their work environment is continually changing, that the workload has a negative impact on their health and that the current workload is unmanageable, these issues were more significant for Ps than VPs. Conversely, VPs reported feeling better supported in their schools and by their school boards than Ps.

Notably, when examining the experiences of Ps and VPs, the 2025 data reveals distinct patterns: while both groups grapple with overwhelming responsibilities and a rapidly changing work environment, Ps tended to report higher levels of stress and lower perceptions of support compared to VPs. Conversely, VPs were somewhat more likely to report that they feel supported within their schools and by their school boards, which may contribute to slightly higher satisfaction levels. This differentiation suggests that tailored strategies may be needed to address the unique pressures faced by Ps and VPs, ensuring that support systems and interventions are responsive to their specific roles and challenges.

Conclusion

The numbers from Abacus Data are clear: P/ VPs across Ontario face growing pressures and challenges – but data alone isn't enough. We need to keep collecting and sharing personal stories that put a human face on the statistics when we engage in discussions with boards, government representatives and other partners. The OPC's advocacy work is made stronger by a combination of evidence and lived realities. That combination helps ensure that real issues aren't ignored as we keep pushing for changes that are urgently needed. ▲

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The Reality of School Leadership in Ontario

Abacus Survey Data 2025

The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) collects data to advocate on behalf of our Members. In 2025, a survey of 2,298 OPC Members indicated that

88%

have personally witnessed violence or threats against staff

98%

say the number of responsibilities they have are increasing

96%

report accessing their benefits this year, compared to 55% in 2023

77%

say the level of violence is interfering with learning in the classroom



82%

report that their increasing workload is negatively impacting their well-being



89%

feel overwhelmed by the volume and number of duties



75%

have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event in their school in the past three years

85%

say their work environment is constantly changing and it is hard to keep up

73%

say the level of violence is increasing

77%

say their current workload is unmanageable

43%

believe there are insufficient resources to support their mental health and well-being

Mark Your Calendar

July

2-29

[Equitable and Inclusive Schools Qualification Program](#)

Registration deadline: June 17

3

[Special Education for Administrators Qualification Program](#)

Registration deadline: June 19

6

[Principal's Development Course](#)

Module 1: Principal Legal Duties and Responsibilities

Module 11: Leading the Special Education Program

Registration deadline: June 22

7

[Mentoring Qualification Program](#)

Registration deadline: June 23

14

[Book Club](#)

(Free for Members!)

Re-Storying Education: Decolonizing Your Practice Using a Critical Lens by Carolyn Roberts

Four meetings in July and August

Registration deadline: July 12

August

17-20

[Navigating Leadership Transitions](#)

(Free for Members!)

Four sessions including "Your First Month with the Ontario Principals' Council"

Registration deadline: August 16

20

[Leading Through Identity](#)

Registration deadline: July 10

September

19

[New Leader Support Program](#)

(Vice-principal Cohort)

Registration deadline: September 11

26

[New Leader Support Program](#)

(Principal Cohort)

Registration deadline: September 18

October

21-22

General Assembly Meeting

22-23

[OPCLearn Annual Conference](#)

Open Registration

[Self-directed Learning:](#)

Conducting Bias-aware Investigation

Interview Preparation

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Teacher Performance Appraisal

Understanding Professional Boundaries

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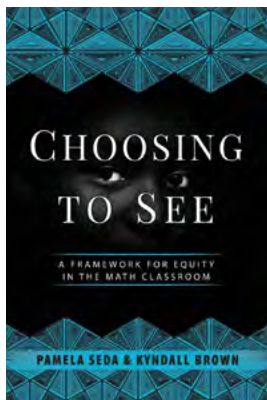
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Choosing to See*: A framework for equity in the math classroom

By Pamela Seda and Kyndall Brown
Dave Burgess Consulting
ISBN: 9781951600808
Reviewed by Mervi Salo

*The title of this book refers to the concept of choosing to see beyond the notion that mathematics is culturally neutral. *The OPC acknowledges the lived experiences of individuals who are blind, have low vision or have other vision-related experiences.*

Equity in mathematics remains one of the most persistent and consequential challenges in public education. Despite decades of reform, student outcomes continue to reflect

deep disparities along racial, socioeconomic and cultural lines. *Choosing to See* offers school leaders and educators a powerful reminder that inequity is not accidental, nor is it neutral. Rather, it is sustained by systems, assumptions and instructional practices that too often go unquestioned. While written with classroom teachers in mind, this book is equally important for principals, vice-principals and system leaders. Seda and Brown argue that “true seeing must always precede doing,” positioning equity not as a checklist of strategies but as a lens through which educators examine beliefs, structures and daily decisions. The authors introduce a pedagogical and leadership tool for disrupting inequitable patterns in mathematics and STEM education called the [ICUCARE framework](#): Include others as experts; be Critically conscious; Understand your students well; use Culturally relevant curricula; Assess, activate and build on prior knowledge; Release control and Expect more.

One of the book’s central contributions is its insistence that mathematics is not culturally neutral. Drawing on research, classroom narratives and lived experience, the authors challenge the

myth that math exists apart from identity or context. Instead, they show how traditional approaches to mathematics often favour compliance, speed and answer-getting, which are classroom conditions that disproportionately marginalize historically underserved learners. For school leaders, this raises critical questions about how instructional norms, assessment practices, grouping structures and enrichment pathways may unintentionally reproduce inequities for learners.

Each chapter combines theory with concrete classroom examples, making the framework accessible and actionable. Particularly compelling is the authors’ discussion of redefining expertise. By positioning students, families and communities as central sources of mathematical knowledge, Seda and Brown challenge deficit-based thinking and invite educators to redistribute authority in the classroom. This shift has clear implications for leadership practice, from how principals and vice-principals frame professional learning, to what they notice during classroom observations, to how they support teachers in moving from control and compliance toward collaboration and sense-making.

Importantly, *Choosing to See* does not lower expectations in the name of equity. On the contrary, the authors emphasize that high expectations, paired with appropriate support, are essential for student success. Equity, they argue, is not about making mathematics easier, but about making powerful mathematics accessible to all learners. This message resonates strongly in an era when schools are grappling with achievement gaps, disengagement and the long-term consequences of disrupted learning.

Tools such as the ICUCARE self-assessment, group-worthy task checklists and culturally relevant task adaptations provide concrete entry points for professional learning, co-planning and school improvement work. These resources make it possible for principals and vice-principals to move beyond individual reflection toward collective, sustained action.

For principals and vice-principals seeking to deepen equity work in mathematics, *Choosing to See* offers both urgency and hope. It challenges leaders to confront uncomfortable truths about how inequity is produced, while providing a coherent framework for change. ▲

Mervi Salo is a principal with the Toronto District School Board. She has led system-wide professional learning in mathematics, science and technology, STEM, robotics and the arts.

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Finding My Way In

Inquiry as a bridge to making meaningful change

Looking back on my experience as a new principal in a different school board, I grappled with the tension every

incoming leader faces: having my own perspectives about what defines “good” teaching and learning, while still learning about the community I had been entrusted to lead. Navigating relationship-building felt particularly difficult. It was 2021, the height of the pandemic; students were in three-hour blocks, faces were hidden behind masks and staff were understandably overwhelmed by the pivot to hybrid learning. Added to this, the steep learning curve of new board-level processes and policies meant that even the simplest tasks demanded more time.

My goal was to create a culture of powerful learning. How did staff, students and the community experience belonging, inclusion and equitable assessment? What were their needs in these areas, and what changes would create space for learning? I created a guiding question: **What are the most powerful**

ways to foster a nurturing and identity-affirming learning environment?

I was consistent and always went back to this question with my learning and actions, and I now see how it became my vehicle for change management. I could model the change in how I showed up for staff, just as I hoped they would show up for students. I had to engage with my own thinking, be intentional in my practices, use coaching moves and be humble with where the many answers could lead. Modelling high-impact instructional practices facilitated trusting relationships with students, staff and families. With that trust, I could build intentional structures and, together with the community, make bold moves. I collaborated with [I-Think](#) to engage students in creating the vision, mission and strategy for our school. We eliminated exams in grades 9 and 10 as a gateway to building assessment literacy, thus changing teaching practices. We restructured our tiered

intervention programs, supporting our most underserved students. We made our commitments to the students visible.

In the five years since I joined the school, our Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) scores are up by 26 per cent ([TDSB 2019](#); [EQAO 2024](#)), suspension rates are down significantly and the Fraser Institute has highlighted that we are among the fastest improving secondary institutions in the province ([Fraser Institute 2025](#)).

In retrospect, asking important questions served as a bridge, connecting my personal perspective on pedagogy to the collective changes needed for our school’s continued growth. Utilizing this question helped me find my way into an established community, allowing me to lead with inquiry rather than assumptions. In doing so, the necessary space was created for me to ask the deeper questions required to truly understand and support the community I serve. ▲

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Navigating Leadership Transitions



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Leader Mental Health and Well-being	August 18
Navigating the Transition from Vice-principal to Principal	August 19
Setting up a Documentation System	August 20

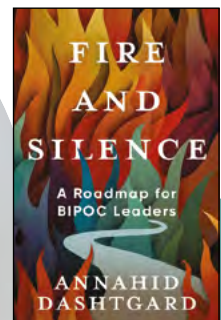
Leading Through Identity

August 20

Toronto – 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. ET



Learn More



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